

to the authority of Porphyry, and six hundred years after Aristotle. Aristotle himself makes no mention of it; no accredited astronomer speaks of it. Ptolemæus relates and makes use of ten observations on eclipses really made by the Chaldeans; but it only goes back to Nebuchadnezzar (721 years before Christ;) they are incorrect, the time is only expressed in hours and half-hours, and the obscuration only in half or quarter diameters. However, as they had certain dates, the Chaldeans must have had some knowledge of the accurate length of the year, and some method of measuring time. They appear to have known the period of eighteen years which brings back the eclipses of the moon in the same order, and which the mere inspection of their registers would have informed them quickly; but it is certain that they neither knew how to explain, nor foretell the eclipses of the sun.

Cassini and Bailey, having misunderstood a passage in Josephus, have asserted that they had discovered in it a luni-solar period of six-hundred years, which must have been known to the early patriarchs.(1)

Thus all confirms the idea that the great reputation of the Chaldeans were given to them in more modern times, by their unworthy successors, who, under the same name, sold throughout the Roman empire, horoscopes and predictions; and who, to gain more credit, attributed to their rude ancestors the honour of the discoveries of the Greeks.

Memoirs of M. Ideler, on the Astronomy of the Chaldeans, 4th vol. of Halma's Ptolemy, p. 166.

(1) See Bailey's Hist. of Ancient Astronomy, and M. Delambre's work on the same subject, v. 1, p. 3.