

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jtvi-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php)

JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR,  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

---

VOL. LVII.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.)

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1925

## 669TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1, ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 1924,  
AT 4.30 P.M.

DR. JAMES W. THIRTLE, M.R.A.S., F.R.G.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the Honorary Secretary announced the following Elections since the last Meeting:—W. Bell Dawson, Esq., M.A., D.Sc. (son of the well-known scientist, Sir William Dawson, an honoured Member of the Victoria Institute), as a Member, and the Rev. S. S. Farrow, L. T. Chambers, Esq., W. J. Scales, Esq., Miss A. A. Browne, R.R.C., Mrs. E. S. C. Hutchinson, the Rev. W. D. Vater, E. R. Wheeler, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.S., Miss M. W. Rouzee, B.A., Wilfred M. Clayton, Esq., the Rev. James Holroyde, M.A., and Louis H. Loft, Esq., as Associates.

The Chairman then introduced Professor T. G. Pinches, LL.D., M.R.A.S., the well-known Assyriologist, to read his paper on "The Worship of Idols in Assyrian History in Relation to Bible References."

---

### *THE WORSHIP OF IDOLS IN ASSYRIAN HISTORY IN RELATION TO BIBLE REFERENCES.*

By PROFESSOR THEOPHILUS G. PINCHES, LL.D., M.R.A.S.

**I**N all the noteworthy things in Jewish history, as told in the Old Testament, there is probably nothing which strikes the reader more than the unique position occupied by the chosen people owing to the religious isolation in which they found themselves. On every side, far or near, they were surrounded by heathendom. And this fact comes to our notice so often that the reader is tempted to take it as a most natural state of things, as though it had existed from the beginning of the history of the nations of the Near East; but the truth of the matter seems to be, that there was no monotheism in the Mediterranean coast-lands before the arrival of Abraham, who, about 2,000 years before Christ, brought that creed with him from Ur of the Chaldees, when Amraphel, who is identified with Hammurabi, the Ammurapi of a late Assyrian letter, ruled over Western Asia. Though this letter is of no great

importance, it shows that he had a certain amount of popularity in the northern kingdom of Assyria, just as the fragments of an Assyrian copy of his laws show that he was also renowned as a lawgiver in the Mesopotamian tract. That his laws should have been known—and probably well known—in Syria and Palestine during his lifetime, when he was lord of Amurru—the land of the Amorites—is not without its significance, and that fact may have some bearing on the subject of idol-worship in the district with which we are now dealing.

Abraham, the father of the Israelites, on arriving in Palestine, found himself in a land which, like Babylonia, whence he had come, possessed quite a pantheon of gods. In this district there were not only the native deities, but also many from other countries, including Babylonia and, possibly, Assyria, though the latter country had not yet attained the renown which it acquired in later centuries, when it had thrown off the Babylonian yoke. The fact that Babylonian deities had reached Palestine and the neighbourhood before the arrival of Abraham implies considerable intercourse between Babylonia and the western tract long before the time of Hammurabi, the king who ruled in Abraham's time. And in this connection we may quote the name of the goddess Ištar, who was always known in that district as Ashtoreth, with a feminine suffix which certainly did not belong to the name, seeing that the original language—that in which the name arose—was the genderless Sumerian. In connection with the worship of this important goddess in the Near Eastern world of 2,000 years before Christ it is noteworthy that a tablet from Babylonia in the British Museum seems to give no less than ten identifications with a divinity called *Ašratu*<sup>m</sup>, which is probably the *ashērah*, "grove," of the Old Testament and the English translations. Such a text as this list naturally shows that as yet we have but meagre details of the heathen worship of the Canaanites.

Of all the Babylonian deities which we should expect to find sympathetic to the Hebrews, we may take the Babylonian king of the gods, Merodach, as being the most to their liking. This, in fact, seems to have been really the case, for, as I have pointed out before, a name containing, as its main element, that of the deity in question, namely, Mordechai (better Maredachai) introduced during the Babylonian captivity, is to be found among the Jews even to-day. But it was not the Babylonian Merodach whom they thus honoured, but Jahwah

under his Babylonian name. The only passage where Merodach is mentioned—and that as a Babylonian god—is Jer. 1, 2 :—

“Declare ye among the nations and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not; say: Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame, Merodach is dismayed (or broken down): her images are put to shame, her idols are dismayed (or broken down).”

Notwithstanding that Bel and Merodach are here spoken of as though they were different deities, they were really one and the same; for although all the gods of Babylonia were, in their degree, *bēlē* or “lords,” Merodach bore this title in a special sense as *bēl bēlē*, “lord of lords”—chief of all the other gods bearing that title. As a fine Babylonian hymn handed down to us by the Assyrians tells us, he was :—

The merciful one among the gods,  
 The merciful one who loves to give life to the dead—  
 Merodach, king of heaven and earth.  
 King of Babylon, lord of Ê-sagila,  
 King of Ê-zida, lord of Ê-maḥtila,  
 Heaven and earth are thine—  
 Yea, heaven and earth are thine;  
 The charm of life is thine,  
 The philtre of life is thine,  
*Sar-azaggu, gu abzu* (the glorious pronouncement, the word  
 of the Deep), is thine.  
 Mankind, the black-head race (= the Babylonians),  
 The creatures of life, as many as announce a name (and) exist  
 in the land,  
 The regions four as many as exist,  
 The Igigi of the host of heaven and earth, as many as  
 exist—  
 Verily to thee are their ears [directed].

An idealized idolatry, this, which sets up a king of heaven and earth, and makes everything, even the “five-one-one”—the *Igigi*—the five planets and the sun and the moon, subject to him, without acknowledging their likeness to him except by setting the divine prefix before the word. Was it this conception of the lord of creation on the part of the Babylonians which appealed to the Hebrews and led them to look indulgently upon the personality of their chief god? And here it is worthy of note, as the fact has a tendency to be overlooked, that there

were, in ancient times, several statues of gods—seven, or eight, or nine in number—set up at Babylon, near the gate (probably the chief entrance to the city), and each of those gods bore a title. The teacher, we find (or was it the preacher?—the word is broken away) was an image of Nebo;  $\text{𒌦 𒌦 𒌦 𒌦 𒌦}$ , <sup>awetu</sup> *sag-šub-bara*, meaning, among numerous other possible significations, “the chief overthrowing the boundary,” or the like, was the “official title,” as it were, of Nergal, and if this be the rendering it should designate him as god of war—or, perhaps better, unwarranted hostile (surprise) attack. After this comes *mubarrá*, “the discerner,” the title of the god  $\text{𒌦 𒌦 𒌦}$ , <sup>a</sup> *Di-kud*—that is, “judgment-deciding,” in Semitic *dayanu*, “the judge,”—a Babylonian word taken into Hebrew under the form of  $\text{דַּיָּן}$ , *dayan*, used by the Jews even now. Last on the list is the *zazzaku*, the title borne by the god Papilsag, well known to the Assyriological student as the equivalent of Architenens, “the Archer” of the signs of the Zodiac. These divine names occur on the reverse of that well-known tablet first published in the *Journal of the Victoria Institute*, vol. xvi, pp. 8–10—the “monotheistic tablet,” on the obverse of which 14 or more Babylonian deities are identified with Merodach. In this important inscription *Enlil*, or *Illil*, the  $\text{𒂗 𒂗 𒂗}$ , *élil* (plural  $\text{𒂗 𒂗 𒂗}$ , *élimim*, “idols” of the Hebrews), appears as “Merodach of Lordship and counsel”—*Maruduk ša bēlūtu u milūktu*, the last word in the sense, apparently, of reflection and consideration, with a view to the rule either of the heavenly kingdom, which was Merodach’s domain, or any earthly kingdom to whose ruler he might give advice. Though we only know this inscription from the late copy published in the *Journal of this Institute*, I am inclined to think that it dates from the time of the first Dynasty of Babylon—that of Hammurabi—and if this be the case, the monotheistic doctrine contained therein may easily have emanated from “the land of the Amorites,” the Semitic predecessors of the Jews. Upon this point Prof. Clay, of Yale, will probably, later on, enlighten us. He thinks that the Babylonian story of the Flood may have originated with them, and early took on that monotheistic form which Genesis has handed down to us.

But there is no evidence that the Amorites were in any sense monotheists—the identification of all the gods with Merodach was a belief held by those, in the time of the “dynasty of Babylon” (which was, it would seem, a foreign dynasty), who

were in the army of Sumu-abi ("Shem is my father"), the first king. And this suggests the probability that there were in all polytheistic lands a section of the people who did not believe in a multiplicity of gods. Hammurabi, of the foreign dynasty of Babylon, therefore accepted this doctrine of their identification with Merodach and had the tablet declaring it set up after his assumption of regal power in the twentieth century before Christ.

But the Amorites of Palestine did not accept Merodach; they seem to have held to Merodach's predecessor—a sun-god like him—namely, Tammuz. Of all the deities of Semitic heathendom, there is hardly one who has a more interesting mythological career than this favourite of the Palestinian tract and of the women of Israel, for they must have been worshippers of Tammuz long before the women of Jerusalem lamented for him in the court of the temple at Jerusalem, as related by Ezekiel.

The worship of Tammuz goes back to an exceedingly early date, as the name is found in the temple accounts of the time of Lugal-anda and Uru-ka-gina, who reigned at Lagaš about 3,000 years before Christ. The full form of the name Tammuz in the original language, Sumerian, is Dumu-zida, meaning "the true" or "faithful son," probably referring to the belief that he constantly kept his word and went down to pass the winter months of every year with Ereš-ki-gal (Persephone) in the underworld. Though always written *Dumu-zi(da)*, it is contended that the name of the god was pronounced *Tammuz* in Babylonia as well as in the Palestinian tract. From this name, however, that of the fourth month of the Babylonian year, *Du'uzu* (for *Duwuzu*, and this, again, for *Dumu-zi*), Tammuz, was derived, which seems to argue against the pronunciation suggested, except among those Babylonians and Assyrians who came into contact with the Palestinians. Naturally a change in the pronunciation would have obscured the etymology, which must have been known to the scribes.

The first element of the name is easy, *dumu* being the Sumerian word for "child," "son." *Zida*, shortened to *zi*, is probably to be rendered in Semitic Babylonian by a form of the root *kānu*, "to be set, fixed, true, faithful." It also stands for *imnu*, "the right (hand)," which is the Akkadian form of the Hebrew יָמִין, *yāmīn*, with the same meaning. This would make the name Tammuz practically the same in meaning as the Hebrew

בִּן־יְמִין, *Bin-yāmin*, Benjamin, the usual rendering of which is "son of (the) right hand." A right-hand son naturally suggests a faithful supporter, like a master's right-hand man. Other meanings of *zīda* seem to contain the ideas of greatness, height, and splendour.

In view of the importance of this west-Semitic deity I give some of his other names from *Western Asia Inscriptions* II, pl. 59. After mentioning the attendants of the sun-god Šamaš, who were named *Kittu<sup>m</sup>* and *Mēšaru<sup>m</sup>*, "justice and righteousness," we have a dialectic form of the name of Tammuz, *ʿTu-zizi*, explained (though broken here) by the regular form, [*Dumu*]-*zi*, which is carried into the Semitic explanatory column by means of the characters *šu-ma*, "the same," and after this we have another of his names, very rarely found in the inscriptions—<sup>a</sup>*U-libir-si* | <sup>a</sup>*En-ubar-si* | <sup>a</sup>*Dumu-zi*, Tammuz.

The meaning of this three-element name is instructive; it may be rendered as *Bēlu remūta mala*, "the lord filled with grace." As a sun-god, Tammuz is rightly classed, as here, with the attendants of Šamaš, the sun in a general sense, as seen all the year round, and not merely the luminary favouring the growth of the fruits of the earth and the living creatures thereon.

The attraction of the Israelites towards this deity is therefore not to be wondered at, especially when we consider the importance of the solar heat in nature. The lamentation, after the summer solstice, was only what might be expected in a nation surrounded by idolators still more devoted to heathen practices than the Jews. As for the Assyrians and Babylonians, they were influenced likewise by patriotic feelings. Whether the Hebrews used the hymns composed in Babylonia or not is uncertain, but we may imagine that they sang compositions of a similar nature to the extracts which I now quote after subjecting my older renderings to a further revision. The opening lines possibly refer to an enemy of the god:—

The ewe and her lamb he taketh ;  
 The goat and her kid he taketh ;  
 The ewe and her lamb he smiteth down ;  
 The goat and her kid he smiteth down.

---

Arise, then, go, thou hero, the road of No-return.  
 Ah hero—warrior, Lord-physician.  
 Ah hero—my hero, my god Damu.

Ah hero—son—my faithful lord.  
 Ah hero—god Lamga, lord of the outspread net.  
 Ah hero—*libir*, lord of sacrifice.  
 Ah hero—Gu-silim the bright-eyed.  
 Ah hero—thou who art my heavenly light.  
 Ah hero—*Ama-ušû-gal-ana*.<sup>\*</sup>  
 Ah hero—brother, mother, heavenly vine.  
 He goeth, he goeth to the bosom of the earth—  
 He will cause abundance for the land of death.  
 (Variant translation :—The Sun-god hath made him great  
 for the land of death.)

[Neither of these translations, suggested by Assyro-Babylonian scribes, however, seem to give the sense of the original words, which are best transcribed as follows :—

[*û*]-zale    *û*-zale    kur - ušana - šu  
 Daylight, daylight, for the land of death ! ]

The rest of this noteworthy paragraph I translate mainly from the original dialectic Sumerian :—

For the bitter grief, for the day of the descent,†  
 For the unpropitious month of thy year‡ ;  
 For the last road of thy people ;  
 For my acclaiming of the lord—  
 (Thou goest), hero, to the distant unseen land.

In suchwise reads, roughly, the non-Semitic Sumerian text. The Akkadian translation, however, is somewhat as follows :—

Filled with lamentation on the day when he fell and was in  
 grief,  
 In an unpropitious month of his year,  
 To the road of the peoples' end (*or* mankind's rest),  
 At the cry of the lord (*or* my lord),  
 (Thou goest), hero, to the distant land which is not seen.

It is strange that the Akkadians should not have known exactly how to translate these remarkable lamentations, but such seems to have been the case. The wording, however,

\* "Mother, great unique one (of) heaven."

† To the underworld.

‡ The month Tammuz.

suggests that there was some mysterious meaning in them, but this we have not time to deal with ; it is enough to include here these few specimens, even though the renderings may not be altogether satisfactory.

It is naturally difficult to get away from the subject of the god Tammuz—his worship was so general in the Palestinian tract, as well as in Babylonia, and so many books have been written about it, from the Italian monograph of Lenormant to Sir James Frazer's noteworthy work, that any discussion of the importance of the cult in a paper such as the present is bound to give but a faint idea of its popularity—indeed, Tammuz seems to have become in Palestine almost like a national deity. In Babylonia, on the other hand, he was largely superseded by that more glorious sun-god, Merodach, whose worship seems not to have prevailed in the extreme west of Asia.

The heathen worship of the national god of the Babylonians seems, moreover, not to have affected the Israelites either ; but notwithstanding this, it is needful to say something about it here. As I have already pointed out, the Jews were inclined to identify the chief of the Babylonian pantheon with Jahwah or Jehovah. But in stating this, I do not mean that they regarded Merodach as a separate deity from Jehovah ; it was simply his name in another language.

Concerning Merodach and his merciful nature I have already spoken (p. 12), and a few examples of the worship addressed to him by the Babylonians may be of interest. It appears on Plate XXIX of Craig's *Religious Texts* :—

I will celebrate thy name (O) Merodach, the mighty one of the gods, governor of heaven and earth,

Who, having been well created, is alone supreme.

---

Thou bearest now heavenly divinity, sovereignty, power of uniting (?), royalty,

Thou embracest all wisdom, perfect in strength.

---

Beloved, counsellor, supreme prince, powerful, magnified,

He has caused his dominion to be glorious, he has prepared resistance—even A[nu ?].

---

In heaven thou art supreme, in earth thou art king, able in wisdom.

Fixing the totality of the habitations, holding the ends of the firmament and of the e[arth].

Thou now art made great among the gods, the image he hath created for thee Nudimmud hath [set]—

He who hath caused thee to hold the fates of the great gods set in thine hands.

He hath caused (them) to kiss they feet, they have spoken, they have blessed (thee), (even) the[y].

Here the text becomes defective, and though there are many more lines worth notice, I refrain from continuing the translation owing to its length. It will be seen, however, that though the other gods of the Babylonian pantheon are recognized, Me. odach was, among the Babylonians, the supreme deity and lord of the universe. In this sense the Israelites regarded themselves justified in using his name as the equivalent of Jehovah.

Concerning the worship of the Assyro-Babylonian gods in Palestine we get but little information from the Old Testament. In the case of Baal, based upon Phœnician practices, or the Baalized worship of Jehovah, the places of worship were on the hill-tops, and among the trees. Here were to be found *Ashêras*, or wooden poles or masts of unknown shape, and possibly carved or draped in some distinctive way. Or a *massêbah*—either a single stone or a heap of stones, may have been set up to indicate the sacred nature of the place. At the accompanying altars offerings of the fruits of the earth and of the flocks were made; as to the rites performed, it is not my intention here to describe them. They had their own priests and prophets, and on the more important ceremonial occasions these leapt upon the altar, calling upon the god to show his power, and trying to induce him to do so by gashing themselves with knives. How far the out-door ceremonies of the Babylonians may have followed the same lines it is impossible to say, but the solemnity and decorum of their temple-worship was in many cases undoubted, even in the strange ritual which follows:—

3. . . . dust of the shrine of the dust-god of the great gate;

4. dust of the crossways (?) of the regions (or of dusts), dust of the divine dove ;
5. who (is) Azaga the four-winged (?), dust of *ašammeti* (?) ;
6. dust of the prostitute's gate, dust of the night-gate ;
7. dust of the recruiter's gate, dust of the palace-gate ;
8. dust of the orchard(?) -gate, dust of the *sabû*-gate, dust of the road ;
9. dust of the orchardman's gate, dust of the carpenter's gate—these dusts,
10. all of them, thou shalt crush, thou shalt mingle in the river(-water),
11. cypress-oil in the midst thou shalt pour (?), the gate of the house of the . . .
12. thou shalt prepare a platform, pour out pure (or holy) water,\* thou shalt set up a GAB-reed† before Ištar ;
13. 12 foods thou shalt apportion, food of oil thou shalt pour out, honey (and) cream thou shalt set on,
14. dates (and) rice(?) flour thou shalt heap up, a brazier‡ of cypress thou shalt set on,
15. A wether (or) a ewe thou shalt raise on to the platform, at its end
16. thou shalt tie it, and thou shalt place§ it on the right of the brazen image, (and) thus (the minister) shall say :—
17. " Ištar, Nanaa, and Kasbaya,||
18. unto it (*i.e.*, the house) be helpful." This he shall say, and
19. the word of his heart he shall pronounce, and [i]n the house of the *sabû*
20. he shall write. That house in future days will be happy.
21. INCANTATION: Ištar, the mighty one of the great gods,
22. Exalted, brilliant, warlike Ištar,

---

\* *Mé elliti*, written  $\text{𐎶} \text{𐎶} \text{𐎶} \text{𐎶} \text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ , *a azagga*.

† Possibly a substitute for the W. Semitic *ashērah*.

‡ Martin: *cassolette*, " perfume-box," " perfume-burner " (censor), *niknakku*.

§ The scribe's original evidently had  $\text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ , which he could not understand. He has therefore written  $\text{𐎶}$  under this group, making  $\text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ , *tašahk-an*, " thou shalt place," the reading adopted here.

|| Martin: *Gazbá*.

23. Dominating, grand, Irnini, the lordly,
24. To me be helpful, thou createst and thou protectest,
25. Divinity of the people, goddess of men,
26. My counterpart of the people, my august one, Ištar,
27. Daughter of Anu, offspring of the great gods,
28. Giver of sceptre, throne, [and rule] to [all the rulers].

Here the obverse breaks off. Of the reverse the remains of eight lines are preserved, and read as follows :—

2. Thou shalt set up a GAB-reed . . . .
3. A censor of cypress thou shalt place . . . .
4. Thou shalt repeat the incantation 7 times, and [put on] a woollen garment, . . . .
5. Into the water thou shalt pour. [Thou shalt repeat] the incantation 7 [times,]
6. The gate of the house thou shalt sprinkle, and [the slaughter ?]
7. Of an ox thou shalt make and [shalt set it] beneath a *hare*-[oven ?]

8. If a man (by) seal and the killing of a sheep, the driving (?) of a sheep to the river . . . .
9. Tablet CXXXVth (of the series) *Nambur-bi*.

Notwithstanding its tedious length, this is one of the most interesting of the ritual tablets from Babylonia which the Assyrians have preserved to us. The collection of dust from the various places trodden by the feet of all the classes of men of which the writer of the text speaks is doubtless intended to symbolize the offering's benefit to all the inhabitants of the land, who naturally had a right to make use of it. In more than one passage in the Old Testament men are compared with dust, either because of its evanescence, or the impossibility of numbering its particles. Dust and water, however, formed part of the ceremony of the jealousy-test (Numbers v, 17 ff.)—analogous, but very different in its intention, to that of the Assyro-Babylonian Text here translated.\* The mixing of the watered dust with oil was followed by the setting up of a

\* In Lev. xiv, 41, where the dust was scraped away from an infected house, this was simply done as a scientific measure.

platform, and the offering of the fruits of the earth, a wether, and a ewe, thereon. When reading this part we realize that these preparations were connected with the asking of a blessing on what seems to have been a new house for the *sabû*—an unknown official, but possibly a vine-dresser. In the course of this invocation-ceremony Istar (Ashtoreth), Nanaa, and Kasbaya were invoked. A noteworthy point in the address to these deities, however, is that the imperative verb contained therein is in the singular—perhaps because they were all regarded as indicating the same goddess, and therefore a single person. From its form, Kasbaya should be a gentilic noun, but, if so, its ending is masculine—for the feminine we should expect *Kasbaitu<sup>m</sup>* instead of *Kasbaya*.

The goddesses having been invoked, the celebrant had apparently to write something of the nature of a blessing or good wishes on his own account, and place it in the *sabû's* house. Then follows the incantation to Istar, giving her all the honorific terms to which she was entitled.

One of the most interesting references to the gods of Assyria—mythological creations worshipped first of all by the Babylonians—is in that interesting and characteristic passage in 2 Kings xvii, where it is recorded that the king of Assyria imported men from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to the cities of Samaria to replace the exiled children of Israel. The new-comers, finding themselves a prey to the lions which infested Samaria, appealed to the king of Assyria to be taught the way of the god of the land, who, they believed, had control over the beasts, and could prevent their attacks. He therefore sent an Israelitish priest to teach them, and they combined the worship of their own gods with that of the worship of Jehovah.

“The men of Babylon made Sukkoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima.

“And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.”

As there is no proof that Sepharvaim was Sippara of the Sun-god and of Anunitu<sup>m</sup>, the identification of Adrammelech and Anammelech with the deities worshipped there is seemingly impossible, and Nibhaz and Tartak, worshipped by the Avites, were probably not Babylonian gods either. There remain,

then, only two deities with which we have to deal—Succoth-benoth and Nergal. As Succoth-benoth was worshipped by the men of Babylon, I conjectured some years ago that this must have been a name of Merodach, the god of the city, and published in the *International Bible Encyclopædia* a suggestion that the name should really be read *Sakut ban wâthi*, a variant for *Dikut ban mâti* (as Assyriologists would transcribe the words), the whole meaning “Sakut (for *Dikut*, the Judge), creator of the land”—a good title of Merodach. When writing this paper, however, I asked myself: Why not return to the old explanation that Succoth-benoth is a phrase, and means what it seems to mean—“Booths of daughters,” or “maidens”? We all know the reputation of the Babylonians when it came to the worship of Ištar; Herodotus tells us all about it, as does also the *Epistle of Jeremy*, appended to the Book of Baruch. In this the women with cords about them, sitting in the ways, are described. And as many of them had to sit there a long time, it is not improbable that wooden booths were constructed for them, as a protection against the sun and the rain. In this case we may imagine that the King of Assyria deported to Samaria the more undesirable portion of the population of Babylon, who at once set up the most immoral of the customs connected with the worship of Ištar of Babylon there. But is it likely that they would have done this to the neglect of the worship of the king of the gods, the merciful Merodach, he who loved the giving of life? Besides, “booths of daughters” could hardly be objects of worship. There is still something to be said, then, for *Sakut ban wâthi* as these exiles’ way of saying *Sakut bani mâti*. Friedrich Delitzsch’s comparison of Succoth with the Babylonian divine name *Sakkut* is rendered improbable by the fact that it does not designate one of the great gods of Babylonia, but simply one of the attendant-deities of Anu, the god of the heavens.

Clearer, and therefore more interesting, is the name of the god of Cuth, otherwise Cuthah, that interesting city about 18 miles north-east of Babylon. This site, which is now known as *Tel-Ibrahim*, “the mound of Abraham,” was that of one of the primæval cities of Babylonia, and its Akkadian name, *Kutî*, is derived from the original Sumerian form,  *Gudu*<sup>ki</sup>. Its patron-god was, as indicated in 2 Kings xvii, 30, Nergal, the great deity of the underworld, who ruled there with

his spouse Ereš-ki-gal, the queen of that region before he became her consort. Nergal was conceived as a lion-headed god, probably to indicate his warlike character, and he was also the god of plague, disease, and death. As "lord of the grave" (𒍪 𒀭𒍪 𒀭𒍪 𒀭𒍪, *ša qabri*) he was *Ne-eri-gal*, "ruler of the great abode"—the place where all those who have departed this life await the day of bliss. As 𒍪 𒀭𒍪, *U-Gur*, "the lord who turns," he was *Nergal ša bayāti*, "Nergal of inspecting," doubtless because he went about the earth and the underworld seeking those chosen for the fate to which they were destined—death or the reward of a well-spent life, as the Babylonians understood that term.

A great deal more could be written about Nergal, the Babylonian god of the underworld. His names are very numerous, and there is one of them which arouses our curiosity. His temple at Cuthah was called *Ē-mešlum*, "the house of the palm-growth," or the like, and he himself therefore bore the name of *Nešlam-ta-ēa*, "he who came forth from the palm-growth." As the plague-god, smiting at random, and seemingly without cause, he might be likened to the god of the assassin, striking down by a chance shaft from a bow. But could he be described as coming forth from the wood of that bow? It seems doubtful, and we may, therefore, have to look for some romantic legend concerning him—one of the series of the legends of the gods, like those of Merodach or Tammus, or En-urta, "the lord from the beam," who was also a god of battle, differing, probably, from Nergal in that he was advocate of conflict in fair fight and military strategy.

The literature concerning Nergal is of some extent, though far from equalling that referring to Merodach. As a specimen I select an extract from what reads somewhat like a litany, though in all probability it should be regarded as a simple liturgical text:—

(Priest:) Leader, whose face is bright, the shining mouth of the powerful fire-god [illuminateth him].

(People:) Nergal, leader, whose face is bright, etc.

(Priest:) The lusty son beloved of the heart of Enlil, the great director [of the world].

(People:) Nergal, the lusty son, etc.

(Priest:) Prince of the great gods, [who spreadeth] fear and awe.

(People:) Nergal, prince, etc.

(Priest :) Giant of the Anunnaki, who [spreadeth] terrible awe [over all the lands].

(People :) Nergal is the giant, etc.

(Priest :) Lord, supreme head-raiser, beloved of Ê-kura, the record of whose name [overcometh evil].

(People :) Nergal is the supreme lord, etc.

(Priest :) High one of the great gods, who [holdeth] sceptre and judgment [over the land].

(People :) Nergal is the high one, etc.

(Priest :) Dragon sublime, who poureth out venom over them (*i.e.*, the hostile lands).

(People :) Nergal, dragon sublime, etc.

(Priest :) His bright (?) image terrifieth the powerful demons right and l[eft].

(People :) Nergal, his (bright) image, etc.

(Priest :) The long arm whose blow (*i.e.*, disease) is invisible, [smiteth] the evil one with his arm.

(People :) Nergal, the long arm, etc.

(Priest :) [Great Nergal] at the sound of whose foot the house of the worthy [is not disturbed].

(People :) Nergal, great god, etc.

The remainder of this striking address to the god of disease and strife is mutilated, but enough is left to show what it was like. In the above rendering I have attempted a completion of the defective lines wherever needed, but these restorations must be taken as merely provisional, and a more perfect copy is needed to give a really good rendering. The indications (Priest) and (People) are also mine.

Another important reference to the worship of a god of the Assyrian pantheon is that connected with the death of Sennacherib. The following is the rendering of the Revised Version of 2 Kings xix, 36, where, after recording the Assyrian retreat from Jerusalem, the murder of Sennacherib is described :—

“ And the king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adram-melech and Sharezer (his sons) smote him with the sword : and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.”

Nisroch has always been a puzzling name for Assyriologists, as no deity so called appears in the numerous lists of divine names handed down to us by the Assyrians. The Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint version, however, give *Esdrach*, *Esthrach*, *Nassarach*, and *Asarach*, whilst the Vulgate has *Nesroch*, just as it has *Nemrod* for *Nimrod* in Genesis x, 10. It is, therefore, certain that the initial *M* is not original, and of the forms given I am of opinion that *Asarach* is the best. Now *Nimrod* is for *Nimrodach* or *Amarodach* (*Merodach*), and it looks as though the termination had been taken off the earlier name to place on the later one. This would transform *Asarach* into *Asar*, for *Aš(š)ur*, the well-known national god of Assyria. I must admit, however, that this form *Asarach* may not, after all, be due to the scribes of the Septuagint (and the Hebrew) versions—it may be owing to Assyrian pedantism, for as the name of the god *Aššur* was very often written with the characters 𐎶 𐎠, *An-šar*—the group given, in the Babylonian lists and the Story of the Creation, as expressing the divine “host of heaven”—it is possible that it had once a fuller form, namely, *Anšarak*, which, when the Assyrians adopted this ideographic group, became one of its readings, and furnished the alternative pronunciation. In connection with this it is to be noted, that *Aššur* has become *Esar* in *Esar-haddon*, the Hebrew form of the name of Sennacherib’s son, who succeeded him.

Nisroch being thus identified, I give here a translation of a dedication which Sennacherib made to his god in the temple E-šarra at Aššur. If this referred to a temple of Aššur at Nineveh one might imagine that the tragedy took place in that city. As it is, the exact locality is doubtful, for 2 Kings xxx, 37, does not give it. It is not impossible, however, that Sennacherib may have used, or intended to use, some of the phrases contained in this dedication, and we may take it as giving good examples of his literary style. In any case, the wording of this address is in some cases noteworthy :—

To Aššur, king of the host of the gods, creator of himself, father of the gods,

whose personality grew up within the Deep, king of the heavens and the earth.

Lord of the gods totally, he who assembleth the Igigi and the Anunnaki,

he who hath created the heaven of Anu and the world beneath, maker of all the settlements (of men).

He who dwelleth in the glorious firmament, Enlil of the gods,  
fixer of fates,

he who dwelleth in Ê-šarra, which is within Aššur, the great  
lord, his lord, [Sennach]erib,

king of Assyria, maker of the image of Aššur, the great god  
[f]or [the preservation of his life],

the lengthening of his days, the good of his heart, the establish-  
ment of his reign . . . . .

a *liles* of massive copper, the work . . . . .

which by the art of the god Igi-duggu . . . . .

artistically he has had made for . . . . .

and the repose of his heart . . . . .

day 5th, day 7th . . . . .

and the festival . . . . .

Here the text comes to an end. The copy which I have had  
to use is that of Prof. Craig, and, excellent though it is, there  
are a few doubtful details of it which I should have liked to  
revise—perhaps I may be able to do this when brighter weather  
comes.

By way of comment it may be noted that the name of Aššur  
is written →† ◈,\* the group which, at that time, was seemingly  
pronounced *Aššar*, for *Anšar*. The god Aššur differs from Merodach  
in many ways, but mainly in the belief that, whilst Merodach  
was seemingly begotten, Aššur created himself, as well as the  
world and the universe as the Assyrians conceived it. In fact,  
the chief of the Assyrian pantheon was more like a supreme deity  
than even the Babylonian Merodach. Noteworthy, too, is his  
title “*Enlil* of the gods”—the word which, under the form *Ellil*,  
was borrowed by the Hebrews.† Ê-šarra, the temple in the city  
of Aššur where Sennacherib dedicated the image, means “the  
house of the host,” probably because a number of other gods were  
worshipped there. It seems likely that Ê-šarra was the most  
important, or at least the most renowned, temple in the city of  
Aššur, and the tale of its gods would be the first in any list drawn  
up. Unfortunately, the first section of the text printed in  
*Western Asia Inscriptions*, III, pl. 66, is imperfect, but it  
contains a lengthy list of the gods worshipped at one of the  
city’s great sanctuaries, and we gather from it that Aššur was

\* See p. 25.

† See p. 13.

worshipped in this temple under many forms. In line 14 his name occurs between those of *Dagan* (Dagon) and *Āgû*; and in line 18 the sun-god *Šamaš* seems to be described as "Aššur, he who captures" (*kašidu*). As, however, I have already overrun my space, I cannot examine this list at greater length, so at present will only say that in other sections the names *Laban* and *Išmelâ* (Ishmael), one of the judges of the temple of Aššur, occur with the divine prefix; also we find the gods *Šalmanu* (Shalman), *Malik* (identified with Moloch), *Amurrû* (the Amorite), etc., and many combined forms. I should have liked to deal with some of these names, though they are not always really subject to my title—and to these I must add Hadad and Abil-Addu, or Ablada (Ben-Hadad the god, not the Syrian king)—but these must be for another time.

Though my paper is far from perfect, it may have had one useful effect, as it shows the action of the ancient religions of the ancient Near East upon each other, and how, though the Hebrews may have been tempted to heathenism, there were among the heathen of that tract and elsewhere men who were tempted to, and even embraced, monotheism. We may, indeed, say that within heathenism itself in those days there was a tendency to higher things.

#### APPENDIX.

The following inscription, which has some bearing on the subject of ceremonies, with which the above monograph deals, was given to the author by Mr. F. S. Rudler, I.S.O., Curator of the Museum of Practical Geology, many years ago. This record, which, from internal evidence, comes from Abu-Habbah (Sippar), is unfortunately mutilated, but the general drift can be gathered with considerable probability. Although there was ample room for further details (the reverse being unincised), there is no date, but it may be as early as the time of Nabopolassar (626 B.C. or later). It has a parallel in one of the late Assyrian letters, which describes a ceremony (or ceremonies, in which torches were carried, and in which the king (Assurbanipal) was to take part.

*Transcription.*

1. [a-we-lu-tu<sup>m</sup>?] ša Bêl-âhê-iki-ša D.P. ki-i-pi Ê-babba-ra
2. [Šamaš]-uballiṭ (?) D.P. šangu Sip-par<sup>ki</sup> D.P. TU-MAL<sup>d.</sup> Šamaš
3. [a-šib?] Ê-babba-ra Warad-<sup>d.</sup>A-nu-ni-tu<sup>m</sup> D.P. si-pir
4. [ša B]êlit A-kad<sup>ki</sup> u D.P. ki-na-ul-tu<sup>m</sup> Ê-ul-maš
5. . . . . -nu âbli-šu-ša [Nabû-ušur]-šu Nabû-âbla-ušur
6. [abti-šu sa<sup>m</sup>] šum (?) -ukîn Šamaš-êtir âbli-šu ša Le'u-<sup>d.</sup>Tu-tu
7. . . . . ina paḥari iq-ṭa-bu-u um-ma Ūmu êšraia-šina
8. [ûma êšraia-šalša u ūmu] êšraia-irbu ša warah Šabaṭi D.P. la-mu-ta-nu
9. [ša . . . . . âbli]-šu ša Bêl-ušallim ṭi-pa-ri a-na muḥ-ḥi
10. . . . . -tu<sup>m</sup> u-ša-et-ti-qu ni-il-te-mu.

*Free Rendering.*

[The staff] of Bêl-âhê-ikiša, Governor of Ê-babbara; . . . scribe of Sippar, priest of the Sun-god [who dwelleth] in Ê-babbara; Warad-Anunitu<sup>m</sup>, secretary of the [house of the Lady of Akkad, and the staff of Ê-ulmaš, said to . . . -nu, son of [Nabû-ušur]-šu; Nabû-âbla-ušur, son of Šum(?) -ukîn; Šamaš-êtir(?), son of Lê'u-Tutu, [and . . . ], in the assembly, thus: "(On) the 22nd, [23rd, and] 24th days of Sebat, the eunuchs [of . . . ], son of Bêl-ušallim, will carry round the torches upon the . . . . We have been round."

The only uncommon word is *kinaltu<sup>m</sup>*, possibly from *kanāšu*, "to bow down," implying obeisance and service. As *rabû-ša-rêši*, "great one of the chiefs," or "head-men," was apparently a

military title—he seems to have been a eunuch—*rabsaris*—I am inclined to regard *lamutanu* (“not men” or “not husbands”) as including “eunuchs.” The hairless priests of the cylinder-seals were seemingly shaven as a mark of their office, but this was probably not a universal custom either in Assyria or Babylonia. Beardless eunuchs, if admitted to the priestly offices, possibly occupied a different position from that of their uncastrated colleagues.

Ê-babbara is the usual transcription of 𒂍 𒂗 𒂍 𒂗, “house of light,” the temple of the sun at Sippara, and Ê-ulmaš was a kindred shrine. Judging from *Cuneiform Texts from Bab. Tablets*, xxiv, 11 and 24 (lines 64 f.), the god Ulmaš was one of the 𒂗-𒂗 𒂗-𒂗 𒂗-𒂗, *Gubba*, of Ê-kura, probably the temple of that name at Nippur or Niffer, the city identified with the Coluch of Gen. x, 10, by the Jews of Rabbinical times.

Whether there is an analogy in the ceremony here referred to with the “smoking furnace” and the “lamp of fire” in Gen. xv, 17, is uncertain.

#### DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN, in moving a vote of thanks to Professor Pinches, suggested that, under the impressions conveyed by the lecture, it should now be profitable for instructed Christian people to go through the Old Testament afresh, and note the many places in which the jealousy of the God of Israel is expressed in regard to the worship of idols. It will be seen that, in the midst of the chosen people such worship was denounced as an abomination, while among the surrounding nations it was a thing of vanity—from Merodach downward the divinities were “gods that were no gods,” “gods of earth,” the creation of human perversity and folly.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES thanked the learned lecturer for his scholarly and interesting paper.

As to the origins of idolatry, there were four principal sources :—

1. The worship of the sun, moon and stars, or Sabeanism ;
2. The reverence paid to the perverted symbols of the Cherubim, the winged man-headed bulls and lions of Assyria ;
3. Ancestor worship—Nimrod and others ;
4. The deification of human passions, as in the worship of Greece and Rome.

A good history of caricature had not yet been written—the images of the gods of Egypt were often caricatures of Divine attributes. Men had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images of corruptible man, of four-footed beasts and creeping things (scarabs, etc.); and Israel, too, alas! changed their glory into the similitude of a calf.

The gods of Egypt had caricatured and debased the teaching of the Patriarchs. Professor J. G. Fraser's books ignored this sad perversion of Divine Revelation. Myths and legends were often corruptions of primitive truth—and not the original source of true religious ideas.

Mr. THEODORE ROBERTS thanked Professor Pinches for informing us of many things which we should not otherwise have known, and likened him to the engineer who made the road across the Alps whereby Napoleon took his hungry and ragged soldiers down to the rich plains of Italy. Mr. Roberts thought we could learn most from the paper by contrast, and instanced the absurdity of the god who was said to have created himself in comparison with our God who covered Himself with light as with a garment (Ps. civ, 2).

He pointed out that Joshua, speaking in the name of Jehovah, three times over told the Israelites that their fathers, even Terah, the father of Abraham, had served "other gods" (that is, idols) beyond the river (Euphrates) (Joshua xxiv, 2, 14, 15); so that the knowledge of the true God which Abraham brought from Ur to Canaan appeared to have been the result of a revelation made to him. This was the first mention of idols in the Bible, save the prohibitions of the Law; and the last, according to the historical order of the books, was found in the last verse of the first Epistle of John—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—where our Lord Jesus Christ was presented as the alternative.

It was in contrast to idols that God was thrice described in the New Testament as the true (or real) God, namely, the Father, in the earliest Christian writing (1 Thess. i, 9) and our Lord's high-priestly prayer (John xvii, 3), and the Son in 1 John v, 20. The Son is there described as the real or "very" God, because all that can be known of God is set forth in Him, He being God. He is there also described as the Eternal Life—that is, the ideal Man, namely, all that man can be for God. It is only by undivided

loyalty to His Person that we can be kept from idolatry in its present subtle, and, therefore, more dangerous, forms.

Lieut.-Colonel G. MACKINLAY writes: "This is a very valuable paper. Bearing in mind that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, it is reasonable to expect that some relationship exists between the religion of the Jews and that of the Babylonians. It is of interest to know that modern Jews (p. 13) still use a word which is derived from the Old Babylonian language, and also that the Babylonians, and even more the Assyrians, recognized a supreme God who occupied a leading pre-eminence among all their gods or idols (pp. 11, 17, 18, 26).

"The Japanese have a tradition that Jews came to this country many centuries ago, and the Afghans to the North of India possess many resemblances in features and in habits to the Hebrews. On the first page of this paper our author speaks of nations of the *Near East*; one is led to ask him if any resemblances to the worship of Jehovah can be found in any other of the religions of Asia.

"Perhaps the Professor will tell us in the future paper at which he hints on p. 27, which we much hope he will give us ere long."

#### AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I am glad to have the clear statement of the Rev. J. J. B. Coles with regard to the four forms of idolatry. There is no doubt that the Babylonians and Assyrians were great sinners (they ought to be pardoned, for they knew no better) in worshipping the heavenly bodies. The identification of Merodach with Jupiter, Ištār with Venus, etc., shows how they desired to honour their gods, and it is very probable that these identifications go back to a period earlier than the foundation of the Sabean states. Whether ancestor-worship, and the deification of kings and heroes, goes back to an earlier date than the worship of the heavenly bodies is uncertain, but the glories of the Eastern skies, seen by the Babylonians from the earliest ages, must have suggested to the men of those days that the changeless starry host, if not the gods themselves, were at least their symbols.

Yes, from our point of view, the Egyptian mystic and often abhorrent images of the gods whom they worshipped were certainly caricatures. In this respect the Babylonians were very moderate,

and it is mainly on the boundary-stones that animal-symbols of the gods whom they worshipped are seen. How far these were adopted by the Israelites we do not know, but they were probably well acquainted with them. The name of Merodach means "the steer of day," but I do not remember having ever seen that god represented as a steer. The cuneiform character for Šamaš originally represented the sun's disc, and this we find on the cylinder-seals, often accompanied by the crescent of the moon. In connection with this it is to be noted that, as Professor Garstang has pointed out, the Ottoman crescent and star, which serve as their national symbols, and are found on their flag, are a modification of the Babylonian sun's disc within the moon's crescent, as found on these same Babylonian cylinder-seals.

Egyptian overcharged symbolism is repellent to us, but there is much to be said about symbolism in general, and we ought not to despise it—even the symbolism of the heathen Assyro-Babylonians. But that is a subject for future treatment.

It is needless to say that I thank Mr. Theodore Roberts for his kindly and appreciative remarks. I feel that I am not worthy to be compared with the great imperial general whose masterly leadership he instances, but this I can say, that there are pastures richer far than those to which I have led you—or, rather, than those of which I have given you a glimpse. All members of this Institute will, I am sure, be gratified with Mr. Roberts's comments and quotations—quotations which recall to our minds so many interesting and acceptable passages of the Testaments, both the Old and the New. One of the most attractive subjects with which I should have liked to deal is that of the signs of the Zodiac and the Sumerian names of the months, but this would have entailed too long a study. Many a legend, however, is probably connected with their origin. Of special interest, also, is the legend (may I use the word ?) of the dragon Rahab.

I am much obliged to our Chairman, Dr. Thirtle, for his kind remarks, as well as for the appreciative words of those who have joined in the discussion. I also thank Lieut.-Colonel G. Mackinlay for his interesting letter. If I can make the tablet of divine names referred to on p. 27 really interesting—as interesting as it is important—that, too, might be dealt with along with other lists of heathen divinities.