

are loth to support the champions of their views, and so Freethought in spite of its loud clamors for recognition makes a poor show in the world, for its devotees lack the earnestness usually found in religious circles. Certainly, Mr. Green had a hard time to make both ends meet, and his only son, a young man of business ability and full of enthusiasm for the cause, the business agent for the *Freethought Magazine* of his father who had made it a financial success, had died a premature death about a year ago. When Mr. and Mrs. Green found themselves confronted with a deficit and the prospect of a failure in their publishing business, they felt that at their advanced age they were unable to carry the burden any longer and decided in a gloomy hour to give up the fight and quit a life which for them, after the loss of their son, had no longer any attraction. Their bodies were found in a room in which they had turned on the gas.

Their fate is sad and we have no doubt that even those who did not agree with their aims and ideals will honor their good intention, the honesty of their conviction and the love of truth which they manifested in their life-time.

Peace be with them and an honorable memory to their endeavor.

### ZODIACAL MITHRAIC TABLETS.

*To the Editor of The Open Court:*

Are not the well-known Mithraic tablets entirely zodiacal? At least I have come to that conclusion after examining and comparing the several specimens of the British Museum, the Louvre, the Vatican, the Naples Museum, and the large Mithraic Monument of the Municipal Museum at Metz. The same conclusion follows when we examine the engravings of Mithraic tablets in such works as Monfaucon, Drummond, Maurice, Calmet, etc. The specimen in the British Museum practically ranks with the tablets, being identical with the more usual *alto-rilievo* bas-reliefs, in design and meaning. The same remark applies to the Mithraic sculpture in the Kircher Museum, Rome. Some writers have recognised one or more zodiacal signs on these tablets, as the Scorpion, Crab, etc. But I refer to their being entirely zodiacal, and thus affording a clue (though perhaps a slight one) to their origin and meaning.

It appears to me that writers on the tablets have missed or passed over this conclusion, because they omitted to examine the tablets in connection with the 36 Decans, as well as with the 12 great familiar signs.

But the evidence available all tends to show that the 36 inferior signs are of similar antiquity and equal authority to the 12 great signs. This being so, it is as reasonable to conceive that the former as well as the latter were made use of in the mystic Mithraic symbolism.

I of course refer not to any modern post-Christian constellations, but to the original ancient 25 signs, as handed down by Hipparchus, Ptolemy, *et al.*, and as are to be found on the great Denderah, Isaic planisphere in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Taking these as our guide, we find each figure accounted for in the tablets as being one of the ancient original 48 zodiacal constellations.

Undoubtedly additions to the tablets have been made by local priests to local Mithraic temples or worship. Thus the Metz tablet has a series of small tablets as a border, depicting mythologic scenes of initiation, etc. But it seems possible to eliminate these later and local accretions from the original zodiacal tauroctonus Mithra.

The zodiacal origin of the Mithraic figures will be seen by comparing those

on existing tablets with the ancient Planisphere. In the Vatican Museum, in the Sala degli Animali, No. 1412 is a Mithraic group entitled "Sagrifizio di Mitra." This consists of the following figures to each of which I will attach the technical Latin name of the sign to which it refers: (1) Bull (*Taurus*), (2) Scorpion (*Scorpio*), (3) Dog (*Sirius*), (4) Serpent (*Hydra*), (5) Phrygian (*Perseus*). This being in the round, there are fewer figures, as usual, than are found on the tablets. But every figure there is, is manifestly zodiacal; two are signs, three are decans. It illustrates the former observation, viz., that unless the 36 decans are referred to, as well as the 12 signs, the tablets cannot be explained.

The tablets preserve exactly the central idea of the Mithraic cult in every example; but at the same time the secondary symbols vary. This instead of weakening confirms the conclusion that these mystic tablets are entirely zodiacal.

Thus the British Museum Mithraic group shows this. It is engraved in *The Open Court* (No. 560, p. 2) and appears in *The Mysteries of Mithra* on p. 39. We have here, besides the above five, the two Phrygian youths so common on these tablets. One has the torch up (life), the other down (death). We here have Pollux and Castor, the twins in Gemini: for one was immortal, the other mortal. A more recondite symbol is seen in the blood issuing from the bull. The sculptor has made it to exactly imitate a threefold corn-ear. This is really Spica held by Virgo. We here therefore have obtained seven signs from these two tablets.

The Aquilied Tablet (No. 560, p. 3) gives similar evidence. On it are found the above seven. Spica, however, is on the end of the bull's tail. Besides these is (8) a Goat (*Capricornus*). Sol and Luna are in their chariots. These may be late additions from Roman mythology; but if not, both are intimately connected with the original zodiacal system. (Barrett, *Enquiry Into the Origin of the Constellations*, Dublin, 1800.)

The Borghese Tablet gives us five signs, and seven, Spica on the tail, besides Sol in a quadriga, and Luna in a biga, each with a symbolic herald; but no fresh sign.

In one of the tablets, engraved by Drummond (*Edipus Judaicus*), is found a Crab (*Cancer*) instead of a scorpion, thus making nine signs.

In the Mayence bas-relief (No. 559, p. 726) Mithra is with a bow, probably here personifying Sagittarius.

In the Konjiga bas-relief is a Raven (*Corvus*). That this refers to the sign Corvus is confirmed by a raven being found, among the other signs, on some tablets (No. 558, p. 675). This banquet is undoubtedly mystical, and to be interpreted in accord with the mystic tablets. Accordingly we here see a lion (*Leo*) as on some tablets; and a tripod-altar (*Ara*), and sacred cakes, each marked with a cross (*Crux Australis*). Prominence is given to a cup of wine (*Crater*), held by the chief person. As this sacrament is highly symbolical, it would seem that Gemini is here adumbrated no less than four times. The two seated, the two on the right, the two on the left, and the two costly mystic pillars. There appears to be the head of a Goat (*Capricornus*), also. Another figure is the soldier (*Perseus*). The two mystic pillars may be compared with Jachin and Boaz, and the two still found in esoteric Masonry. We have here then five fresh signs, or sixteen in all.

On some Mithraic tablets I have seen a fish (*Pisces*); and on the Metz monument is a large urn (*Aquarius*). In some ancient zodiacs this sign is merely an urn; so that the 12 signs and many of the 36 decans are found on the tablets.

That this is not accidental, the number seems to show; but the example (No. 560, p. 9, No. 558, p. 672) confirms this conclusion in a convincing manner; for

here we have Mithra, surrounded by the 12 signs, in order, no longer disguised, but in the usual form. Further confirmation may be gathered from the central figure itself, which combines various signs in union; thus: Man (*Aquarius*), Lion (*Leo*), Bull Feet (*Taurus*), Wings (*Aquila*), Arrowfulmen (*Sagittarius*), Vase (*Crater*), besides Sol and Luna.

Augustine's remark (No. 558, p. 671) confirms the zodiacal origin, for he says that they imitated birds (*Aquila, Corvus, Columba*), crows, lions (*Leo*). Professor Cumont also informs us that pagan theologians asserted that the masks the initiated wore had "allusion to the signs of the zodiac: a circumstance which these theologians would presumably be thoroughly conversant with. The celebrated Mithra cave-temple in Capri had a fine Mithraic tablet, now in the Naples Museum. Romanelli (*Isola di Capri*) has an engraving and full description of this, and he identifies all the figures with zodiacal signs.

ROME, Italy.

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### EDUARD KOENIG'S BIBLE AND BABEL.<sup>1</sup>

When Professor Delitzsch's lecture created a stir among the religious circles of Germany, a flood of criticisms appeared, and among them a pamphlet which in contrast to Delitzsch's *Babel and Bible* was called *Bible and Babel*. It was written by Eduard Koenig, Professor of Theology in the University of Bonn, and the inversion of the title indicated that Bible should take precedence before Babel, and that while Babel may have been the brains of Western Asia, the Bible was after all the product of divine revelation.

Koenig's lecture *Bible and Babel* has reached nine editions, and it was finally translated by Charles E. Hay, D. D., and published by the German Literary Board of Burlington, Iowa. The translator deeming the term "Babel" inappropriate, replaced it by Babylon, and so the book lies before us under the title *The Bible and Babylon*. The change is by no means an improvement.

The translator explains the purpose of Koenig's lectures as follows:

"A thrilling interest attaches to the excavations of recent years in the vicinity of Babylon. They afford us a vivid picture of civilisations antedating that of God's ancient people and thus furnish what has hitherto been lacking—a clearly-defined background for the narratives and revelations of the Bible.

"It is not surprising that in the imagination of some enthusiastic students the central picture should be absorbed in the background—lost sight of as they painfully decipher the dim lines of the ancient past so long shrouded in darkness. When, however, sweeping conclusions drawn from the most meagre and uncertain premises are boldly proclaimed as undoubted facts and used to discredit the inspired records, it is incumbent upon Christian scholarship to display the fallacies of these hasty deductions and indicate the true relation of the new knowledge to the old familiar truth.

"As a contribution to this end, the little pamphlet of Dr. Koenig, here placed within the reach of English readers, cannot but prove welcome to many who are not in position to follow the discussion in all its details. It is well that the most extreme positions have been distinctively stated by so zealous and competent a scholar as Delitzsch. His lectures have challenged attention and focused interest

<sup>1</sup> *The Bible and Babylon*. A Brief Study in the History of Ancient Civilisation, by Eduard Koenig, Doctor of Philosophy and Theology and Professor in Ordinary in the University at Bonn. Translated from the German by Charles E. Hay, D. D. German Literary Board, Burlington, Iowa, 1903. Price, \$1.40. Pages, 64.