ANIMAL SYMBOLISM.

BY THE EDITOR.

COMPARATIVE theology has collected many strange facts concerning the religious development of mankind. We are confronted in Egypt with a religion that worships animals or gods with animal heads. In India Ganesha, the god of wisdom, has an elephant's head and trunk, and Vishnu in his successive avatars passed through the forms of a fish, a tortoise, a boar and a lion before he became human, and then in the fifth he became only a dwarf. In the sixth avatar he was incorporated in Rama with the battle-ax, and in the seventh he appeared as Rama Chandra, the hero of the Mahabharata epic; then follow the avatars as Krishna, as Buddha and finally the avatar to come is the white horse, the tenth and last. The key to many of these strange notions we have found in the religion of the American Indians which preserves a most important stage of arrested development and proves that these animal avatars as well as animal symbols of the deity are remnants of a most primitive age when the world was mirrored strangely in the mind of man.

We know that primitive man was by no means conscious from the start of his superiority over the animal world. He entered life on this planet rather timidly, because in the days of savagery lower animals seemed to him his own superiors in many respects. Bears and other wild animals were of greater strength, wolves and foxes more nimble, the wild cat could better climb the trees and hide in ambush, the wild ass was swifter, the birds could fly and the fishes swim. His own superiority on account of his intellect dawned on man only gradually and very slowly with the acquisition of civilization. For this reason it was natural that he ordinarily thought of his brute fellow creatures as something more than his equals, and when he formed the idea of spiritual presences, of invisible superior beings that influenced his fate, either attacking or protecting him, either promoting his life or injuring his health and his prop-
enity, he naturally pictured them in the shape of animals. The animals uppermost in his mind were those that were most important factors of his destiny at certain periods of his development, partly by furnishing him with food, partly as being his most dangerous enemies, and perhaps for some other reasons.

We can trace a certain succession in this development through three periods: first, the period of wild animals, the age of savagery; then the period of flocks, the age of nomad life; and finally the period of domesticated animals, the age of agriculture. The first is represented by such creatures as the bear, the wolf, the dog, the snake, the mouse, birds, and fish. A transition to the second period is constituted by the boar and the wild ass; and then came the camel, the goat and the sheep, and finally the cow. In the stage of agriculture, the gods assume human form and only domesticated animals are offered as sacrifices, especially sheep, goats, bullocks and heifers.

The fish belongs to the first class. It is one of the oldest emblems, if not the very oldest, of a divine power regarded with awe by primitive man.

When mankind progressed from the savage state to the civilization of the nomad, and from the nomad state to agriculture, the older forms of religion were sometimes scorned and abandoned with ostentation, but sometimes the old ideas continued to slumber and occasionally broke out with renewed force. For in truth the old way of thinking is never absolutely abandoned but only superseded (in the literal sense of the word) by a new mode of worship. New ideas are grafted upon the old ones. The old ideas lie dormant; they remain in a latent condition and when the new ideas weaken or lose their hold on the people in times of trouble, the old religious ritual breaks forth with renewed vigor.

Instances of this kind are preserved in the Old Testament in writings dating from the time of the Exile when the reform ritual which had supplanted the older and more savage mode of sacrifice, had become weakened. Then the old worship came to the front again. The national misfortune may have aroused the conscience of that part of the population which had its misgivings concerning the innovations of the reform ritual, and now they abandoned the new sacrifices of goats, heifers and other domesticated animals, and fell back upon the ancient customs sanctified by hoary traditions, offering dogs, creeping things, swine, mice and other vermin, which the prophets with disgust call "abominations." In this sense we must read Ezek. viii. 10-12: "So I went in and saw; and behold
every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the
idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.
Then there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the
house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son
of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud
of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou
seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every
man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth
us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.” The same religious
reaction is described in Is. lxv. 3-5: “A people that provoketh me to
anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth
incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and
lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abom-
inable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come
not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in
my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.” The same practice is re-
ferred to in Isaiah lxvi. 17: “They that sanctify themselves, and
purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating
swine’s flesh, and the abominations, and the mouse, shall be con-
sumed together, saith the Lord.”

Sometimes old ideas reappear with new force and remain vic-
torious without being mere recapitulations of former ages. Though
they are symptoms of a reactionary spirit, they may finally lead to
a religious progress. This has been the case with several Christian
institutions and dogmas, among them the reverence for the fish
which by its very nature could not become an object of sacrifice.
The religious notions attached to the fish were more spiritual and
consisted more in interpretations involving perhaps also a remi-
niscence of sacrificial meals.

It is strange that Christianity, though upon the whole a pro-
gress, falls back upon many notions which were thought to have been
absolutely abandoned. We have in it a revival of the primitive
custom of the god-eating, of the need of human sacrifice, and the
belief in the dying god who rises from the tomb to new life. These
beliefs had been done away in the circles of philosophers and among
the educated classes of the people, but large multitudes still clung to
these ideas as can be proved by the occurrence of the sacrificial death
of Antinous who offered his life as a vicarious victim for the
preservation of the emperor. His act was taken seriously, was
praised as a great and noble deed and was generally regarded as

^1 Compare also in the same chapter verse 3 which is too corrupt however
to make good sense.
A SARCOPHAGUS FROM MILETUS.
After Reinach.
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efficacious. The many statues erected in his honor bear testimony
to the prevalence of these beliefs paving the way for the spread of
Christianity. We must remember that during the civil wars the
higher culture of classical antiquity broke down and so the beliefs
of the older and lower strata made their reappearance.

We know that during the classical period of ancient Greece the
fish did not hold a significant place in the established religion, and
as a sacred symbol it is conspicuously absent in the several centers
of Greek civilization, especially in Athens. This is not so in the
pre-Hellenic civilization of antiquity, and we may boldly state that
fish totemism was not unknown to the Achæans.

In both Thessaly and the island of Crete, Ionia was worshiped
as the great goddess, identified either with Athena or Artemis or
Demeter. The center of her cult seems to have been Larissa, but
Homer (Iliad. II, 696) mentions her temple in Phylake, the city
of Protesilaos. The Achæans of Thessaly named the mouth "Ito-
nios" after Ionia, and gave her the cognomen "mother of apples." 2
Her Palladium, an ancient Bethel or monolith, was said to have
fallen from heaven, but the main thing about her of interest to us in
this connection is the fact that her emblem was the fish. Her cult
differed from the pantheon of classical Greece as we know it from
Homer and Hesiod, and was older. So we need not be surprised
to find the older forms of worship preserved here, especially the
stone pillar and the totemism of the fish. According to A. J. Reinach
the fish cult was combined with a cult of the two-lobed shield and we
here reproduce from his article. "Les survivances du fétichisme dans
les cultes populaires de la Grèce ancienne," 3 an ancient sarcophagus
found in Miletus which shows a winged divinity with a two-lobed
shield and a fish.

While the fish disappeared from the official worship of ancient
Greece it is found again in the new movement of the Greek mysteries
in which Dionysus, Orpheus and other divinities of a mystic char-
acter played a prominent part. These mysteries, we must remem-
ber, were introduced into Hellas from the East, and the burden of
their message was communicated through dramatic performances
representing the fate of the dying and risen God. It prescribed
ablutions, fasts and vows and enjoined a pure life in return for which
it promised happiness here and hereafter by the assurance of a
resurrection of the dead, or of the continued life of the soul in Elysian
fields, or some other hope of immortality. The initiates were told

2 "Ἰωνα μητέρα μήλων.
that death did not end all. The god who brought this message came as the Saviour, the liberator or the healer. Some intoxicating drink, the soma in India, the haoma in Iran, and wine in Greece represent the enthusiasm, the bliss and spirituality of his worshipers. These mysteries continued into the beginning of the Christian era, and in the catacombs Christ was still identified with Orpheus.

The mysteries were originally no part of the official state ritual,

but the new movement soon entered into an alliance with the old established institutions and even the thinkers of the age speak with great respect of the deep thoughts incorporated in these mysteries with their imposing processions and weird symbols.

It is characteristic of the development of religious symbols that the fish plays a prominent part in this movement. Dionysus rides on the fish, sometimes on a ship. Eros, too, the god of love, crosses the sea on a dolphin or on a fish, and Apollo himself seated on his tripod.
takes wing and crosses the ocean accompanied by dolphins and fishes. A very beautiful piece of sculpture of modern workmanship repre-

senting Eros setting sail for a new country has been erected on the Campo Santo in Genoa. It is well known as one of the most artistic
monuments of any cemetery and a photograph of it was reproduced as a frontispiece to *The Open Court* for April, 1907.

Marduk in ancient Babylonia and Dionysus in Athens enter in festive procession in a ship called the "ship of plenty," and even to-day its modern successor Prince Carnival sits on a float in the carnival parade. We have evidence that even the established cult of Zeus in primitive Greece was once connected with the same notions of crossing the ocean either on a fish or in an ark or ship. The Greek Noah, called Denicalion, is no one else than a specialized figure of Zeus or rather Dzeus,\(^4\) for the name Denicalion, as Usener has pointed out, means simply "the little Zeus" or "Zeus the child." The god is starting out after death on a new career in the same way as the sun is reborn with every new year, yea every new morning. Man follows the sun in his career and from the analogy of the rebirth of the sun he takes assurance that he too will come to life again.

Among the Teutonic nations it was customary during certain periods to bury the dead in a hollow tree like that in use for navigating the rivers. That this is the oldest form of sailing the water among the Germans is testified to by the name they give to a ship, *Schiff*, which is derived from a root meaning to "shove" or "push," German *schieben*. The Aryan nations of southern Europe named a ship *navis* or *naus* which means "the swimmer" and suggests the theory that their ships were first launched on the sea and served

\(^4\)The Greek *Zeôs* is *dzeus*; its genitive is *Διός* and its Latin equivalent is *deus*, preserved also in the first syllable of Jupiter, which means *Diu*-pater.
the purpose of crossing from island to island. Burials in hollow trees indicate the belief that the dead had to cross some body of water, either the river Styx, or the western ocean. In southern countries, the tombs contain funeral ships.

The same idea was also known to the Phoenicians, as is proved by the existence of a Tyrian coin on which the lord of the city of Tyre, the god Melkarth, sometimes called the Phoenician Heracles, is represented as riding on a seahorse.
We read in the Babylonian epic that Gilgamesh is ferried over by Arad-Ea to the Isles of the Blest, and this scene is portrayed on an ancient cylinder. The ferryman who carries souls from this world to the next is called Charon by the Greeks, a name which Wiedemann compares to the Egyptian word *kare*, meaning driver or ferryman. (See Budge, *Mummy*, p. 155, footnote.)

**Gilgamesh and Arad-Ea.**
From a Babylonian cylinder.

The story of Noah, Deucalion, Paranapistin, Manu, or whatever name the hero of the deluge may have had, must have been much more common in primitive times than we might think, judging from its obliteration in Greek literature and its disappearance in Italy.

**Bronze Ship of Vetulonia.**

We have good evidence that the story of the Etruscan Noah had some reference to the idea of the soul's migration after death into another country.

A prehistoric bronze ship found in a grave of Vetulonia, in Etruria, proves that the story was known to the primitive Etruscans,
and there we find even the animals on board ship and we may be assured that the presence of this funeral ship in a grave indicates

also that in primitive times the meaning of the legend was well understood to be a promise of immortality.
That the story of Noah was well known in Asia Minor is evidenced by the fact that Kelainai, a city of Phrygia, was supposed to be the place where the ark touched land when the waters subsided. In the days of Augustus this city was called Kibotos, which means "ark," and coins were struck in the times of Septimus Severus and other Roman emperors exhibiting on their reverse a memorial of the deluge. In these cases the hero of the flood is not called Deu-

calion but Noé, and it is not impossible that this same name was current among other Semites besides the Jews. In Palestine an absolutely unwarranted tradition localizes the place where Noah died, and his tomb can be seen there even to this day.

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When paganism broke down and Christianity spread rapidly over the Mediterranean countries the ancient beliefs had become untenable; but the ideas underlying them, and the customs, especially
funerary rites, continued. So we need not be surprised when we find the old symbols reappearing imbued with new meaning. Here again the fish and the dove play the most prominent part, and if the fish is interpreted to be Christ himself the popular interpretation of the symbol has certainly not missed the mark, for in pagan times the fish conveyed a similar idea and represented to primitive mankind that divinity which comes to him as the Saviour and promises him life everlasting.

Fish deities were certainly worshiped in Palestine and Phoenicia, for Lucian saw with his own eyes a Syrian goddess whom he calls Derketo, and he tells us that her image ended in a fish's tail. Her temple near Ascalon was provided with a sacred pond like that of the temple of the Assyrian Juno at Hierapolis, and in the pond were kept sacred fishes.
Whether Derketo is the feminine counterpart of the ancient Semitic god Dagon is more doubtful than it would appear at first sight. The name Dagon is commonly derived from the Hebrew *dag* which means "fish," and if that derivation were assured we might safely infer that the traditional view is correct. But according to Professors A. H. Sayce and G. F. Moore, the name *Dagon* ought to be derived from the ancient Canaanitic word *dagan*, "wheat," in which case *Dagon* would be the deity of agriculture.
worshiped by the Philistines, the Aryan colonists who had settled as farmers among the nomadic Semites of Palestine.

Whether or not Dagon was a fish deity, we may be sure that fish deities were known and worshiped both in Phoenicia and Palestine. In fact the main deity of Hither Asia is the fish god whom Berosus calls Oannes.

The classical passage to which we owe our information on this subject and which is preserved by Eusebius who quotes Berosus, reads as follows:

"In the first year (of the world) there appeared, rising up from the Persian Gulf, a being endowed with reason whose name was Oannes. The body of this monster was that of a fish, but below the fish's head was a second head which was that of a man, together with the feet of a man which issued from his tail, and with the voice

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5 For details see the author's *Story of Samson*, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1907.
of a man; an image of him is preserved to this day. This being passed the day among men, but without taking any food, teaching them letters, sciences, and the first principles of every art, how to found cities, to construct temples, to measure and assign limits to land, how to sow and reap; in short everything that can soften manners and constitute civilization, so that from that time forward no one has invented anything new. Then at sunset this monster Oannes descended again into the sea and spent the night among the waves, for he was amphibious. Afterwards there appeared several other similar creatures....Oannes wrote a book on the origin of things and the rules of civilization, which he delivered to mankind.”

Oannes is a Sumerian deity, and the Sumerians are the oldest civilized people we know of. They were not of Semitic blood, nor were they Aryans, but they belonged to the large Turanian family whose kin are the Turks, the Magyars, the Mongols, the Manchus, the Tartars and the Chinese. They came down to the Gulf of Persia at the mouth of the Tigris from the mountains of Elam, and their first settlement was the city of Eridu. They brought with them a certain amount of civilization and even the beginning of writing. Some of the most common characters indicate that the inventors of Sumerian script were inhabitants of a mountainous region; for instance, land is characterized by three mountains, the same sign which in Chinese means hills.

The Sumerians were comparatively a small nation. When they dwelt at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates they seem to have lived mainly on fishing. One of their oldest legends speaks of the first man as having acquired mortality, and calls him Adapa, a reading which according to Professor Sayce is now discredited and ought to be replaced by Adama or Adamu, practically the same word as the Hebrew Adam. The story of Adapa or Adama bears a great resemblance to the story of Adam and Eve in Paradise, because it too describes how man fell from his immortal state and became subject to death. The Sumerian legend tells the story as follows:

Adapa, the son of Ea, was fishing and the South Wind came and upset his boat. Then Adapa broke the wings of the South Wind and the South Wind could no longer blow. When Anu in heaven noticed that the South Wind no longer blew he inquired into the cause, and when he learned what had happened he summoned Adapa before his tribunal. Adapa was warned by his father Ea that when he came up to Anu he should not eat the food offered to him nor drink of the cup handed him because he would be given food and drink of death. He further enjoined him to arouse the compassion
of Anu by putting on garments of mourning. Adapa did as required and Anu so took compassion on him that instead of offering him the food and drink of death he offered him food and drink of life, which Adapa, mindful of his father's warning, refused, thus forfeiting his immortality and becoming henceforth a mortal.

This ancient myth accounting for the mortality of man, describes him as a fisherman, and we may very well look upon the legend as a genuine reminiscence of primitive mankind, for the first settlements, so far as anthropology has investigated, are the so-called culinary deposits or kitchen remains which have been found on the shores of the Baltic and along the rivers of northern Europe. It appears that the Sumerians also started civilized life with fishing, and thus the god of civilization who brought to them all the treasures of their intellectual accomplishments, writing, and the arts and sciences, was supposed to have had the shape of a fish. Yea, we may assume that the sun himself was conceived to have been a fish rising from the ocean and staying with mankind during the day to return to the ocean and remain in the deep over night emerging therefrom the next morning.

As devotees dress themselves in the shape of their god, so it appears that the priests of the mythical Oannes donned fish skins, for we see frequent representations of fish-clad priests on the ancient Babylonian monuments, especially in the ritual of conjuration which was supposed in ancient times to be the quintessence of all science, the purpose and aim of all knowledge, and its occult significance.