

WERE THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY DERIVED
FROM BABYLONIA?

GEORGE A. BARTON
BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

THE question expressed in the above title, although urged by certain over-enthusiastic Assyriologists, has never until now merited serious discussion. It seems wise at this time, however, to consider it soberly because of the recent publication of a remarkable text excavated by Dr. Andrae at Kalah Shergat, the site of the ancient city of Ashur.

The excavation at Ashur had been going quietly forward since 1902 until it was interrupted by the outbreak of the war in 1914. A number of important historical inscriptions were unearthed and their publication filled some of the gaps in our knowledge of Babylonian history. It was not, however, known until 1915 that Andrae had discovered at Ashur an archive of literary and religious texts as important as that found in the library of Ashurbanipal or at Nippur. In 1915 the publication of these was begun, and up to the present time six Hefte have appeared.¹ These volumes contain a number of fragments of the so-called Babylonian Creation Epic, the beginnings of which were discovered by George Smith fifty years ago. These fragments fill out important lacunae in the first tablet of the epic, which we had before only in a fragmentary condition, and give

¹ Published by E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Ashur, religiösen Inhalts*, Leipzig, 1915—1920. The publication is not yet completed.

us practically the whole of tablet six, of which we had before but a few lines. This new material makes one doubt whether the designation "Creation Epic" is properly applied to this poem. "The Wars of the Gods" would more nearly describe it, for throughout it is filled with the intrigues of the younger generations of gods against their elders, the measures taken by their elders to maintain their ground, and the consequent strife. The creation of the heavens, the earth, and man were only incidental to this strife and, as it were, by-products of it. But to this topic we shall return presently. This archive is much older than that of Ashurbanipal. Its latest texts are not later than the ninth century B. C. and its earliest fifteen hundred years before that time. It contains also an Assyrian code of laws comparable in some degree to that of Hammurabi. The translation, assimilation, and digestion of this new material will make the next few years a time of great interest to Assyriologists and students of religion.

The tablet which has called forth this paper is the sixth tablet of the so-called Creation Epic already mentioned. The writer has given a detailed translation of it in the third edition of his *Archaeology and the Bible* which has just appeared. To repeat the translation here would occupy too much space; it will suffice to give a summary of its contents.

It is no exaggeration to say that this tablet is one of the greatest surprises that Assyriological research has ever afforded, although that study has been replete with great and unexpected discoveries. We expected an account of the creation of man; the tablet contains not only that, but gives us the long sought Babylonian Paradise, a counterpart of the Fall of Man, and the re-creation of man and the redemption of the gods by the death of a god. Its contents are, in brief, as follows:

Lines 1—32 tell of man's creation. In this text man is made, not from the blood of Ea, but by Ea from the blood of the rebellious god Kingu, the husband of Tiamat. This work was entered upon and accomplished as the result of a conference between Marduk and Ea. Probably in an earlier form of the narrative Ea acted alone. Professor Jastrow showed some years ago that the text of other parts of the epic has been worked

over with a view of glorifying Marduk, and doubtless the same is true of this tablet.

After man was thus created, it is related in lines 33—69 how Eden was established. Man was put upon the earth in a large garden, twenty of the great spirits were stationed above and below, and a guard was placed so that he should not get away. In this spacious garden a sanctuary was built. This sanctuary, which was the divine pattern on which Esagila was afterward constructed, was provided with a ziggurat, the top of which they carried up till it touched the celestial ocean (*zu-ab e-li-ti*). Man cultivated the garden and in the temple provided the gods with food in the form of feasts and sacrifices. Thus the gods constituted an establishment in which they could anticipate comfort and satisfaction.

Lines 70—100, which contain the Babylonian equivalent of the Fall of Man, are in a fragmentary condition, owing to the crumbling of the tablet. This much is, however, clear: the whole trouble was caused by jealousy among the gods themselves. The trouble began by jealousy between Enlil and Anu. Enlil saw Anu's bow in the sky and hurled something at it. Anu was angry and as a result of the quarrel the goddess Ishtar seems to have been taken away. The loss of some eight lines at this point deprives us of the story of just how this happened. When deprived of their beloved goddess, men forgot their deities, and permitted everything to go to ruin. Their pride became great and the sanctuaries of the gods they destroyed. Terrible ruin was the result.

Lines 101—110 relate how the god Marduk, in order to repair this disaster, made a pit as a tomb, went down into it in full splendor. From his bones a living creature — a new mankind — was formed. This new man restored and re-established the services of the gods, so that all was again happy.

Meantime Marduk lay in the grave, and lines 111—128 are occupied with the praises which the grateful gods ascribe to him, who had thus sacrificed himself for their sakes. Then line 129 tells how two mighty ones called Marduk, who is also called Asaru, to life again. Lines 130--134 record their praises of the risen god. These lines are remarkable:

"Exalted, he by his act gave might to us, the gods who had
perished!

He is the lord, who by his holy death, made the dead gods
to live!

May the hirelings who hated him perish! . . .

Verily he is the one whom his fathers named the brilliant
god! —

The pure god who makes holy our way!"²

The tablet then concludes with some partly broken lines, which tell apparently how three of the gods reported the culprits who had caused Marduk's death, and how they were bound and punished, after which praises and rejoicing were renewed.

This remarkable text presents many aspects for comparative study. It invites comparison with other Babylonian myths, with the myths of the death and resurrection of Osiris, with the J and P Documents of the Pentateuch, with the punishment of the wicked angels in Enoch, and with the Gospel accounts of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. In a paper, such as this, no exhaustive treatment is possible. Only a few suggestive remarks will be attempted.

1. It may be noted in the first place that the defection of men from the service of the gods was caused by the fact that they were deprived of their beloved goddess Ishtar. While it is not said that Ishtar had died, it seems probable that she was thought to have gone down to the Lower World in a manner analogous to that described in the well-known poem of "Ishtar's Descent".³ In that poem the god Ea sent his Messenger, Namtar, to bring her back to life. In the new tablet before us Marduk goes down to death to create a new man and then comes back to life. Are not the two representations somewhat parallel treatments of the same theme? The writer has long believed that the god Marduk was a development out of an earlier

² *ša-ki-ma bi-nu-ti-šu-ma ig-ši-ru-ni ilani^{p1} ab-tu-ti*
be-lum ša ina mi-ti-šu illi-tim u-bal-li-tu ilani^{p1} mīti^{p1}
[u]š-ī-ib-bit ig-ru-ti za-'a-ru-ti . . .
[lu] ilu nam-ru ša in-na-bu abi^{p1}-šu
ilu il-lu mu-ul-lil a-lak-ti-ni.

³ For a translation, see *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 423 ff.

Tammuz, closely connected with the goddess Ishtar.⁴ He is inclined to see in the present parallelism a confirmation of that view.

2. Marduk is, in this new text, called sometimes Marduk and sometimes Asaru. It has long been known that the name Asaru was also a name for Marduk. The name Asaru has been equated by some with Osiris (*'sir*) and made one of the arguments for the Semitic origin of the Egyptian civilization — even for the derivation of that civilization from Babylonia. Even Sayce⁵ is inclined to give great weight to that view. It is true that the name Asaru⁶ is Semitic, not Sumerian. It is derived from the root אָשַׁר, which designated a wooden post or ashera, and from which *asirtu* (*eširtu*), “sanctuary” also comes. From it also was derived the name of the Assyrian god, Asur or Ashur, who gave his name to the city and country of Assyria. There can be little doubt, I think, that the name Osiris (*'sir*) is derived from the same root. Asaru means “post” and the symbol of Osiris was a post. Both were gods of vegetation who died and rose again.

To insist for these reasons that the one must be derived from the other is, however, to take too narrow a view. When all the facts are considered — the kinship to Semitic of the Hamitic languages other than Egyptian, and the similarity of the environment of the Hamites in North Africa to that of the Semites in Arabia, together with the similarity of their resulting institutions — one is led, as the writer has pointed out elsewhere,⁷ to believe that instead of borrowing from one another, the two peoples are offshoots of a common stock. Asaru and Osiris, the gods and their names, are survivals from that common ancestry.⁸

⁴ When writing *Semitic Origins*, being somewhat over-enthusiastic as to the possibilities of changes of sex in deities, the writer thought Marduk a transformed Ishtar, but the view expressed above seems the more probable.

⁵ See *Archæology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, London, 1908, p. 119 ff. (see p. 208 ff.).

⁶ The name Asaru occurs as early as 2500 B. C. in the inscriptions of Gudea; see Cylinder B. iv, l. It is probably only accidental that earlier occurrences of it have not been found.

⁷ See *Semitic Origins*, pp. 9 ff. and 115 ff.; also “Tammuz and Osiris” in *JAOS*, XXXV, pp. 213--223 and “Semites” in Hastings' *ERE*.

⁸ Clay's attack upon the theory of the Arabian cradleland of the Semitic peoples in his *Empire of the Amorites*, New Haven, 1919, p. 27 ff.

3. A comparison of this tablet with J's story of Eden and the Fall of Man in Genesis 1 and 2, and with his account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, leaves on the mind the conviction that the J writer was dealing with the same material as the writer of this tablet, but that it had reached him in his Palestinian home in an oral and somewhat fluid form. This is shown in various ways.

For example, the J writer, holding as he did the nomadic ideal of Yahweh,⁹ could not conceive that the Garden of God contained a temple. Accordingly, while he places the Garden to the East in Eden or *edennu*, the Babylonian plain, he retains of the temple only the "tower" or *Ziggurat*. This he transfers to a time after man had lost his Eden and to a place outside the Garden. Where the Babylonian text says that they raised the tower till its top touched the celestial ocean, J has instead: "Come let us build . . . a tower, whose top may reach to heaven". In harmony with his conception that civilization proceeded from sin, he represents this building as so displeasing to Yahweh that in order to prevent its success, he confounded human speech.

J's Garden is, accordingly, minus both temple and tower. Like the Babylonian garden, it was divinely planted; man was put into it to dress it and keep it. Whereas, in the Babylonian story, guards were placed at the gates to keep men in, in J's account the Cherubim guards were not stationed until man had been expelled, and then to prevent his return. In the J Document trouble crept into Eden through the sin of the man and woman who were tempted by the serpent. In the Babylonian, by envy and strife among the gods themselves. Nevertheless in both accounts there would seem to be a consciousness that the trouble had to do with sexual functions. In the Biblical story

is unsuccessful because he fails to meet these fundamental facts with others equally fundamental. Indeed, he adduces no facts in favor of *Amurru*, apparently reasoning that, if other theories are disproved, his theory must be true. He has by no means, however, disproved the Arabian theory.

⁹ For proof, see Budde, *The Religion of Israel to the Exile*, New York, 1899, chs. i—iii, and Barton, *Religion of Israel*, New York, 1918, chs. iv, v.

the sin would seem to have been an act which resulted in the establishment of sexual relations between the inmates of the Garden;¹⁰ in the Babylonian, through an act which destroyed the goddess Ishtar and so caused sexual relations to cease.

Such comparisons make it evident that, while there is in the two accounts a substratum of common tradition, the biblical writer either handled the material with great freedom or received it through oral channels in which it had been so handled.

4. It has long been held by many interpreters that the P writer knew and was to a certain extent influenced by this Babylonian Creation epic. His account of creation in Genesis 1 1—2 4^a is based on the same substratum of raw material as this highly mythical poem. Both conceive of primeval chaos as consisting of a mass of waters. They give to this the same name. *ṯhōm*, *tiamat*. The wind of god (Hebrew רוּחַ, meaning also "spirit") is, according to both accounts, active in the creative process. Both writers describe the creation of a firmament which separates a super-celestial ocean from the waters below and allows space for the air to circulate above the flat earth. Each account is arranged in a series of sevens, the Babylonian in seven tablets, the Hebrew in seven days. Each of them places the creation of man in the sixth division of its series. While the exalted monotheistic conception of the author of the P Document led him to eliminate the mythical conceptions of the Babylonian account, and his prosaic mind also eliminated the poetic form, it seems clear that he was acquainted with the ideas of the Babylonian epic. If, as is generally believed, he lived in Babylonia, it is possible that he had read it in the cuneiform, or had heard it read, although this does not necessarily follow. These religious texts were in Babylonia the property of temples and of royal palaces. It is not at all certain that the library of a Babylonian temple would be open to a Jewish captive, or that an orthodox Jew of the type of Ezekiel and the Priestly Writers would frequent it, if it were. Like the J writer, P may have known the poem only through oral report, for, like J, he

¹⁰ See the writer's *Sketch Semitic Origins*, New York, 1902, p. 93 ff.

exercises considerable freedom in his use of it. The creation of the firmament he transposes from the fourth tablet to the second day; the intrigues of the gods of tablet three are replaced by the appearance of dry land and the growth of grass, and the creation of the heavenly bodies is taken from the fifth tablet and placed on the fourth day. Of all the interesting things contained in the sixth tablet, which has now been recovered, P employs only the story of the creation of man. Nevertheless it seems probable, partly from the general considerations already noted, and partly from the language employed by P, that he had heard, at least orally, the Babylonian story, much as it lies before us in this new text. This story represents the plan to create man as the result of a conference between Ea and Marduk; it implies a kinship between man and the gods by saying that man was made from the blood of a god. P's account, in spite of his exalted monotheism, still contains an echo of this conference of the gods in the phrase: "Let us make man" — a phrase in which a number of commentators have discerned the survival of an anterior polytheism.¹¹ P also transforms the idea of kinship to the gods, expressed in the Babylonian belief that man was made from divine blood, into the statement that man was created in the image and likeness of god. This new text, then, illuminates the statements of Genesis 1:26 and affords new proof of the Babylonian origin of the creation story.

5. There is one other possible bearing of the contents of this tablet which ought to be discussed. No one can read it, without being impressed with the analogies between the death and resurrection of Marduk and the life-giving power which the Babylonian poet attaches to it and the Death and Resurrection of Christ as recounted in the Gospels and the theological significance attached to it in the New Testament and in Christian theology.

Undoubtedly the text will be hailed by the various branches of that group of writers who resolve the life of our Lord into myth as a godsend, and they will doubtless make various uses

¹¹ See Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 31 ff.; Gunkel, *Genesis*, p. 101 ff.; Holzinger, *Genesis*, p. 10 ff.

of it according to their respective theories.¹³ Not simply in the interest of apologetics, therefore, but in a sincere desire to reach historical truth, the question raised by the analogies noted should be investigated.

The investigation of this problem involves three different lines

¹³ These writers fall into four different groups. Like those who witnessed against our Lord at his trial, "their witness agrees not together".

1. There is the school represented by such works as J. H. Robertson's *Pagan Christs and Christianity and Mythology*, Arthur Drews's *The Christ Myth*, and W. B. Smith's *Ecce Deus*. Writers of this school seem to think that the authors of the Gospels consulted dictionaries of mythology and wove together into the story of the life of Jesus such elements as appealed to them. They have been sufficiently and soberly answered by S. J. Case, *The Historicity of Jesus*, Chicago, 1912, and their methods have been unsparingly exposed by F. C. Conybeare's *The Historical Christ*, London, 1914.

2. There is Professor Peter Jensen who, in editing the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic for Schrader's *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, became obsessed with the idea that almost everything in the world was derived from Gilgamesh. In 1906 he published the first volume of his *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur* — a work of a thousand pages — in which he contended that all the prominent characters in the Old Testament were mythical and forms of Gilgamesh. He proposed in a second volume to dissolve the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into Gilgamesh stories. When critics were severe as to the soundness of the positions taken in his first volume, he returned to the attack with a second: *Moses, Jesus, Paulus, Drei Varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesch* (1909).

3. In another class we must put W. Erbt, a pupil of the late Hugo Winckler, who in his *Das Markus Evangelium*, 1911, endeavored to resolve the material of our earliest Gospel into adumbrations of astral myths, as his teacher Winckler in his *Geschichte Israels*, vol. ii, had endeavored to resolve the characters of the Old Testament.

4. We have such writers as H. Zimmern, who in the third edition of Schrader's *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, 1903, and his *Zum Streit um die Christusmythe: das babylonische Material in seinen Hauptpunkten dargestellt*, 1910, finds the origin of the narratives of Christ in the myths of the Babylonian god Marduk. With Zimmern we must place H. Gunkel, whose *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments*, 1903, occupies somewhat similar ground. The writers of this last school approach much more nearly to sound methods of research than those of either of the three preceding, but, in appreciation of what is involved in a method that is really historical, even these writers leave much to be desired.

of study. 1. The New Testament accounts attesting the Resurrection should be studied in chronological order. From such a study it should be ascertained what the primitive tradition was, what modifications and additions have been made in it in the later Gospels. In this way, if there is a kernel of historical fact capable of being separated from later accretions, it should be possible to ascertain it. 2. If the study just outlined results in the separation of later accretions to a narrative that is probably historical, these later accretions may be properly compared with the Babylonian material to ascertain what likenesses and differences are presented. 3. If strong resemblances are found to exist between elements of the Gospel story and the Babylonian poem, it then becomes incumbent upon the investigator to make a careful examination of the possible channels by which the Babylonian material may have reached and influenced the Gospel writers. Unless he can prove that it came through the Babylonian influence upon the *Golah* in Babylonia, or through Persian sources to Jews, or through the Mithra cult, no Babylonian influence can be assumed. One will have to conclude that such resemblances as there are are strictly accidental. Let us briefly examine these points.

1. It is generally supposed that our earliest account of the Resurrection of Jesus is in 1. Cor. 15 3-8, though, in view of the investigations of Harnack and Torrey, it is, in the opinion of the writer, doubtful whether the Gospel of Mark is not earlier.¹³ If, however, we follow the common opinion and take St. Paul's reference as the starting point, he tells us that Christ was raised the third day after his death, that he appeared first to Peter, then to the twelve, then to above five hundred at once, then to James, then to all the Apostles, and lastly to St. Paul himself. No further details are given. If we go to the Acts of the Apostles for further details of the appearance to St. Paul, we find it in the three accounts of his conversion (Acts 9 3-9 22 6-11 26 12-16), from which it appears that the appearance to St. Paul

¹³ See Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and Synoptic Gospels*, New York, 1911, and C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts*, Cambridge, Mass, 1916, and "The Date of the Gospel of Mark" read before the Society of Biblical Literature in December, 1919.

was spiritual or psychical, and that St. Paul equates the previous appearances to others with the appearance to him.

If now we turn to the Markan narrative, Mark 16 1-8, and the lost ending, which, as Goodspeed has shown,¹⁴ is probably to be found in Matt. 28 9, 10 and 16-19a, we find the following account. On the morning of the first day of the week after the Crucifixion, various women go to the tomb of Jesus, find the stone rolled away and a young man in dazzlingly white raiment sitting on the right side. He told them Jesus was not there, that he was risen, that they should go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee, that there they should see Jesus. As they were leaving the place. Jesus himself appeared to them. The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed. There Jesus appeared to them, told them that all authority was given him, and bade them go and make disciples.

Here we have an account in which there are no elements which are not necessarily psychical or spiritual. While we cannot account for all the details on rational and psychological grounds, the essential details are, in view of widely attested experiences in modern times, no longer incredible. The elements for which we can find no analogy are easily explained as due to the highly excited state of the minds of the disciples and their habit of speaking in Oriental imagery and exaggeration. It is historically certain that they had some experience or experiences which changed their mental attitude from one of utter discouragement and despair to one of strong courage and confidence. In this new spirit they founded the Christian Church, the existence of which to the present time affords contemporary evidence of the historical character of some extraordinary experience, which convinced them that their loved Master had been raised from Sheol, in which all the dead were supposed to sleep, and was still living. There is no room for Babylonian influences here. We are dealing with the real experiences of unsophisticated peasants.

The Gospel of Matthew, if not the next to be written, is clearly based on the account in the Gospel of Mark and accords

¹⁴ See the *American Journal of Theology*, IX, pp. 484—490.

most nearly with it. There are a few editorial changes. It is said that as the women approached the tomb, there was a great earthquake, which rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, as an angel descended from heaven and sat upon it. This angel calmed the fears of the women, invited them to come and see the place where the Lord lay, bade them go and tell the disciples to go into Galilee, where the risen Lord would meet them. As they were leaving the tomb, Jesus himself appeared to them. Then in verses 11-15 there is inserted the story of the bribing of the Roman guards, after which the account goes on to tell how in Galilee Jesus appeared to the disciples. There is here no addition to the story that at all accords with the Babylonian material. The only element of the narrative of Matthew that can be regarded as parallel to the Babylonian myth occurs earlier in chapter 27 3-5, where it is related how Judas, the traitor, hanged himself. This might be taken as the deposit in story of line 132 and the closing lines of the poem, in which the destruction of the "hirelings who hated him" is described. The parallelism may be no more than a coincidence, but it is a coincidence.

It will be noted that in the accounts of the resurrection of Christ in Mark and Matthew there is nothing inconsistent with the supposition that the appearance of Jesus to the women in Jerusalem and to the disciples in Galilee was a psychical or spiritual experience. According to these accounts the disciples saw him only in Galilee. Turning now to the Gospel of Luke, its narrative of the Resurrection (ch. 24) is as follows: On the morning of the first day of the week the women who had followed Jesus in Galilee went to the tomb, found the stone rolled away. Entering in they did not find the body of Jesus, and, while they were perplexed about this, two men in dazzling apparel stood by them and told them that Jesus had risen in accordance with predictions which he had made while with them in Galilee. Later in the day he appeared to Peter, then to Cleopas and a companion who were walking to Emmaus, then to the eleven Apostles, and on that same night, apparently, ascended to heaven.

As compared with the earlier narratives, one notes here, 1. two angels instead of one. 2. the transfer of the epiphanies

to the disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem, and 3. a tendency to materialize the psychical or spiritual phenomena of the earlier narratives. The risen Lord breaks bread and eats with some of his disciples. Of these three changes only one is necessarily parallel to anything in the Babylonian myth; that is the two angels.

With this Lucan account that in the spurious ending of Mark (Mark 16 9-20) agrees, except that in this version, which is said to have been written by Aristion, there is no mention of the two angels.

The account of the Resurrection in the original Gospel of John (ch. 20) is in substance this: On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the sepulcher and found the stone taken away from its door. She ran and told Peter and a disciple whom Jesus loved; they went to the tomb and found it empty. While Mary was standing without, weeping, she looked into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there. Turning, she saw Jesus, mistook him for the gardener, and had a conversation with him. When she recognized him, she went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord. That same evening Jesus appeared to ten of them as they were assembled and showed them his hands and his side. Thomas was not with the rest at that time. A week later when Thomas was there Jesus appeared again and invited him, because of his doubts, to put his fingers into the scars caused by the nails and to feel also the scar of the wound in his side. With this proof of the resurrection, the Gospel of John concluded.

Luke, Mark 16 9-20, and John all transfer the epiphanies from Galilee to Jerusalem. Luke and John take pains to emphasize the material element in the risen body of Christ, and to preclude the idea that the epiphanies were psychical experiences. John, like Luke, has two angels instead of one.

This last element is the only one that presents features that appear in the Babylonian material, unless we go to other parts of the Gospel of John. In John 10 18 we are told that Jesus declared concerning the laying down of his life. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again". Later parts of the

narrative are in accord with this (see 18 6 19 11). In 19 11 Jesus intimates that the power which Pilate has over him is given him by God. This accords with the intimation in lines 101, 102 of the Babylonian poem, that it was at the behest of his father Anu, that Marduk went down to death. In the Appendix to the Gospel of John (John 21) another epiphany of the risen Lord is recorded. There are in the record two significant things: 1. the place of the epiphany was Galilee. The older tradition, that it was in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem that the Lord appeared to his disciples, here reasserted itself. 2. the other significant feature of this narrative is, that, like Luke and the body of the Gospel of John, it emphasizes the material element in the Resurrection. There is an effort to make it more than a psychical or spiritual experience. There is nothing in the chapter that can be on any pretext derived from the Babylonian poem.

A closer parallel to the Babylonian account of the Resurrection of Marduk is found in the fragment of the Gospel of Peter ch. 9, where it is said that the Roman soldiers who were keeping watch at the sepulcher, heard during the night a great voice from heaven, saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with much light and approach the tomb. At their coming the stone rolled away of itself. The soldiers saw the young men from heaven enter in, and saw three come out from the tomb, "two of them supporting the other and a cross following them; and the head of the two reached to heaven, but that of Him who was led by them, overpassed the heavens". This passage affords a striking parallel to the Babylonian poem, line 129: "Two mighty ones called the god Asaru, who is the perfect god, unto life again."

The result of this examination of the Gospel material is this: there is a parallelism between the story of the resurrection of Marduk and the Resurrection of Jesus, but, so far as regards the resurrection itself, that parallelism is accidental. The story of the Resurrection of Jesus is based on actual experiences through which unsophisticated Galilean peasants passed, and which convinced them that their loved Master no longer lay in the grave, but lived again. The accretions to this simple narrative which might possibly have come from Babylonia, if any

channel for such coming could be demonstrated, are the voluntary character of the death of Jesus portrayed in John, the two angels of St. Luke, St. John, and Peter, and the story of the perishing of Judas in Matthew. Is there historical probability that this Babylonian myth is responsible for the addition of these elements to the Gospel narratives?

That this Babylonian epic was known to the J and P writers, at least in oral form, has already been admitted above. Neither of these writers, however, transmitted the part of the Myth which relates to the death and resurrection of Marduk. It was repugnant to all their religious conceptions. The only narrative of a resurrection in the Old Testament is that of an unknown man whose body, because his funeral was interrupted by invading Moabites, was thrown into the tomb of Elisha, and who, when he touched the bones of Elisha, revived and stood up (2 Kings 13 20, 21). One might compare this incident with the re-creation of man from the bones of Marduk, but one could not fairly argue for a Babylonian origin for the tale. It is either a case of the revival of a man in a state of coma, or a bit of folk lore that might grow up anywhere.

Zimmern called attention years ago to certain analogies between the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 42 1-4 49 1-6 50 4-9 and 52 13—53 12 and the state of wretchedness portrayed in a Babylonian penitential psalm.¹⁵ Perhaps a more telling analogy might be found between the Sufferings of the Servant, as described in Isa. 53, who bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of his beholders, who "made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death", who was to "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" and the death of Marduk, who caused the dead gods to live. The differences are, however, much more striking than the likenesses. The Suffering Servant was "despised and rejected", he "had no form nor comeliness", his "visage was marred more than any man". Marduk, on the other hand, went down "in full splendor into" his tomb (line 102 of the poem). Again, Marduk rose from the dead, while the Suffering Servant did not. The resemblances are really only

¹⁵ Schraders, *KAT*³, p. 385.

accidental. In the fortunes of the Hebrew nation or in the experiences of the prophet Jeremiah one can find the elements of the picture of the Suffering Servant. There is no need to go to a Babylonian myth.

No later Jewish book reflects these features of the myth. The author of Enoch 1—36, while he may have obtained the idea of the punishment of wicked angels from the myths, and knew that some hoped for a resurrection of men (see Enoch 10 10), has no word as to the resurrection of a god, an angel or the Messiah. The author of Daniel looks for a resurrection of many dead (Dan. 12 2-4), but they are human beings. Late psalmists, like the later Sadducees, scout the idea of resurrection (see Ps. 88 10 115 17). There is no evidence in Hebrew literature, canonical or apocryphal, that this part of the myth was transmitted through ordinary Hebrew channels to the time of Christ. Neither Mishna nor Talmud contains an echo of it.

If we turn to Zoroastrianism as a channel through which it might have been mediated to esoteric Jewish thought, our search is rewarded with the same negative result. The Gathas, the source of our knowledge of Zoroaster's own thought, afford no parallel to this myth, and one searches for it in vain in Yasts, Yasnas, Vendidad, as well as in the Bundahishn and other Pahlavi texts. Later Zoroastrianism had its belief in a general resurrection, it also looked for a Saviour, but its Saviour was not a suffering Saviour; he did not die and rise again.

The same is true of the Cult of Mithra,¹⁶ which might conceivably have been a channel through which this Babylonian story might have been transmitted to Gospel writers. The devotees of Mithra looked for a resurrection, but there is no hint that their god was believed to die and rise again. If Essenism, on the secret theories of which the writers on the supposed Gospel mythology bank so much, contained Persian elements, as has been supposed, the story of the death and resurrection of a god could hardly have been one of them, for we look in vain in Persian sources for such a belief.

In short there is no known bridge across the chasm between

¹⁶ See Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, Chicago, 1903.

Babylonian heathenism and the groups of early Christians among whom the Gospels were written. Persian and Jew alike held systems of thought so different from this myth, that, while both borrowed some elements of Babylonian thought, and Hebrews borrowed some of the myths of this very epic, the particular part which corresponds to the death and Resurrection of Jesus appealed to neither Hebrew nor Persian.

While it is true that our copies of the Babylonian Creation Epic are early, it was probably copied and read in the temples of Babylonia down practically to the Christian era. A Babylonian hymn is known, which, copied in the Arsacid time, bears the date of 80 B. C.¹⁷

But there is no evidence that at this period the sacred texts of the Babylonian temples possessed any attraction either for Jews of the *Golah* or for the little Christian churches, composed of poor people, which were scattered through the Levant toward the close of the first century A. D. Not till the next century did Christianity reach the dominions of Parthia.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that no influence of the Babylonian poem on the Gospel can be proved. Such likeness as there is may be purely accidental. The voluntary character of the death of Jesus as depicted in the Gospel of John, is the natural result of the Logos doctrine of the author of that Gospel, and the roots of the Logos doctrine are found in part in the Old Testament, and in part in Stoic and earlier Greek thought. These two strands had been blended in Philo, and account much more satisfactorily for this element than it is possible to do in any other way.

If, however, we were to make the most liberal assumption possible, and grant that in some unknown way the Babylonian myth *might* be responsible for the addition to the Gospel narratives of the suicide of Judas (an entirely gratuitous assumption) and for the two angels (which seems to the writer entirely unnecessary) the addition is so small and relates to such unimportant details, that it is entirely negligible. It strikes nowhere near the nerve of the great historic facts which underly the narratives of the Resurrection of our Lord.

¹⁷ See Reisner, *Sumcrische Hymnen*, Berlin, 1896, No. 49, and p. xiv.