

god ; and which fate, the three noble Hebrew youths were subjected to, though they were preserved in the face of Babylon's idol, and rescued from his supposed omnipotence, by one who walked with them, and who was "like the Son of God." The mode of worship was by offerings to the temple, victims to the fire, wild gesticulations, and agonizing prayers. An illustration of the mode of supplication, when all offerings had failed to bring the response, we find in the history of Elijah. The worship of Bel or Baal had spread over Israel ; and that the question of superiority might be decided between the true and the false God, the prophet challenged the idolatrous priests to try the respective powers of their Gods. Baal represented the sun, or fire ; then let the decision be by fire. The prophet challenged them in their strongest position, "the God that answereth by fire let him be God." The priests cried "from morning even till noon, O Baal, hear us." Elijah mocked them in bitterest sarcasm, and that, along with no heaven-sent fire, excited them to frenzy. The desperation of defeat, and being forsaken by their god, made them cry with intense importunity, leap on the altar, cut themselves with knives and lances, and present the horrible spectacle of gashed and blood covered men.

The Babylonian Bel was derived from the same false idea, and held the same idolatrous position, as did the Ammon of the Egyptians, the Baal of the Midianites, the Moloch, Milcam, or Malcham of the Canaanites ; the Chemosh of the Moabites ; the Herakles or Hercules of the Tyrians ; the Jupiter of the Greeks, and the Jove of the Romans.

The female divinity, Mylitta, or queen of heaven, had temples dedicated to her, also, but her rites were chiefly observed in groves and on high hills. These are too gross to permit of detail, and it is enough to say, that they consisted of the most licentious orgies, and her sacred places, as they were called, were scenes of unbounded and unblushing prostitution. This supreme goddess of the Babylonians was the same, with the same rites, as the Egyptian Isis ; the golden calf that the Israelites made at Sinai, and to which they paid homage in music, dances, and lustful revelry ; the same as the Phœnician Ashtaroth or Astarte ; the Ephesian Diana ; the Grecian Juno ; and the Roman Venus. Thus the primitive Sabaistic idea came down and covered the ancient heathen world, and though the names of the two chief deities differ in different nations, yet no one can fail to see the close resemblance that everywhere prevailed.