

"Among the Assyrians, as among the Egyptians, the gods were often arranged in triads, as that of Anu, Bel, and Ao."

This is the opinion and conclusion of James Freeman Clarke, after having consulted no less than one hundred and ninety-eight different authorities—some in the original, and others being translations—previous to publishing a work of great research by himself, wherein he treats of "Ten Great Religions."

In "Lippincott's Biographical Dictionary," we find that "Baal was also the Bel or Belus of the Babylonians, and his worship became almost universal under several of the Jewish Kings."

In support of this, I cite the following passages from the Old Testament:

"And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger."

"And they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth."

"And Joash said unto all them that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? . . . If he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."

"Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only."

"And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

"And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much."

"Now, therefore, call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants and all his priests; let none be wanting; for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal."

"But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel."

Manasseh "reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did king Ahab of Israel, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them."

Josiah afterward "put down the idolatrous priests, whom the Kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the high places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun and to the moon, and to the planets and to all the hosts of heaven."

The Old Testament gives evidence of great difference in religious opinion, and since the era of Jesus Christ as great differences have continued to exist—in some cases piety without morality, in others morality without piety, have distinguished the worshippers. Under different forms and by different nations, religion has been characterized as "Struggle, Independence, Conservatism, Variety, Divine Will, Development, Progress, Unity;" each has recognized a Divine Power, a Creative Intelligence, a God to worship, in places sacred to him, or at altars erected for the purpose; but to say that they or either of them worshipped the devil as they understood the altogether bad, or as Christians understand that character, is an assertion void of charity and void of justice.

It is true that gods were worshipped under the name or character of the Destroyer, but with such were associated others possessing the powers of creation and restoration. Good in Deity has always been stronger than evil; even to this day.

In referring to the word Bel, Dr. Oliver says, "The compounds of this divine name, Bel are of great variety. Belus was used by the Chaldeans; and the Deity was known amongst the Celts by the name of Bel or Belenus, which title, by modern authors, is identified with Apollo. The Primitive name of Britain was Velynys, the Island of Bel; and the fires lighted up on May-day were in honor of this Deity, and called Bel's fire."