

to Eridu and its worship of the deities of the deep. Eridu did not communicate to the rest of Babylonia only the seeds of culture or the adoration of Ea, the god of wisdom ; it impressed upon all the cosmogonies of Babylonia the stamp of its own, and originated that view of the origin of the world which found its western prophet in the first of Hellenic philosophers. Like so much else that had its primal home in Shinar, it was carried westward to the shores of the Mediterranean. Phœnician cosmology also began with an abyss of waters in which the seeds of all things were begotten;¹ and even the Hebrew writer tells us that “in the beginning,” before Elohim “carved out the heavens and the earth,” “the earth had been waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

It does not seem, however, that the belief in a provisional creation, in the existence of composite animals who perished when the present world came into being, can have emanated from Eridu. At Eridu the deep was not the representative of chaos and confusion; quite the contrary, it was a venerable divinity, the mother of Ea himself. So far, moreover, from the composite animals of mythology being subjects of abhorrence, Oannes, the god of culture, the god of pure life, as the inscriptions term him, was actually one of them. It was he who is described in the fragment of Bêrôssos as half-human, with the tail of a fish.

These composite creatures were really the offspring of totemism and the attempts of a later age to explain the figures which totemism had bequeathed to art and mytho-

¹ Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* i. 10; Damaskios, *De Prim. Princip.* 123, p. 361, ed. Kopp.

logy. A place had to be found for the colossal bulls with human heads and eagles' wings, for the hawk-headed cherubs who guarded the tree of life, for "the scorpion-men" who watched the sun at his rising and setting, or for the centaurs, half-man and half-horse, whose forms are engraved on Babylonian boundary-stones, and who passed over to the Greeks through Phœnician hands. Many of these, it is true, were beneficent beings, like the man-headed bulls; but the majority belonged to those spirits of the earth and air against whom the sorcerer-priest had prepared his spells. They had no place or portion in the existing order of the universe; when, therefore, Tiamat had become a cosmological principle, symbolised by the serpent or dragon and opposed to the gods of light, it was easy to banish them all to her domain and to regard her as their mother and nurse.

It may be that this was the work of the priests of Babylon. At any rate, Bel-Merodach is credited with having been their destroyer, as he was also the destroyer of Tiamat herself; and it is difficult to believe that this belief grew up anywhere else than in the city which owned Merodach as its lord. It is certainly noticeable that Bêrôssos refers to the images of the monsters painted in vermilion on the walls of the temple of Merodach when he is describing the strange creatures of the pre-human world.

In the epic of the Creation, whether or not it owes its existence, as I have suggested, to an Assyrian poet of the age of Assur-bani-pal, we may see the final unification of the varying cosmological legends of Babylonia. They are here combined and harmonised together; and though the whole is thrown into a mythological form, as

befits the requirements of poetry, its spirit is unmistakably materialistic. In spite of the fragmentary condition **in** which it has come down to us, it is possible to guess at the order of its arrangement by comparing it with the first chapter of Genesis.

The first tablet or book was occupied with the cosmogony proper and the creation of the gods. The birth of the gods of light necessarily brought with it the creation of the light itself. This would have been followed by a second tablet, in which the creation **of** the firmament of heaven was described. The gods needed a habitation, and this was provided by the firmament of the **sky**. A mythological tablet, it will be remembered, states that "the heaven was created from the waters," before that "the god and goddess," or Ansar and Kîsar, "created the earth," in exact agreement with the account in Genesis. Here, too, the firmament of the heaven is created out of the waters of the deep on the second day, dividing "the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament," while the earth does not emerge above the surface of the deep until the third day. **It** is therefore probable that the third tablet **of** the Assyro-Babylonian epic recounted the formation **of** the earth. Unlike the Biblical narrative, however, in place of the vegetable creation of the third day, it would seem to have interpolated here the appearance of the brood of chaos. The legend of Cutha declares that when the earth was peopled by them, there were as yet neither "bodies nor brushwood," neither the animal nor the vegetable world of to-day. However this may be, the fourth tablet recorded the great struggle between Mero-dach and Tiamat, of which no trace appears **in the book**

of Genesis, though we seem to have allusions to a similar conflict in the spiritual world in other parts of the Bible. In Isaiah xxiv. 21, 22, we read "that the Lord shall visit the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in prison;" while a well-known passage in the Apocalypse (xii. 7—9) tells how "there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." The fifth tablet, as we have seen, was concerned with the appointment of the heavenly bodies, the work of the fourth day in Genesis ; the sixth probably related the creation of vegetables, birds and fish; and the seventh that of animals and mankind.¹ In two respects, therefore, the epic would have differed from the Biblical account : firstly, in the interpolation of the appearance of the monsters of chaos and of the combat between Merodach and the dragon; and secondly, in making the seventh day a day of work and not of rest.

The epic never succeeded wholly in supplanting what we may regard as the local legend of the Creation current at Babylon. Its cosmogony was indeed known to Da-

¹ A passage in one of the magical texts indicates that a similar view as to the creation of the woman from the man prevailed in Babylonia, to that which we read of in the book of Genesis. In W. A. I. iv. 1. i. 36, 37, it is said of the seven evil spirits : "the woman from the loins of the man they bring forth," in conformity with the Semitic belief which derived the woman from the man. This part of the magical text, at all events, must belong to the Semitic period.

maskios, and doubtless suited the philosophic conceptions of the Græco-Roman age far better than the older creation-stories of Babylonia; but it is ignored by Bêrôssos, who collected the materials of his narrative from the priests of Bel-Merodach at Babylon. As one of their order himself, he preferred to give their own version of the creation of the world, rather than a version which **was** less peculiarly Babylonian, however consonant the latter might be with the opinions of his Greek readers.

The contents of the fifth tablet introduce us to a side of Babylonian religion which occupied an important and prominent position, at all events in the official cult. At the beginning of the present century, writers upon the ancient East were fond of enlarging upon a Sabaistio system of faith which they supposed had once been the dominant form of religion in Western Asia. Star-worship **was** imagined to be the most primitive phase of Oriental religion, and the reference to it in the book of Job was eagerly seized upon as an evidence of the antiquity of the book. Dupuis resolved all human forms of faith into Zodiacal symbols, and Sir William Drummond went far **in** the same direction. That the first gods of the heathen were the planets and stars of heaven, was regarded by high authorities as an incontrovertible fact.

The plains of Shinar were held to be the earliest home of this Sabaism or star-worship. The astronomy and astrology of Babylonia had been celebrated even by Greek and Latin authors, and scholars were inclined to see in the "Chaldaean shepherds" the first observers of the heavens. The "astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators" of Babylon, are enumerated in the Old Testament (**Is.** xlvii. 13); and the small cylinders brought by

travellers from Bagdad, with their frequent representations of a star or sun, seemed to leave no doubt that the deities of Babylonia were in truth the heavenly bodies. The decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions has shown that the belief in Babylonian "Sabaism" was, after all, not altogether a chimæra.

Babylonia was really the cradle of astronomical observations. Long before the lofty *zigurrâti* or "towers" of the temples were reared, where the royal astronomers had their stations and from whence they sent their reports to the king, the leading groups of stars had been named, a calendar had been formed, and the eclipses of the sun and moon had been noted and recorded. The annual path of the sun through the sky had been divided into twelve sections, like the twelve *kasbu* or double hours of the day, and each section had been distinguished by its chief constellation or star. It was thus that the Zodiac first came into existence. The names given to its constellations are not only Accadian, but they also go back to the totemistic age of Accadian faith. The first sign, the first constellation, was that of "the directing bull," so named from the solar bull who at the vernal equinox began to plough his straight furrow through the sky, directing thereby the course of the year. The last sign but one was "the fish of Ea;" while midway between the two, presiding over the month whose name was derived from its "facing the foundation" or "beginning" of the year, was the great star of the Scorpion. The fact that the year thus began with Taurus proves the antiquity of the Chaldaean Zodiac, and of the months of thirty days which corresponded to its several signs. From about B.C. 2500 and onwards, the precession of

the equinoxes caused Aries, and not Taurus, to be the asterism into which the sun entered at spring-time; the period when Taurus ushered in the year reached back from that date to about B.C. 4700. The Zodiacal circle may therefore have been invented nearly a thousand years before Sargon of Accad was born; and that it was invented at an early epoch is demonstrated by its close connection with the Accadian calendar.

With the Semitic domination of Sargon of Accad, however, Babylonian astronomy entered upon a new phase. To him, tradition ascribed the compilation of the standard work on Babylonian astronomy and astrology called the "Observations of Bel," and afterwards translated into Greek by Bêrôssos. But the edition of the work which we possess presupposes a much later date. Aries, and not Taurus, marks the beginning of the year, and the text contains references to political and geographical facts, some of which are probably not much older than the age of Assur-bani-pal. This is explained by the nature of the work. It was not so much a treatise on astronomy, as on the pseudo-science that had been evolved out of the observations of astronomy. The Chaldæan priests had grasped but imperfectly the idea of causation; their fundamental assumption was "post hoc, ergo propter hoc;" when two events had been noticed to happen one after the other, the first was the cause of the second. Hence their anxiety to record the phenomena of the heavens and the occurrences that took place after each; if a war with Elam had followed an eclipse of the sun on a particular day, it was assumed that a recurrence of the eclipse on the same day would be followed by a recurrence of a war with Elam. In this way a science of

astrology mas created whose students could foretel the 'futureby observing the signs of the sky.

It is obvious that a work whose object was to connect astronomical observations with current events must have been constantly undergoing alteration and growth. New observations would from time to time be introduced into it, sometimes causing confusion or even omissions in the text. There are instances in which we can detect the presence of observations placed side by side, though belonging to very different periods, or of older records which have been supplemented by the calculations of a later age.¹ In their present form, therefore, the "Observations of Bel" have to be used with caution if we would argue from them to the beliefs and practices of early Babylonia.

But the astrological science, or pseudo-mience, which underlies the whole work, shows that even in its earliest form it was a product of the Semitic epoch. Between the attitude of mind presupposed by this pseudo-science, and the attitude of mind presupposed by the magical texts and Shamanistic cult of Sumerian Chaldæa, there lies an impassable gulf. According to the latter, events are brought about by the agency of the innumerable spirits of earth and air, and can be controlled by the spells and exorcisms of the sorcerer; according to the astrologer of Sargon's court, they are natural occurrences, caused and determined by other natural occurrences

¹ See the examination of the Venus-tablet (W. A. I. iii. 63), by Mr. Bosanquet and myself in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, xl. 9, pp. 572, 578, where it is shown that a later scribe has interpolated a series of fabricated observations in the middle of an older and genuine record.

which can be discovered and noted by the observer. Out of the astrologer the astronomer could be born; between science and sorcery there can be only an eternal feud.

It does not follow, however, that the pre-Semitic population of Chaldæa took no notice of the phenomena of the sky. Unusual phenomena, such as an eclipse, must necessarily excite the attention of superstitious and half-civilised tribes; and the formation of a calendar, the invention of the Zodiac, and the naming of the principal constellations, show that a rudimentary astronomy was already in existence. Indeed, the "Observations of Bel" not only contain technical terms of Accadian origin, but embody notices of phenomena like eclipses which presuppose a long period of earlier observations. Unless such observations had existed, even the first compilation of the work would have been impossible. It was astrology, not the rudiments of astronomy, for which the Semites of Babylonia can claim the entire credit.

In the "Observations of Bel" the stars are already invested with a divine character. The planets are gods like the sun and moon, and the stars have already been identified with certain deities of the official pantheon, or else have been dedicated to them. The whole heaven, as well as the periods of the moon, has been divided between the three supreme divinities, Anu, Bel and Ea. In fact, there is an astro-theology, a system of Sabaism, as it would have been called half a century ago.

This astro-theology must go back to the very earliest times. The cuneiform characters alone are a proof of this. The common determinative of a deity is an eight-rayed star, a clear evidence that at the period when the

cuneiform syllabary assumed the shape in which we know it, the stars were accounted divine. We have seen, moreover, that the sun and moon and evening star were objects of worship from a remote epoch, and the sacredness attached to them would naturally have been reflected upon the other heavenly bodies with which they were associated. Totemism, too, implies a worship of the stars. We find that primitive peoples confound them with animals, their automatic motions being apparently explicable by no other theory; and that primitive Chaldæa was no exception to this rule has been already pointed out. Here, too, the sun was an ox, the moon was a steer, and the planets were sheep. The adoration of the stars, like the adoration of the sun and moon, must have been a feature of the religion of primæval Shinar.

But this primæval adoration was something very different from the elaborate astro-theology of a later day. So elaborate, indeed, is it that we can hardly believe it to have been known beyond the circle of the learned classes. The stars in it became the symbols of the official deities. Nergal, for example, under his two names of Sar-nerra and Sulim-ta-ea, was identified with Jupiter and Mars.¹ It is not difficult to discover how this curious theological system arose. Its starting-point was the prominence given to the worship of the evening and morning stars in the ancient religion, and their subsequent transformation into the Semitic Istar. The other planets were already divine; and their identification with specific deities of the official cult followed as a matter of course. As the astronomy of Babylonia became more developed, as the heavens were mapped out into groups of constel-

¹ W. A. I. iii. 57, 52.

lations, each of which received a definite name, while the leading single stars were similarly distinguished and named, the stars and constellations followed the lead of the planets. As Mars became Nergal, so Orion became Tammuz.

The priest had succeeded the old Sumerian sorcerer, and was now transforming himself into an astrologer. To this cause we must trace the rise of Babylonian astrology and the deification of the stars of heaven. The Sabianism of the people of Harrân in the early centuries of the Christian era was no survival of a primitive faith, but the last echo of the priestly astro-theology of Babylonia. This astro-theology had been a purely artificial system, the knowledge of which, like the knowledge of astrology itself, was confined to the learned classes. It first grew up in the court of Sargon of Accad, but its completion cannot be earlier than the age of Khammuragas. In no other way can we explain the prominence given in it to Merodac, the god of Babylon.

But side by side with this "cunningly-devised" system of theology, the ancient cult of the stars—not as manifestations or symbols of the official gods, but as divine beings themselves—maintained itself not only among the multitude, but among the higher orders as well. The hemerology of the intercalary Elul, enumerating the feasts and fasts of the month and the religious services to be performed on each, states that the tenth day was sacred to the Lady of the Lower Firmament (Bilat-Ekur) and the divine judges of the starry sky, and that offerings and sacrifices should be made during the night of it to two particular stars.¹ Towards the

¹ W. A. L. iv. 34, 47–50. See above, p. 72.

close of the Assyrian empire, we find an Assyrian scribe similarly laying down that the king should offer sacrifices "before the stars, before Assur, before Merodach," and other gods.¹ The stars, be it noticed, here take the first place, even before Assur, the god of Assyria, and Merodach, the god of Babylon, and hold the same rank as the colossal bulls and sacred rivers mentioned by the same author as objects of veneration.*

In a country which owed so much to its great rivers as Babylonia, we should naturally expect to find traces of river-worship. And such indeed is the case. But the rivers of Babylonia were not, like the Nile, the bringers of unmixed good. They might indeed be termed "the bearers of fertility," but their destructive floods needed curbing by dams and canals; and "the curse of rain" that descended on the land during the winter months made the rivers also curses instead of blessings. Hence it was that, by the side of the cult paid to the streams, and more especially to the supreme river-god, the divine Euphrates, in whom the people of Eridu had seen the features of Ea, there was a feeling of dread and fear, which prevented the cult from attaining its full development. Nevertheless, an old Accadian text declares that "the name of the man shall perish who destroys the body of a river;"² and a Semitic hymn, which is prefaced by the word *siptu*, "incantation," addresses the river (Euphrates ?) in words of adoration and respect:³

¹ T. A. I. iii. 66, Rev. 12 sq.

² W. A. I. iii. 66, Obv. 30—33.

³ W. A. I. ii. 17, 26, completed by Strassmaier.

⁴ S 1704, Rev.

“Thou, O river, I have made thee !¹
 At the time I dug thee, the great gods (were) on thy bank.
 Ea, the king of the deep, has created blessings in thy heart.
 He has presented his deluge before thee.
 Fire, might, brilliance (and) terribleness
 have Ea and Merodach presented unto thee.
 Judgment (?) hast thou given mankind,
 O mighty river, river supreme of limb.²
 Grant me (to bathe in) the straight course of thy waters.
 The (impurity) which is in my body to thy channel carry it, even
 to the channel.³
 (Take) it, bear it down into thy stream.
 (Deliver) me, and it shall not come nigh my altar.
 (Purify) my sin that I may live.
 May I glorify (that which the god) has created.
 Nay I exalt (*ludlul*) (thy) spring (*enu*).”⁴

Side by side with this primitive worship of rivers and

¹ *Atti, nâru, ebusu kasum.*

² *Di(?)ni tenisêti tadin atti ndru rabiti, nâru tsiriti mesrêti.*

³ *Sa ine zumri-ya basû (KI-PUR =) kibir-ki uri-su kibir-ki.*

⁴ Here several lines are lost. The text becomes legible again in the fourth line of the obverse, from which it appears that the tablet contains charms against the bites of serpents. The lines which are legible read as follows :

“Save me (*suzibaninni*) from the venom of these serpents.
 Myself and my house never may it destroy, never may it poison,
 never may it approach ;
 never may it overcome me; may it cross the river, may it pass
 over my life.
 [Lacuna] pouring their poison into my body like the star-coloured
 bird (*tarri*).
 May it mount to heaven like an arrow, pouring forth the *zikhi* of
 its mission.
 May (the serpents), O lord, be far from my body.
 May they depart . . . and let me glorify your LUL-GIR.
 Let me exalt (*ludlul*) the making of your god, O Ea, Samas and
 Merodach.”

The last line shows that we have here to do with a product of the school of Sippara, as the name of Samas is interpolated between the old god of healing spells and his ministering son.

springs, we find traces of a worship of the mountains. But this worship belonged rather to the days when the early colonists of Chaldaea had not as yet descended from the mountains of the East, and its traces are a survival, assisted perhaps by the conquest of the country in the historical epoch by the Kossæan highlanders. At any rate, in Babylonia itself the primitive cult of the mountains could be carried on only artificially. The sacred mountains of the plain were the mounds which marked the sites of ancient temples, or the towers which rose within them in order that the priest might continue on their summits that close communion with heaven which he had once enjoyed on the high places of the mountain-tops. In the story of the Deluge, the mountain peak of Nizir, where the rescued hero of the legend built his altar and poured out his offerings, is called a *ziggurra*t, or temple-tower. Conversely, "the mountain of the world" was the name given to a temple at Calah; and the mountain of 'Sabu, to which the god Zu took his flight, was Kharsak-kalama, "the mountain of mankind," an artificial mound near Kis. The most famous of these sacred tells or mounds, however, was the famous *tilu ellu*, "the illustrious mound," at Borsippa, now represented by the Birs-i-Nimrud. Nebo, to whom the great temple of Borsippa was dedicated, is called its god (W. A. I. ii. 54, 71). One of "the three great" or secret "names of Anu" was that of "the lord who issues forth from the illustrious mound" (W. A. I. iii. 68, 19), in reference to the fact that the Accadian prototype of Nebo was once the universe itself, in which the seven spheres of light were set, and around which the ocean-stream wound like a rope or serpent. When the old god of Borsippa had

passed into the Semitic Nebo, the attributes which had formerly connected him with the firmament of heaven were transferred to Anu, the sky-god of the official cult.

A fragmentary tablet, which gives us, as I believe, the Babylonian version of the building of the tower of Babel, expressly identifies it with "the illustrious mound." Here we are told of the leader of the rebellion that when "the thought of his heart was hostile" and he "had wronged the father of all the gods," when "he was hurrying to seize Babylon," and "small and great were mingling the mound," "the divine king of the illustrious mound" intervened, "Anu Lifted up (his hand) in front" and prayed "to his father the lord of the firmament." "All day long he troubled" them; "as they lamented on their couch he ended not" their "distress." "In his wrath he overthrows (their) secret counsel; in his (fury) he set his face to mingle (their) designs; he gave the command(?), he made strange their plan."¹ The very word that the Hebrew writer uses in order to explain the origin of the name of Babylon, and which the Authorised Version translates "confound," is here employed of those who "mingled together" the mound, and whose designs were afterwards themselves "mingled" by the god of heaven.

"The illustrious mound" was known as far back as the time when the months of the Accadian year were named. The month which corresponded to the Semitic Tasrit or Tisri, and our September, was "the month of the illustrious mound." It would seem, therefore, that legend had referred the attempt to build the tower whose

¹ The text has been published by Mr. Boscawen in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, v. 1.

head should reach to heaven to the autumnal equinox; at any rate, it is clear that the mound of Borsippa *was* not only in existence, but was already in a state of ruin when the Accadian calendar *was* first drawn up.

The sacred mounds of Babylonia, in fact, like the Gilgals of Palestine, appear to have been the sites of older structures which had long fallen into decay, and around which fancy and tradition were allowed to play freely. They had in this way become veritable hills—tumuli, *as* we should term them in our modern archaeological vocabulary—and as such deserved the venerable title of *sadu*, or “mountain.” New temples like that of “the mountain of the world” could be named after them, but this did not imply a recollection that the sacred mounds had once been temples themselves. They were rather, like the mountains of the eastern frontier, the everlasting altars of the gods, on whose summits worship could most fittingly be paid to the deities of heaven. And, like the mountains, they were something more than altars; they were themselves divine, the visible habitations of the spirits of the air. It is possible that Prof. Friedrich Delitzsch is right in proposing to see in the Assyrian *sadu*, or “mountain,” the explanation of the Hebrew title of the Deity, El Shaddai.¹ At all events, God is compared to a rock in the Old Testament (Deut. xxxii. 15, Ps. xviii. 2), and the worship of sacred stones was widely spread through the Semitic world.

¹ Mul-lil is called *kur-gal*, *sadû rabû* in Semitic, “the great mountain,” W. A. I. iv. 18, 15; 23, 30; and in v. 44, 41, “the god Kur-gal” is rendered by Bel. In the list of Babylonian kings in which the meaning of their names is explained, the Accodian E-Guzi-kharsag-men is interpreted Ê-Saggil-saldu-ni, “Ê-Saggil is our mountain.”

Between the sacred mounds of Babylonia, however, and the sacred stones of Semitic faith, there was a wide difference, answering to a difference in the minds of the two races to whom these separate cults belonged. The sacred stone was a Beth-el, or "house of god;" no habitation of a mere spirit, but the dwelling-place of deity itself. Its sanctity was not inherent; it was sacred because it had been transformed into an altar by the oil that was poured out upon it in libation, or the priest who was consecrated to its service. The worship of these sacred stones was common to all the branches of the Semitic family. The famous black stone of the Kaaba at Mecca is a standing witness of the fact. So firmly rooted was the belief in its divine character among the Arabs of Mohammed's day that he was unable to eradicate it, but was forced to make a compromise with the old faith by attaching to the stone the traditions of the Old Testament. The black stone, though more sacred than any others, did not stand alone. All around Mecca there were similar stones, termed *Anzab*, three of which may still be seen, according to Mr. Doughty, at the gates of the city, where they go by the names of Hobbal, Lâta and Uzza. Northward of Mecca, at Medain-Saleh, the burial-place of the ancient kingdom of the Nabathæans, Mr. Doughty has discovered niches in the rock containing sacred stones. Above one of them is an inscription which shows that the stone was the symbol or habitation of the god Auda (or Aera): "This is the place of prayer which Seruh the son of Tuka has erected to Auda of Bostra, the great god, in the month Nisan of the first year of king Malkhos." Within the last few years, bas-reliefs have been found in Sicily and Tunisia representing persons in the act of

adoration before a small triad of stone. We are here on Phœnician territory, and it is not strange therefore that classical writers should speak of the *Baïtyloi* or Beth-els, the meteoric stones which had fallen from heaven like "the image" of Artemis at Ephesos, and were accordingly honoured by the Phœnicians. In the mythology of Byblos, Heaven and Earth were said to have had four sons, Ilos or El, Bêtylos or Beth-el, Dagon and Atlas; and the god of heaven was further declared to have invented the Baityli, making of them living stones.¹ Bethuel is connected with Aram in the Old Testament (Gen. xxii. 21, 22); and we all remember how, on his way to Haran, Jacob awakened out of sleep, saying, "Surely the Lord is in this place," and "took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it **up** for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and called the name of that place Beth-el." In Palestine, however, the Beth-els were arranged in a circle or Gilgal, rather than singly; the isolated monuments were the cones of stone or the bare tree-trunks which symbolised Ashêrah, the goddess of fertility, and Baal the Sun-god. The sun-pillars and the *ashêrim* meet with frequent mention in the Biblical records; and we may gain some idea as to what the latter were like from the pictures we have on coins and gems of the famous conical stone that stood within the holy of holies in the temple of the Paphian Aphroditê, as well as from the description given of it by Tacitus.² On a gem

¹ Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* i. 10. Halévy's arguments against the identification of Baitylos and the Beth-el amount to very little.

² *Hist.* ii. 2 : "Simulacrum deæ non effigie humana, continuus orbis latiore initio tenuem in ambitum metæ modo exsurgens."

in the British Museum, **Sin**, "the god of Harran," is represented by a stone of the same shape surmounted by a star. The "pillars of the Sun" were also stones of a like form. When the Phœnician temple in the island of Gozo, whose ruins are known as the Temple of the Giants, was excavated, two such columns of stone were found, planted in the ground, one of which still remains *in situ*. We cannot forget that even in Solomon's temple, built as it was by Phœnician workmen, there were two columns of stone, **Boaz** and **Yakin**, set on either side of the porch (1 Kings vii. 21), like the two columns of gold and emerald glass which Herodotus saw in the temple of Melkarth at Tyre (Herodt. ii. 44).

The sacred stones which were thus worshipped in Arabia, in Phœnicia and in Syria, were worshipped **also** among the Semites of Babylonia. There is a curious reference to the consecration of a Beth-el in the Epic of Gisdhubar. When the hero had been dismissed by the Chaldaean Noah, and his sickness had been carried away by the waters of the sea, we are told that "he bound together heavy stones," and after taking an animal for sacrifice, "poured over it a homer" in libation. He then commenced his homeward voyage up the Euphrates, having thus secured the goodwill of heaven for his undertaking.¹

¹ W. A. I. iv. 51, v. 52. vi. 1—4. The stones or *ashêrim* which had thus been consecrated by oil being poured over them, are frequently mentioned in the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions under the name of *kisallî*. *Kisallu* is a word borrowed from the Accadian *ki-zal*, "place of oil" or "anointing," and represented the "altar," so often depicted on Assyrian gems and bas-reliefs, which consisted of an upright post or column, sometimes with an extinguisher-like top. A good representation of three of these columns, of different forms, will be seen on a Phœni-

The homeward voyage of the Chaldaean hero is a reminder that we, too, have finished our survey of Babylonian religion, so far as our present knowledge of it will allow. Two facts in regard to it stand prominently forth; its essentially local character, and its hybrid origin. We cannot understand even its most elementary features unless we bear in mind that it is the product of different races and different political systems. In detail, indeed, it may not always be easy to distinguish between Accadian and Semitic, or between the gods of Eridu and the gods of Babylon; but the main outlines of the picture are clear and distinct, and any attempt to obliterate or forget them will lead only to confusion and error. That the materials are still wanting for a complete history of the rise and development of Babylonian religion, I am only too well aware; but where completeness is unattainable, even an imperfect sketch has its merits and value. And the importance of Babylonian religion to the student of theology need not be pointed out. Apart from its general interest in illustrating the history of religion among one of the few races of mankind who have been the pioneers of civilisation, it has a special interest from its bearing on the faiths of Western Asia, and more especially on that of the people of Israel. If I have not more frequently drawn attention to the latter, it has been due to my desire to keep faithfully to the subject of my Lectures. I have undertaken to treat of Babylonian religion only, not of Semitic religion in general. For such

cian gem procured by Dr. Hayes Ward at Bagdad, and published by him in the *American Journal of Archaeology*, June 1886, p. 156. They correspond to the "sun-pillars" and *ashêrim*, or symbols of the goddess Asherah, so frequently alluded to in the Old Testament.

a task there are others far more competent than myself; great Arabic or Syriac or Hebrew scholars, who have devoted their lives to the study of one or more of these better-known Semitic tongues. My own studies have of late years lain more and more in the ever-widening circle of Assyrian research; here there is enough, and more than enough, to fill the whole time and absorb the whole energies of the worker ; and he must be content to confine himself to his own subject, and by honest labour therein to accumulate the facts which others more fortunate than he may hereafter combine and utilise. This is the day of specialists ; the increased application of the scientific method and the rapid progress of discovery have made it difficult to do more than note and put together the facts that are constantly crowding one upon the other in a special branch of research. The time may come again—nay, will come again—when once more the ever-flowing stream of discovery will be checked, and famous scholars and thinkers will arise to reap the harvest that we have sown. Meanwhile I claim only to be one of the humble labourers of our own busy age, who have done my best to set before you the facts and theories we may glean from the broken sherds of Nineveh, so far as they bear upon the religion of the ancient Babylonians. It is for others, whose studies have taken a wider range, to make use of the materials I have endeavoured to collect, and to discover in them, if they can, guides and beacons towards a purer form of faith than that which can be found in the official creeds of our modern world.