

Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

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I.

La Magie assyrienne: étude suivie de Textes magiques. By C. Fossey. Paris: Leroux, 1902.

Dr. Fossey has given us an important and interesting work. Magic played a very large part in the belief and life of Babylonia and Assyria, and a considerable proportion of the texts recovered from the library of Nineveh relate to it. But hitherto, since the pioneering labours of Lenormant, it has received but scant attention from Assyriologists. Now and again a magical text has been edited or translated, and writers on Babylonian religion have, perforce, dealt more or less briefly with the subject; but no attempt has been made to take up the task which dropped from the pen of Lenormant and systematically examine and describe one of the most potent factors in ancient Babylonian culture. It is fitting that the work should at last be undertaken by a countryman of that brilliant scholar whose premature death science still has reason to deplore.

Dr. Fossey has done his work thoroughly. The second half of his book contains the magical texts themselves, transliterated from both the Sumerian and the Semitic originals, and translated line by line. The first half is a very full and luminous account of what these magical texts teach us, written with French lucidity and method, and covering the whole ground of the subject so far as it is known to us at present. No Assyriologist can afford to neglect Dr. Fossey's monograph, and the same may be said of the theologian and anthropologist who are not Assyriologists.

Babylonian magic lay at the back of Babylonian religion, and it is impossible to understand that religion unless the magic is understood also. It makes no difference whether we regard the religion as mainly due to a new and intrusive Semitic element which engrafted itself on the older beliefs of Chaldæa, or whether we hold that the religion developed naturally out of the magic that preceded it. In either case the result is the same; Babylonian religion and magic are so closely bound up together that as long as the

magic is ignored our conception of the religion will be faulty and erroneous.

Dr. Fossey has, I believe, succeeded in drawing the true distinction between magic and religion, at all events so far as ancient Babylonia is concerned. Magic, as he says, 'constrains' and obliges the supernatural or superhuman powers which surround man to perform his will; religion 'conciliates' them. The demons and jinns of magic are, like the forces of nature, under law and control; the gods of religion possess free will. They can grant or refuse the prayer as seems to them good; the jinn must obey the spell of the sorcerer.

Dr. Fossey's work is full of facts and suggestions which a reviewer would be glad to dwell upon. The remark that 'every city, like the divinity who protected it, probably had a mystic name which could be revealed to no one,' is highly suggestive, and explains why it is that cities appear as divinities in the inscriptions. The *sêdu*, again, from which the Hebrews borrowed their *shêdîm*, is shown to have been a demon with the evil eye, and the curious reference to pointing with the finger in Is 58⁹ is explained by the fact that stretching the hand towards the light was considered unlucky. In the Babylonian 'Confession,' to eat the flesh of the sacrifice is stated to be a sin; and Dr. Fossey notes that perhaps the sin-offering is meant, since according to the Jewish law (Lv 6⁸⁰) no 'sin-offering' was allowed to be eaten. At any rate there seems to be a connexion between the two prohibitions.

I have one fault, and one fault only, to find with Dr. Fossey's volume; there is no index, either of subjects or of words.

II.

Textes religieux assyriens et babyloniens. Première Série. By Fr. Martin. Paris: Letourey & Ané, 1903.

I have already drawn attention in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES to Professor Martin's researches into Babylonian religion. He has now published the first volume of a work which will embrace the larger portion of such Babylonian or Assyrian

religious texts as are known, each of them being transliterated and translated and accompanied by philological notes. The very complete indices at the end of the book make it particularly valuable to the Assyriologist.

But there are others besides the Assyriologist who ought to study it. Like Dr. Fossey's book, it appeals to the anthropologist and theologian, not to speak of the student of the Old Testament. The latter will find in the introduction which Professor Martin has prefixed, abundant matter for thought and comparison. Following in Professor Zimmern's footsteps, Professor Martin points out the numerous coincidences that exist between the Babylonian ritual and the Mosaic Law. Time after time the law of Israel looks back to Babylonia not only in the beliefs and principles that underlie it, but even in the letter of its ordinances. Like the earlier chapters of Genesis, the law, too, has a Babylonian background of far earlier date than the age of the Exile.

The 'leather bag of the oracle of the heavens and the earth,' which contained the lots of destiny, and was entrusted to the 'seers,' reminds us of the Hebrew ephod, and is certainly not favourable to some modern explanations of the latter. The bodily defects which, according to Lv 21, prevented an Israelite from exercising the office of priest, were also those that banished a Babylonian from the order of the seers. The parts of the victim offered in sacrifice and the objects of the offering were, as Professor Martin shows, similar among both Babylonians and Israelites, and it is at least interesting that the Babylonian *asipu* was required in a certain ceremony to present twelve cakes to the gods, recalling the twelve loaves of shewbread.

Professor Martin follows the German school in identifying the *asipu* with the *masmasu* or 'divine.' But the two are distinguished from one another in the texts, and the ritual to which he refers as describing the functions of the *asipu* really makes mention of the *masmasu* and not of the *asipu*. The *asipu* was rather a 'prophet,' and Merodach is accordingly addressed as both the *masmasu* and the *asipu* of the gods.

It will doubtless be objected to Professor

Martin, as it was to my Hibbert Lectures, that he has included magical texts among his 'religious' documents. But in Babylonia, magic and religion were too closely connected to be separable; religion took magic under its protection, and magic remained the religion of the people. Purely religious hymns are often embedded in a magical text and intended to be used for magical purposes, while the religious ritual retained to the last a magical taint. There was no such separation between magic and religion in Babylonia as there was in Israel.

III.

Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum. Parts xvi., xvii. British Museum, 1903.

The rapidity with which the accurate and beautifully printed cuneiform texts of the British Museum are being published is really wonderful, and Assyrian scholars ought to be correspondingly grateful. Hardly have we had time to examine the last two volumes that were published than two more have appeared, containing the very class of documents on which the works of MM. Fossey and Martin are based. Many of them are now published for the first time; others are re-edited with important additions, and assigned their place in the literary works to which they belong. Thus at least one-half of a magical text called *Utukki limniti* by the Babylonians has been recovered. In the light of these new or more complete documents many of our conclusions will doubtless have to be revised.

I must, however, once more protest against the view that in a text which has been believed to refer to the sacrifice of children the word *uritsu* means a 'lamb' or some other young animal. Both the Sumerian original and the Semitic translation are perfectly plain in the revised edition. The *uritsu* or 'offspring' is stated to be *sa ameluti* 'among men,' not *sa amelu* 'of a man'; and to make the meaning still clearer, it is defined as *sag-ilu*, 'with head erect' like a man, and not with the head inclined like a brute beast. 'The offspring with head erect among mankind' can naturally signify a human child and nothing else.