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A Review of Ancient Religions I

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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Having established the possibility of revelation and even the likelihood of its being a verity, the next step in our inquiry is to find out what is reported by the “seekers after God” who claim to have made contact with the infinite, and brought back a message from “the inner fact of things.” To make this inquiry we shall find it most convenient, owing to the limits prescribed for this work, to report the respective messages as they have been accepted by great masses of humanity, and what is the net result of such reporting by the “seers” upon the faith of their followers. In thus proceeding we shall be relieved of considering each one of the many teachers of mankind, and at the same time the status of those large groups will in a way interpret to us the effect of such teaching, religious and philosophical, as they have received.

Babylonian-Assyrian religion. Commencing with the most ancient groups, we start with the races inhabiting the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers.^a These constituted the Babylonian and Assyrian empires and peoples. The religion of these people reflected, of course, their views of the deities reported to them by their prophets—their “inspired” teachers, who ventured to instruct them upon supposedly

[This chapter summarizes the following sections from *Seventy's Course in Theology*: Mesopotamia, *Seventy's Course in Theology* 3:46-52; Egypt, 3:53-59; Phoenicians and Persians, 3:60-64.]

^aIn the past seventy years, our understanding of the ancient Near East has been revolutionized by many important archaeological discoveries. Knowledge of the existence of Sumerians and Akkadians was becoming widespread among scholars only in the early twentieth century with the first publication of grammars of Sumerian and Akkadian and the excavation of Sumerian sites. See Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 3-32, for a general discussion of the history of Sumerology through the early 1960s. For a more recent study and interpretation, with full bibliography, see Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Modern historians designate the

divine things, including the existence of, and the nature of, whatever gods they conceived to exist. Their religion in the main consisted of a combination of the Shamanistic beliefs, that is, a belief that each force of nature had its spirit, good or bad.^b It is declared on the part of some historians that the peoples accepting Shamanism generally believed in a supreme being, but that the government of the world was in the hands of a number of secondary gods, both benevolent and malevolent toward man, and that it was absolutely necessary to propitiate them by magic, rites, and spells. This claim, however, is denied by other of equal authority as historians. Myers, for instance, in his *General History* says that

in the earliest period made known to us by the native records, we find the pantheon to embrace many local deities, but at no period do we find a supreme god. The most prominent feature from first to last of the popular religion was the belief in spirits, particularly in wicked spirits and the practice of magic, rites, and incantations to avert the malign influence of these demons.¹

Spiritual elements. A second important feature of the religion was what is known as astrology, or the foretelling of events by the aspect of the stars.^c This side of the religious system was most elaborately and ingeniously developed until the fame of the Chaldean astrology was spread throughout the ancient world. This historian, however, admits that along side of these low beliefs and superstitious

periods and peoples of Mesopotamia as follows: Pre-dynastic, before 3000 B.C.; Sumerian, 3000-2350; Akkadian, 2350-2000; Old Babylonian, 2000-1600; Assyrian, 1000-626; Neo-Babylonian, 626-539; Persian, 539-330; Hellenistic, 330-30 B.C. For general background and references, see Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* (New York: Facts on File, 1990); and Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1992). On Mesopotamian religions, see Mircea Eliade and others, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 9:447-69.

^bFollowing turn-of-the-century terminology, Roberts uses shamanism to designate what is today generally and broadly referred to as animism. *Encyclopedia of Religion* 1:296-302. Shamanism is now used by historians of religion to refer to specific religions or forms of religious behavior. "Shamanism," *Encyclopedia of Religion* 13:201-8.

¹Myers, *General History* [source not found]. [For a history of the idea of the High God and current thinking on the matter, see "Supreme Beings," *Encyclopedia of Religion* 14:166-81; and "Deus Otiosus," *Encyclopedia of Religion* 4:314-18.]

^cRoberts is here conflating two ideas which are separate in current thinking. Whereas Mesopotamians, along with all other ancient Near Eastern cultures, used divination extensively, astrology in its classical form originated only in the Hellenistic Age. See "Astrology," *Encyclopedia of Religion* 1:472-73; and "Divination," *Encyclopedia of Religion* 4:375-82.

practices there existed higher and purer elements. This is illustrated by the so-called “Penitential Psalms,” some of them dating from the second millennium B.C., “which breathe a spirit like that which pervades the Penitential Psalms of the Old Testament.”² In confirmation of this statement, Myers quotes one of these psalms, translated by Jastro: “O, my god, who art angry with me, accept my prayer. . . . May my sins be forgiven, my transgressions be wiped out. . . . 〈May〉 flowing waters of the stream wash me clean! Let me be pure, like the sheen of gold.”³

“The cuneiform writings on the tablets,” says James Freeman Clarke, author of *Ten Great Religions*, “show us that the Assyrians also prayed. On an unpublished tablet in the British Museum” is the prayer of an Assyrian king, the date 650 B.C.:

May the look of pity that shines in thine eternal face dispel my griefs.
 May I never feel the anger and wrath of the God.
 May my omissions and my sins be wiped out.
 May I find reconciliation with Him, for I am the servant of his power,
 the adorer of the great gods.
 May thy powerful face come to my help; may it shine like heaven, and
 bless me with happiness and abundance of riches.
 May it bring forth in abundance, like the earth, happiness and every
 sort of good.⁴

Dobbins, in his *World's Worship*, says that Babylonians, having a conception both of a supreme being and unity in that being,

when we penetrate beneath the surface which gross Polytheism has acquired from popular superstition, and revert to its original and higher conceptions, we shall find the whole based on the idea of the unity of the Deity, the last relic of the primitive revelation, disfigured indeed and all but lost in the monstrous ideas of Pantheism; confounding the creature with the Creator; and transforming the Deity into a god-world, whose manifestations are to be found in all the phenomena of nature. Beneath this supreme and sole God, this great all, in whom all things are lost and absorbed, are ranked in an order of emanation corresponding to their importance, a whole race of secondary deities, who are emanations from His very substance, who are mere personifications of His attributes and manifestations. The differences between the various pagan religions, is chiefly marked by the differences between these secondary divine beings.⁵

²Myers, *General History* [source not found].

³Myers, *General History*, 38 [source not found].

⁴Clarke, *Ten Great Religions* 2:234.

⁵Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 126. [In the Roberts manuscript, “god-world” was misquoted as “world-god.”]

Astrological phase. Commenting upon the astrological phase of the Babylonian-Assyrian religion, especially that part of it devoted to astronomy,^d Dobbins saw in the astral and especially in the planetary system a manifestation of the divine being:

They considered the stars as His true external manifestation, and in their religious system made them the visible evidence of the subordinate divine emanations from the substance of the infinite being, whom they identified with the world, his work.⁶

Conceptions of God, names and trinities. On *the* part of those who hold that the Babylonian-Assyrians had the conception of a supreme deity, from whom all other deities were derived, was given the name of Ilu, which signified God, par excellence. Dobbins writes:

Their idea of him was too comprehensive, too vast, to have any determined external form, or consequently to receive in general the adoration of the people, . . . In Chaldea it does not seem that any temple was ever specially dedicated to him; but at Nineveh and generally throughout Assyria, he seems to have received the peculiarly national name of Asshur. . . . The inscriptions designate him as “Master or Chief of the Gods.”⁷

There is also traced in the religion of these early people a shadowy triad, or trinity, or a series of such trinities: “Below Ilu, the universal and mysterious source of all, was placed a triad, composed of his three first external and visible manifestations, and occupying the summit of the hierarchy of gods in popular worship.”⁸ The names of this triad are Anu, the lord of darkness; Bell, the demi-urgus, the wonder worker, the organizer of the world; and Ao, called also Bin, the “divine son,” par excellence, the divine light, the intelligence penetrating truth, and vivifying the universe. These three divine personages were esteemed as equal in power and con-substantial, that is, of the same substance, were not held as of the same degree of emanation, but were regarded as having, on the contrary, issued the one from the other, and were variously represented in semi-human and animal forms.

A second triad is produced with personages no longer vague and indeterminate in character, like those of the first, but with a clearly

^dRoberts is again reflecting theories of comparative religion from around the turn of the century which are no longer widely held. For a history of thought and current views on Astral religion, see “Sky: The Heavens as Hierophany,” *Encyclopedia of Religion* 13:343–45.

⁶Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 126–27.

⁷Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 126–27.

⁸Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 128.

⟨divided⟩ [defined] sidereal aspect, each representing a known celestial body, and especially those in which the Chaldaeo-Assyrians saw the most striking ⟨astrological⟩ [external] manifestations of the deity; These were Shamash, the sun; Sin, the moon god; and a new form of Ao or Bin, inferior to the first, and representing him as god of the atmosphere or firmament. Thus did they industriously multiply deities and representations of them.⁹

Belief in a future life. The general belief respecting another life by those accepting these Shamanistic beliefs appears to be that the condition of man in the future existence will be poorer and more rigid than in the present, hence death is regarded with great dread.

One of the most interesting things connected with the Babylonian-Assyrian religion is that more than any other ancient religion it interlocks with the Bible narrative, and apparently had connection with some primitive religion that may have had revelation as its source. Lewis Browne in his *This Believing World* ascribes to the Semites (descendants of Shem of the Bible), whom Browne describes as having, “for reasons that cannot be made out . . . a peculiar genius for religion.” He ascribes to them the origin of the Babylonian-Assyrian religion.

Ethics of the Babylonians. “Ethically the Babylonians were little more than grown up children,” says Browne.

Fear still had hold of them and kept them slaves. Even though they were rich and powerful, even though they were the lords of the green earth and thought themselves the masters of the starry skies, still they remained cravens in their hearts. Beneath all their bluster they were timorous and worried. They were afraid.¹⁰

The Egyptian religion: Origin of the Egyptians.^c Of equal importance to the Babylonian-Assyrian race were the inhabitants of the Nile valley, the Egyptians. It may be said to be the consensus of opinion of those who have dealt with the history of these ancient people that, though living in Africa, they are not an African people; that is, they were not an indigenous race.^f The Egyptian language, it is held, while

⁹Condensed from Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 128-29.

¹⁰Browne, *This Believing World*, 75.

^cFor a general discussion and basic bibliography on Egyptian religion, see *Encyclopedia of Religion* 5:37-69.

^fThe idea that Egyptian civilization was founded by an outside “race,” although common in Roberts’s day, is no longer widely accepted. Nonetheless, some type of cultural influence from Mesopotamia on Egypt is acknowledged. See Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 17-24.

of a peculiar type, has analogies which connect it both with the Semitic and with the Indo-European forms of speech,⁸ more especially with the former. We must regard the Egyptians, therefore, as an Asiatic people, immigrants into the valley of the Nile which they entered from the east.¹¹

The theory that the Egyptians immigrated from the south (Ethiopia) down the Nile is discussed by historians, but generally discredited. Josephus when speaking of one of the ancient Egyptian kings, Sethosis, says, upon the authority of Manetho, that Sethosis was called “Egyptus” and that the country also was called from his name, Egypt.¹²

According to Herodotus, writing in the 5th century B.C., the Egyptians were a very religious people, “religious to excess,” far beyond any other race of men.¹³ [According to Professor Rawlinson,] religion so “permeated the whole being of the people,” and their “writing was so full of sacred symbols and of allusions to the mythology that it was scarcely possible to employ it on any subject which lay outside the religion.” He also says that the subject is “one of great complexity and considerable obscurity.”¹⁴

Esoteric and exoteric forms of the faith: Nature of gods. It appears, however, that the Egyptian religion,^h like most other religions of antiquity, had two phases or aspects:

one, that in which it was presented to the general public or vast mass of the population; the other, that which it bore in the minds of the

⁸Roberts here is apparently confusing the parallels to both Semitic and Afro-Asiatic (Hamitic) languages which can be found in Egyptian. No extensive parallels exist between Indo-European languages and Egyptian.

¹¹Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, ch. 2.

¹²See Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*, “Against Apion,” 1, 584. In the book of Abraham, translated by Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the New Dispensation, gives the information that the king reigning over Egypt at the time of Abraham’s sojourn in that land, was a descendent of Ham, son of Noah. Ham had married a wife of a race with whom the sons of Noah were forbidden to intermarry—the descendants of Cain—and thus through Ham and Egyptus, that race was perpetuated after the flood. This Egyptus, however, seems to have been of an enterprising character. It was she who discovered the Nile valley, and brought her descendants there to inhabit it (see Abr. 1). [The fragments of Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca* have been collected, edited, and translated by William G. Waddell, *Manetho* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940). The passage referenced by Roberts is Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.15 (§ 102) = Waddell’s fragment 50, pp. 104–5.]

¹³Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:320. [Herodotus, *History* 2.37.]

¹⁴Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:322–23.

^hA great deal of progress has been made in understanding Egyptian religion in the last seventy years. Roberts’s discussion of Egyptian religion, based on his early twentieth-century secondary sources, is therefore quite dated and often inaccurate.

intelligent, the learned, the initiated. To the former it was a polytheism of a multitudinous, and in many respects of a gross, character: to the latter it was a system combining strict monotheism with a metaphysical speculative philosophy on the two great subjects of the nature of God and the destiny of man, which sought to exhaust those deep and unfathomable mysteries.¹⁵

It is held by some that even in the Egyptian religion formulated for the masses, it was understood that the “‘idea of a single self-existent deity,’ was involved in the conceptions which it set forth, and is to be found not unfrequently in the hymns and prayers of the Ritual.”¹⁶ In the esoteric religion of the Egyptians, the primary doctrine was

the real essential Unity of the Divine Nature. The sacred texts taught that there was a single Being, “the sole producer of all things both in heaven and earth, Himself not produced of any” — “the only true living God, self-originated” — “who exists from the beginning” — “who has made all things, but has not ~~made~~ Himself been made.” This Being seems never to have been represented by any material, even symbolical, form. It is thought that He had no name, or, if He had, that it must have been unlawful either to pronounce or write it. He was a pure spirit, perfect in every respect—all-wise, almighty, supremely good.

The gods of the popular mythology were understood, in the esoteric religion, to be either personified attributes of the Deity, or parts of the nature which He had created, considered as informed and inspired by Him. Num or Kneph represented the creative mind,

Modern studies on Egyptian religions in English include James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1988); George Hart, *Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Erik Hornung, *Idea into Image* (New York: Timken, 1992); Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973); Stephen Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (London: British Museum, 1992); Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1993); Byron E. Shafer, ed., *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); and W. K. Simpson, ed., *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt* (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989). Modern translations of major Egyptian religious texts can be found in: T. G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead: or, Going Forth by Day* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 3 vols. (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1973–79); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); and Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–80). We thank John Gee for some of these references.

¹⁵Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:323–24.

¹⁶Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:324.

Phthah the creative hand, or act of creating; Maut represented matter, Ra the sun, Khons the moon, Seb the earth, Khem the generative power in nature, Nut the upper hemisphere of heaven, Athor the lower world or under hemisphere; Thoth personified the Divine wisdom; Ammon, perhaps, the Divine mysteriousness or incomprehensibility; Osiris (according to some) the Divine goodness. It is difficult in many cases to fix on the exact quality, act, or part of nature intended; but the principle admits of no doubt. No educated Egyptian priest certainly, probably no educated layman, conceived of the popular gods as ⟨really⟩ [real] separate and distinct beings. All knew that there was but one God, and understood that when worship was offered ⟨to the several gods⟩, the One God was worshipped under some one of His forms or in some one of His aspects. . . . Ra was not a Sun-Deity with a distinct and separate existence, but the supreme God acting in the sun, making His light to shine on the earth, warming, cheering, and blessing it.¹⁷

According to Burder:

To exhibit in symbol form the Egyptian ideas of their gods was the very essence of the Egyptian religion. This brought about the grossest of superstitious worship. To set forth in symbol the attributes, quality and nature of their gods, the priests chose to use animals; the bull, cow, ram, cat, crocodile, ape, etc. were all emblems of the gods. But let it be remembered, that the Egyptians never worshipped images or idols, they worshipped living representations of the gods, and not liveless images of stone or metal. Their sculptures were never made for worship; they chose animals that corresponded as nearly as possible to the ideas of the *nature of the* gods.¹⁸

Survival of the dead. “Popularly these animals were regarded as gods, and were really worshipped; by the priests they were regarded simply as the representatives of the gods.”¹⁹

The Egyptians believed in the survival of the spirit of man after death, and ultimately that the spirit would rejoin the body it had inhabited in life in a resurrection from the dead.²⁰

¹⁷Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:324–26.

¹⁸Burder, *History of All Religions*, 507–8.

¹⁹Burder, *History of All Religions*, 507–8.

²⁰After telling the drama of the life and resurrection of Osiris, the author of *This Believing World*, Lewis Browne, says: “Osiris came to life again! He was miraculously resurrected from death and taken up to heaven; and there in heaven, so the myth declared, he lived on eternally!” The Egyptians reason that if it was the fate of God Osiris, then a way could be found to make it the fate of man too. Of course, all one had to do was to be buried properly, if only a man’s soul were committed safely into the hands of Osiris, and his body embalmed and preserved in a tomb, then some day of a surety the two would get together again and the man would walk the earth as of yore—at least, so it came to be believed in Egypt as long as 4000 years ago (Browne, *This Believing World*, 83–85).

Disparagement between principle and practice. One thing respecting the Egyptian religion remains mysteriously dark, viz. the disparagement between the very exalted moral doctrines of the religion and the immorality of those who followed it. Rawlinson states then:

In morals, the Egyptians combined an extraordinary degree of theoretic perfection with an exceedingly lax and imperfect practice. It has been said that the forty-two laws of the Egyptian religion contained in the 125th chapter of the *Book of the Dead* fall short on nothing of the teachings of Christianity, and it is even conjectured that Moses in compiling his code of laws for Israel did but “translate into Hebrew the religious precepts which he found in the sacred books” of the people among whom he had been brought up. Such expressions are no doubt exaggerated, but they convey what must be allowed to be a fact, viz. that there is a very close agreement between the moral law of the Egyptians and the precepts of the Decalogue.

Yet notwithstanding this profound knowledge of high moral truth, the practice of the people was rather below than above the common level.

The Egyptian women were notoriously of loose character, and, whether as we meet with them in history, or as they are depicted in Egyptian romance, appear as immodest and licentious. The men practiced impurity openly, and boasted of it in their writings; they were industrious, cheerful, nay, even gay, under hardships, and not wanting in family affection; but they were cruel, vindictive, treacherous, avaricious, prone to superstition, and profoundly servile.²¹

And yet the high praise for the moral law as given above is borne out by answers that the spirit of man must make before Osiris in the judgement hall, where the decisive sentence is pronounced either admitting the candidate to happiness or excluding him forever. He must show that his knowledge of life is great enough to give him the right to be admitted to share the lot of glorified spirits. Before each of the forty-two judges who question him in turn, he must be able to tell the name of each judge, and what it means. Among other things he is obliged to give an account of his whole life, in which he must be able to say that he has not blasphemed, has not stolen, nor smitten men privily; that he has not treated any person with cruelty, nor started up trouble; that he has not been idle nor intoxicated, and has not practiced any shameful crime. Nor must he, when before the judges, confine himself merely to denying any ill conduct; he must speak of the good he has done in his lifetime; that he has made proper offerings to the gods, given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothes

²¹Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* 1:108-9.

to the naked.ⁱ “If in sincerity” he could report affirmatively upon all these heads,

then the soul was straightway gathered into the fold of Osiris. But if it could not, if it was found wanting when weighed in the heavenly balances, then it was cast into hell, to be rent to shreds by the “Devouress.” For only the righteous souls, only the guiltless, were thought to be deserving of life everlasting.²²

All which makes one wonder why the disparagement between the high demand of religious principles and *the* Egyptian low state of righteous living.

Immorality of the Egyptians: An explanation. Some in the explanation of this disparagement between the high morality of the religion of the Egyptians and the low state of morals in their lives, say that it arises from this circumstance, viz. that the religion itself was derived from contact with the true religion of the antediluvian patriarchs of the Bible, but being left in the hands of a people who soon fell away from righteous principles to the practice of gross sensualism, the divergence between moral theory and moral practice soon set in and drifted wider and wider apart until we have the result observed and commented upon by the authorities above quoted. This observation may apply also to nearly all the ancient religions of the world subsequent to the flood.

Religion of the Medes and Persians. The religion of the Medes and Persians is accorded so great an antiquity that it is supposed to have been taught by one of the grandsons of Noah who planted colonies on the plateau of Persia soon after the confusion of languages. In Persia the first idolaters were called Sabians, who adored the rising sun with the profoundest veneration.^j To that ~~planet~~ **luminous sphere** they consecrated a most magnificent chariot to be drawn by horses of the greatest beauty and magnitude on every solemn festival. In consequence

ⁱRoberts is referring to the so-called “Negative Confession,” chapter 125 of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. For translations, see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* 2:124–32.

²²Browne, *This Believing World*, 86–87.

^jRoberts’s source (Burder, *History of All Religions*, cited in *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 3:62) is inaccurate on the Sabians. The Mesopotamian Sabians (not to be confused with the south Arabian Sabaeans) were in fact medieval survivors of older pagan Mesopotamian astral cults. On Iranian religion, see “Iranian Religions,” *Encyclopedia of Religion* 7:277–80; “Zarathushtra” (Zoroaster), 15:556–58; and “Zoroastrianism,” 15:579–91.

of the veneration they paid to the sun, they worshipped fire and invoked it in all their sacrifices. In their marches they carried it before their kings, and none but the priests were permitted to touch it because they made the people believe that it came down from heaven.

Persian adoration, however, was not confined to the sun. They worshipped the water, and the earth, and the winds as so many deities. Human sacrifices were offered by them; they burnt their children in fiery furnaces appropriated to their idols. Both Medes and Persians at first worshipped two gods: namely, Arimanius, the god of evil; and Oromasdes, the giver of all good.^k By some it was believed that the good god was from eternity, and the evil one created; but they all agreed that they would continue to the end of time and that the good god would overcome the evil one. They considered darkness as the symbol of the evil god, and the light as the image of the good one.

They held Arimanius, the evil god, in such detestation, that they always wrote his name backward. Some ancient writers have given us a very odd account of the origin of this god Arimanius. . . . Oromasdes, say they, considering that he was alone, said to himself, “If I have no one to oppose me, where, then, is all my glory?” This single reflection of his created Arimanius, who, by his everlasting opposition to the divine will, contributed against inclination to the glory of Oromasdes.²³

James Freeman Clarke, commenting upon the religion of the Persians, follows Herodotus in his description of the religion of the Persians and agrees that they had

no temples, no altars, no idol worship of any kind. The Supreme Being is worshipped by one symbol, fire, which is pure and purifies all things. The prayers are for purity, the libation the juice of a plant. Ormazd has created everything good and all his creatures are pure. Listen to the priest chanting the litany thus: “I invoke and celebrate Ahura Mazda, brilliant, greatest, best. All-perfect, all-powerful, all-wise,

^kThe spellings of Arimanius and Oramasdes used by Roberts were current in the early twentieth century and were based on Latin and Greek forms of the names.

Old Persian	Pahlavi	Greek	Latin
Ahura Mazda	Ohrmazd	Oromazes	Oramasdes
Angra Mainyu	Ahriman	Areimanios	Arimanius

Most modern scholars generally use the Pahlavi versions of the names unless dealing specifically with Old Persian texts (see *Encyclopedia of Religion* 1:157-59 on these two beings). Note that on p. 134, Roberts uses Ormazd and Ahriman for these two beings. For further information on Iranian religions, see William W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983); and Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984).

²³Burder, *History of All Religions*, 521.

all-beautiful, only source of knowledge and happiness; he has created us, he has formed us, he sustains us." "He belongs to those who think good; to those who think evil he does not belong. He belongs to those who speak good; to those who speak evil he does not belong. He belongs to those who do good, to those who do evil he does not belong." This is the religion of the great race who founded the Persian empire.

To these worshippers life did not seem to be a gay festival, as to the Greeks, nor a single step on the long pathway of the soul's transmigration, as to the Egyptians; but a field of battle between mighty powers of good and evil, where Ormazd and Ahriman meet in daily conflict, and where the servant of God is to maintain a perpetual battle against the powers of darkness, by cherishing good thoughts, good words, and good actions.²⁴

Phoenician religion. As near neighbors to the Persians, the Phoenicians and their religion deserve mention. Meyers claims the Phoenicians were of the Semitic race, and that their ancestors lived in the neighborhood of the Persian Gulf. From their seats in that region, they migrated westward like the ancestors of the Hebrews and reached the Mediterranean before the light of history had fallen upon its shores.¹ The Phoenicians had somewhat the same religious notions as the Babylonians and worshipped some of the same gods, Baal for instance.²⁵ Baal was the supreme male divinity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations; Ashtoreth was their female divinity. The name Baal means Lord. He was the Sun God. The name is generally used in connection with other names, as Baal-Gad, that is, Baal the fortune bringer; Baal-Berith, or covenant-making Baal; Baal-Zebub, the fly-god.^m The people of Israel worshipped Baal for some time, up to the seership time of Samuel, at whose rebuke they forsook this iniquity for nearly one hundred years. The practice was introduced again at the time of

²⁴Clarke, *Ten Great Religions* 1:11-12. See also Myers, *General History*, 63 [source not found].

¹For general studies of the Phoenicians, see S. Moscati, *The World of the Phoenicians* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968); D. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, 2d ed. (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1971); G. Herm, *The Phoenicians: The Purple Empire of the Ancient World* (London: Gollancz, 1975); and *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5:349-57. On Carthage, see Aïcha Ben Abed Ben Khader and David Soren, eds., *Carthage: A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1987). On Phoenician and Carthaginian religion, see *Encyclopedia of Religion* 11:311-18.

²⁵Crabb, *Mythology*, ch. 55.

^mBaal-Zebub was the god of the city of Ekron according to the Old Testament (2 Kings 1:2, 3, 6, 16). The name is otherwise unknown and may represent a variant of the better documented Baal-Zebul (Beelzebul). See *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1:554, 638-40.

Solomon and continued until the days of the captivity, early in the sixth century B.C.²⁶

Carthaginian religion. Saturn, under the name of Moloch, was the god most honored by the Carthaginians, a colony of Phoenicians.ⁿ This idol was the deity to whom they offered up human sacrifices, and from this proceeds the fable of Saturn having devoured his own children. Princes and great men, under particular calamities, used to offer up their most beloved children to this idol. Private persons imitated the conduct of their princes, and thus in time the practice became general—so general that they carried their infatuation so far that those who had no children of their own purchased those of the poor, that they might not be deprived of the benefit of such a sacrifice! “This horrid custom prevailed long among the Phoenicians, the Tyrians, and the Carthaginians; and from them the Israelites borrowed it, although expressly contrary to the order of God.”²⁷

²⁶See Dobbins, *Story of the World's Worship*, 142.

ⁿThe synthesis of the Carthaginian/Canaanite Moloch with the Roman god Saturn occurred only after the Roman conquest of Carthage in 142 B.C. Roberts's source (Burder, *History of All Religions*, cited in *Seventy's Course in Theology* 3:61) confuses these two gods, which although similar in some respects, are nonetheless distinct. On Moloch/Molech, see *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4:895–98. On Saturn, see Pierre Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) and the classical sources he provides.

²⁷Burder, *History of All Religions*, 510–11; and 2 Kings 16; 21.

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*.