

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1900.

EGYPTIAN AND BABYLONIAN RELIGION
AND MYTHOLOGY.*Books on Egypt and Chaldaea. Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life; Egyptian Magic.* By E. A. Wallis Budge, M.A., Litt.D., D.Lit. 2 vols.*Babylonian Religion and Mythology.* By L. W. King, M.A., F.S.A. 1 vol. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

THE delightful certainty which characterises the youth of an individual not infrequently finds its analogue in the initial phases of a science. At the outset assertion is dogmatic inversely to the evidence, and the flimsiest figments are made to serve as the basis of the widest generalisations. Maturity brings with it a curious restriction of certitude, but for this there is a compensation in the knowledge that for the faith which we do hold there is an adequate reason. Thus it has long been the custom to regard the religion of ancient Egypt as a tissue of the grossest idolatry, and this amongst persons who were not, in general, ill-informed. To such a view the education of the public school and the university has largely contributed, and those who were contented to mould their opinions upon classic authorities would be apt to remember nothing more than Juvenal's telling gibes, which practically epitomise the creed as that of the ape and onion. Whatever the poet's personal views may have been, those which the exigencies of his satire led him to express are far removed from the truth or, at least, they state it so partially as to be wholly misleading; and it may come as a surprise to many to learn the magnitude of the libel. As a matter of fact, the ideas and beliefs of the Egyptians concerning God closely approximated to those of the Hebrews, and of the Muhammadans at a later period; and they arrived at conceptions of man's immortality for which we look in vain in the Jewish record, and which we only re-encounter in the teaching of the Christian churches.

Dr. Budge emphasises the fact that an exalted monotheism was the basis of the theology and religion of ancient Egypt, and that it persisted throughout its historic periods with a tendency ever increasingly assertive. God was one, self-existent, immortal, invisible, eternal, omniscient, almighty and inscrutable; the creator of the heavens, the earth, and of all things visible and invisible. But long as the period was during which this noble creed was held, there was unquestionably a time prior to its evolution when a more primitive conception prevailed, and when the beliefs of the people were probably similar to those of existing savages: when family and tribal gods were worshipped whose characteristics were those of their adorers, and whom a victory or a defeat raised to supremacy or relegated to oblivion. It has been observed that three main elements may be recognised in the Egyptian religion. A solar monotheism, or a god specially manifested in the sun; the worship of the regenerating powers of nature or the adoration of ithyphallic deities; and an anthropomorphic divinity; but the sequence in time of these phases of

faith is doubtful, and they ultimately became intermingled in a most bewildering manner. Where such uncertainty exists we must rest satisfied with a suspension of judgment; but it may be reasonable to assume that the less exalted views were formulated before those of a higher type; that the earlier notions acquired from their antiquity a sanctity which led to their retention; and that ecclesiastical conservatism was responsible for that grotesque admixture of puerile superstitions, both in faith and practice, which disfigured the higher faith to such an extent as to cause strangers to regard it as the essential element of that purer religion by which it had been supplanted. This curious grafting of views has an apt illustration in the picture symbol for the supreme being, who is figured by a stone axe-head in a wooden handle, a reminiscence of the time when their god was but a magnified chief, and when the wielder of the biggest war-axe being the person of prime consideration, an image of the weapon was a recognised emblem of power and sovereignty. Apart from these survivals, the very piety of the worshippers served to enhance the number of the gods, for the sun-god, himself the type and symbol of the supreme deity, found his every form, phase and attribute deified, until so strangely complex a pantheon was set up that the protogod was almost whelmed by the sanctifications of himself.

In spite of this seeming multiplication of entities, the unity of God is constantly reiterated; and if, as may well have been, this truth was hidden from the perception of the vulgar crowd, we may believe that to the educated layman, as well as to the priest, it was an ever-present fact. The pure and unthinkable spirit which formed the subject of their devout adoration dwelt originally in the darkly-shrouded water of the primeval abyss. Thence, by uttering his own name, he evolved himself; whilst from the void, the world sprang into existence, after the type which was pre-existent in the divine mind. Following this creative act was the production of the germ from which emerged that embodiment of the power of God, the holy Ra, whose attributes were subsequently annexed by that great Osiris, who for ages was the ensample and comfort of aspirants to immortality. It is curious that no comprehensive account of the career of Osiris has been found in the Egyptian records, and that we depend upon Plutarch for a connected history. This, as it is confirmed by various Egyptian inscriptions, may be outlined as follows:—Osiris was the offspring of Nut by Seb, and was the husband of his sister Isis. As King of Egypt, he advanced civilisation; taught the art of agriculture; and exhorted men to worship the gods, both in his own and other lands. On his return from foreign proselytising, he was slain by the machinations of Set, who repossessed himself of the body, after it had been obtained by Isis, and tore it to pieces. The fragments, with a single exception, were recovered and buried by Isis, who instituted a special festival in honour of the missing portion. By divine assistance Isis obtained such a revivification of Osiris that, by him, she became the mother of Horus, who was, later, his father's avenger. Of the exact position which in prehistoric days was occupied by Osiris we are ignorant; but, in all later times, he was regarded as a being of divine origin, who was killed and mutilated by

the powers of evil, and who rose again to become King of the Underworld and judge of the dead. He represented the idea of one who, though a god, had been a man who had suffered and died, and who was, therefore, in full sympathy with human beings in their own time of trial and death. As his flesh had not seen corruption, so was he the cause of mortals being born again, and the righteous who followed his ensample might, with the help of the gods, secure a resurrection to everlasting life, and dwell with him in his kingdom.

In this way Osiris, from being the example of a man raised from the dead, became himself the cause of the resurrection and the bestower of eternal life, and it is needless to say that his ever-increasing popularity finally raised him to the position of the quasi-national God. He gradually assumed the attributes of the cosmic deities and even of the creator; and thus making himself his father's equal, he reigned beside him in Heaven as the divine source of all things. It is sufficiently evident that the growth of such conceptions must have been gradual, and that prior to their formulation the condition of the disembodied spirit must have been largely problematic. It was then, no doubt, regarded as a spook which it was as well to banish from the precincts of the living; and those mutilations and cremations of corpses which were originally practised may have been intended to coerce the spirit into an abandonment of his old habitation. With the belief in a resurrection a new order of ideas arose, and, far from a desire to destroy the body, every means was sought for its preservation. The outcome of the new dogma was that wonderful system of mummification with which we are familiar, but the adoption of which, in view of the strongly expressed declaration that immortality was confined to the spiritual body, is somewhat inexplicable. It may be that the primary conception of the resurrection was that of the physical body, and that the spiritualisation of the tenet was a subsequent modification; in which case the later retention of the practice would be due to the ever observable reluctance of man to change the procedures associated with the crises of his existence. Another explanation may be found in the fact that the spiritual body derived its existence from the physical body through the prayers and ceremonies of the funeral rites. There are various pictures representing the departed soul as hovering in proximity to the mummied corpse, of which, possibly, it could but gradually acquire the characteristics. Were that the case, the necessity for a prolonged retention intact of the senseless clay is intelligible in order to afford ample time for the intended assimilation whereby the mortal put on immortality. Be this as it may, by whatever process the spiritual body acquired its existence, it was called upon to answer for the deeds done in the flesh: the heart, as the seat of being, was literally weighed in the balance, and woe to its possessor were it found wanting. Then the deceased had to declare himself innocent of forty-two specific transgressions contained in a catalogue which is so skilfully compiled to include every possible wickedness, that it must have been very difficult to sin outside it. Either, then, the gods failed to verify their facts, or, unless they differed considerably from the men and women of to-day, the number of the Egyptian elect must have been infinitesimal. The

final admittance to Elysium was further hindered by a series of perplexing interrogatories—floor and threshold—hasp and socket each in turn propounded its riddle to the aspiring soul; an ordeal apparently purposeless until it is understood that it was the business of the priesthood to furnish the replies which were needed to pass the purified spirit to the presence of that Osiris with whom he had at last become identified.

When we find the ecclesiastical body purveying such wares for the spiritual well-being of their flock, it is evident that the line of demarcation between religion and magic is faint. Indeed, as one reads the documents cited by Dr. Budge, it is by no means easy to determine the category to which certain practices and invocations should be relegated. In a sense the whole religion was so theurgic that it might pass for a sublimated magic; whilst much of what is classed as magic consisted in such invocations of divine beings, and aspirations for assimilation to them, as to contain the essence of genuine religion. It may be taken that the fundamental doctrine of magic is contained in the formula, "whatever is above is below, and whatever is below is above." The idea being that all existing things are created after divine prototypes, and that by an accurate perception of the one a knowledge of the other is obtainable. The germ of such an idea evidently existed in Egypt, the Supreme God having produced the universe in accordance with his previous mental conception. The premises being admitted they might serve either as the means by which a partial comprehension of the creator was obtainable, and as inciting the student to thankfulness and adoration; or they might place in his hands a means not only of invoking the gods, but of compelling them to his will. It must always be borne in mind that ideas, whether religious or not, are not the outcome of unreasoning invention, but are the result of a certain sequence of thought, however wanting it may be in logical acumen. The association of a certain evil with a certain precursory series of facts may have been arrived at on the post-hoc propter-hoc principle; but that this is so only proves the insufficiency and inadequacy of the observations upon which the association was reached, and not that it was arbitrarily devised. In many cases the mental position from which a belief or a custom was reached is so alien to our own that we are unable to reconstruct the train of thought by which it was arrived at; but in some cases we have been provided with a key to the mystery, and that is especially the case where names are in question. A spirit appearing before the gods had to be known and named by them. Nameless, he was non-existent, and consequently we find that, to the Egyptian, the name was as much a part of a man's being as his soul. Just as possession of the soul would place the entire individual in the possessor's power, so the name of god or devil gave a control which made the spirit your humble servant. The names of beings or things were words of power to conjure with, and, as has been stated, it was by the utterance of his own name that God brought all things into existence. It was but doing on a supreme scale what man on a lesser might perform; and when the potency of the uttered word was admitted, the transition to the efficacy of the written charm and

the engraved talisman was a mere question of time and of a certain subtlety of reasoning. From an existent sympathy between words and things a belief in an equivalent interrelation betwixt objects might arise, either from a fancied resemblance of nomenclature or by an analogous train of thought which classed together things which had some real or fancied resemblance, a process of which the mandragora of later legends is an instance. From this system of affinities, bounded only by the imaginative powers of the sorcerer, the weaving of the most complex web of enchantment was inevitable. In Egypt the system was prolific, and bore as its fruit that crop of magical figures, pictures, spells, and ceremonies, with the attendant beliefs in lucky and unlucky days, dreams, demoniacal possessions, and astrological lore, with which the learned doctor has filled his pages to the delight of the occultist.

In the study of the Babylonian religion and mythology which is presented to us by Mr. King, we find a less exalted view of divine beings than that reached in Egypt, the beliefs of the Babylonians, in such matters, having received a tincture from their predecessors, the Sumerians, which was never wholly eradicated. Of the creed thus evolved, documentary evidence older than the seventh century B.C. is wanting, but this source of information is supplemented by the recorded beliefs of the Assyrians who were themselves colonists from Babylonia. Here the gods were many, a catalogue of 1800 names failing to furnish a complete enumeration, a heterogeneous company essentially human in their attributes, who were born, caroused, loved, fought, and even died. In later historical periods the chief deities acquired definite characteristic personalities, but they were only in degree superior to their worshippers, who never reached the conception of a Supreme Being essentially different to themselves. The gods, who were personifications of the forces of nature, had their cults curiously relegated to special centres, being localised in different cities, the fortunes of which they followed. The great triad of Anu, Bel and Ea, the respective deities of heaven, earth and the abyss of waters, headed the company of the gods; with the subsidiary trinity of Sin, the moon-god, his son Shamash the sun-god, and Rammān, god of the atmosphere; but the most prominent deity was Marduk, the tutelary god of Babylon, who, as that city rose into importance, became identified with Bel, and was established as the intercessor for mankind. Scant justice was accorded the ladies, the goddesses being but faint reflexes of their husbands, with the exception of Ishtar, who occupied a position of commanding importance in her dual aspects of the patroness of love and war. No doubt the heavenly host was influenced by the peculiar cosmogony which obtained. It was thought that from out the waters which, in the darkness of chaos, alone at first existed, abnormal creatures sprang. Over this monstrous brood the woman-dragon Tiamat was supreme, until, after creating the gods, she rose in revolt against them. She was vanquished and slain by the divine champion Marduk, who employed the fragments of her body to fashion the earth and heaven. The portion used to make the earth he shaped as an inverted bowl surmounted by the remainder of the corpse bent into the hollow hemispherical vault of heaven, and both resting

on the waters of that great deep, from which all things had their origin. Above the firmament was a celestial ocean, and beyond that the innermost heaven to which the gods retired when weary of their earthly abodes and the immediate conduct of human affairs.

Beneath the earth was the seven-walled house of the dead in the "Land of no Return." Here no distinction was made between the good and the bad, all being alike condemned to the same joyless existence. The gloom which pervaded the tomb may have originated in the rapidity of decomposition and decay in the moist alluvial soil of Mesopotamia, and the elaborate burial rites which were observed had no further object than to prevent the wanderings of the earth-bound shade, who would haunt those who neglected to secure him a safe passage to Hades.

Whilst this and other passages scattered through the text will give the student of folk-lore and demonology much food for thought, the chief interest of the work naturally centres in the exposition of the resemblances which exist between the Babylonian myths and the Jewish traditions recorded in the Bible. Mr. King has directed attention to the legends of the Great Dragon, the Creation, and the Deluge, and shows that both nations derived their narratives from a common source, or that, at any rate, the Hebrews' indebtedness to the Babylonians was long antecedent to the period of the captivity. It is a matter for regret that the limits of this notice forbid more than an allusion to this section of the volume, which is likely to be that most generally attractive. In the succeeding portion is recited the poem of Gilgamesh, in which are recounted his exploits and those of his semi-divine friend Ea-bani. This story has no Biblical equivalent, unless we see in Ea-bani, who "was clothed with long hair like a woman," was of stupendous strength, and became a victim to the wiles of the woman Ukhat, the analogue of Samson and Delilah. Such resemblances must necessarily arise, and to insist upon too close an identification may be unwise; but, in leaving such speculations, we pass to what is of more human interest, the personal relations which existed between the Babylonian and his gods. Here we find that to each man, from his birth, a god and goddess were allotted as guardians and monitors. They departed from him if he transgressed, and when they so withdrew, priestly intervention was necessary to secure a return of their favour. At first mere defects of ritual observance or the utterance of ill-omened words were the sole causes of divine estrangement; but as the mental conceptions of the people were elevated, injustice to their fellows and sins against their neighbours were regarded as constituting equally valid grounds for the wrath of the gods. And so in process of time it came to pass that upon a foundation of much apparent absurdity, the good sense of the Babylonians erected a working code of morality which an existing tablet cataloguing acts that were regarded as sins shows to have been little inferior to that of the Hebrews.

It is impossible within the necessary limits to do fitting justice to the contents of these most interesting volumes, and the care with which the great mass of facts which they contain has been condensed defies any attempt to reduce them to a précis. That they fill an existing blank in the text-books on comparative religions is obvious, and

their careful documentation cannot fail to convince the reader that, in following the authors through the mazes of Egyptian and Babylonian belief and ceremonial observance, he has no uncertain guides. There will be few who will not learn from these volumes much detail of which they were previously ignorant, and many will derive from them their first clear conception of what was really believed in ancient Babylonia and of the sublime grandeur of that faith which during so many centuries was the spiritual stay and solace of the Egyptians.

FRANK REDE FOWKE.

HUXLEY'S SCIENTIFIC MEMOIRS.

The Scientific Memoirs of Thomas Henry Huxley.

Edited by Prof. Sir Michael Foster, K.C.B., M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., and by Prof. E. Ray Lankester, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S. In Four Volumes. Vol. II. With Portrait. Pp. xi + 612. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.)

THE second volume of this valuable series will be welcomed by a large class of readers, and not alone by those who are professed biologists. The thirty-seven memoirs here collected together for the first time in one volume were published at dates ranging from 1857 to 1864, and, therefore, cover a period of strife and ferment which originated within the scientific world, but soon spread beyond it, that, namely, caused by the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species" in 1859.

Naturally, we find amongst the writings, at this period, of one of the foremost champions of Darwinism, many memoirs devoted either to discussion of the problem of evolution as a whole, or to threshing out some special point in the evidence for or against the theory and its applications. Such papers will always possess an interest, even if only a historical one. Here we have, for instance, Huxley's famous controversy with Owen as to the alleged constancy of the "posterior horn of the lateral ventricle" and the "hippocampus minor" as characters distinguishing absolutely the brain of man from that of the ape, and of sufficient importance to rank man as a distinct sub-class of the mammalia. It is difficult to imagine any naturalist of eminence at the present day advancing such conclusions, even granting the correctness of the premises, which, as a matter of fact, Huxley was able to impugn without difficulty. Here, again, we find the well-known controversy as to whether the human remains from the Neanderthal were those of an ape-like man or of a "rickety Mongolian Cossack." And before leaving the subject of Darwinism, we may draw attention to Huxley's eloquent and impassioned appeal, in a lecture, "On Species, Races and their Origin," delivered before the Royal Institution, for consideration of the facts of the case without prejudice. In his peroration the clerical and other opponents of the progress of physical science are likened to "little Canutes of the hour, enthroned in solemn state," who bid the great wave to stay, but who, when forced to fly, learn no lesson of humility, and pitching their tents at what seems a safe distance, repeat their folly; and, in conclusion, he calls upon the people of England to cherish and venerate science. "Listen to those who would silence and crush her, and I fear our children will see the glory of England vanishing like Arthur in the mist." At

a time when colleges could be named in our great Universities whose authorities would prefer a "football blue" to a "research student," we may ask ourselves if we are not beginning to realise this prophecy.

It is not possible within the limits of a review to do more than indicate the many papers of interest collected in this volume, some of which laid the foundations of our knowledge, or marked an epoch in its advance, in not a few directions. Of great merit, but of interest to a more limited circle, are the numerous treatises upon fossil types, contributed to various geological periodicals; or anatomical memoirs, of which that upon the Nautilus may be taken as an example. Of more general interest are the two classical memoirs, "On the Agamic Reproduction and Morphology of Aphis," and "On the Anatomy and Development of Pyrosoma," in which Huxley made great additions to our knowledge, both of the theory and of the facts, of non-sexual processes of reproduction in both forms. From Pyrosoma he was led on to a discussion of the significance of the germinal vesicle of the ovum, which also forms the subject of a Royal Institution lecture deserving more than a passing notice.

At the present day it may be safely asserted that though much remains to be investigated and elucidated, yet a number of fundamental facts have been generally established with regard to the question of the nature of the sexual elements, and the process of fertilisation, in animals and plants. No instructed person now doubts that the ovum, whatever its size or peculiarities in a given species, represents a single cell set free from a many-celled organism, and that the germinal vesicle is the cell nucleus, which, after certain processes of maturation, unites in the process of fertilisation with the nucleus of the male cell or spermatozoon to form the so-called segmentation nucleus, the ancestor by repeated divisions of all the nuclei in the body of the future embryo. These are facts which now are taught to every student of biology in his first term, but in the early sixties it was not so. The details of fertilisation were unknown, except in so far that both ovum and spermatozoon were concerned in it, and the true nature of these two elements, in the light of the cell theory, was not understood. Many authorities believed that the germinal vesicle of the ovum and its contents disappeared, and had no direct connection with the cells of the blastoderm or future embryo. Huxley, on the contrary, was on the side of those who held the more correct view, that the cells and nuclei of the blastoderm stand in genetic relation to the germinal vesicle. His observations were, however, in so far erroneous, in that he believed he had seen in Pyrosoma the vitellus of the ovum disappear, and the cells of the blastoderm arising within the germinal vesicle.

In judging a mistake of this kind, the modern biologist will remember, in the first place, that the present state of our knowledge with regard to these matters has been attained by the gradual perfection of a technique more complicated than French cookery, and that to investigate or demonstrate these now well-known facts, a laboratory stocked with reagents and aniline dyes, with complicated machines for section cutting and other apparatus, is required. In the second place he will note, perhaps