

**THE HELLENISTIC BACKGROUND OF NEW TESTAMENT THOUGHT.**

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One of the most pressing questions in the religious world today is to determine what constitutes the essence of Christianity. The advance of the sciences, physical and mental, the application of scientific methods to the study of Scripture, the growth of the spirit of modern individualism, rebelling against external authority and demanding the right of unfettered enquiry, - these are the factors that lie behind the present wide demand for a clearer exposition of the Christian faith. Formerly the great historic creeds of the Church afforded ready and authoritative answers to religious questionings, but as these can no longer be regarded as the source whence faith conducts its enquiries, men, to find the things that are vital to the Christian religion, are going more and more to the New Testament itself, to the record of the beginnings of Christianity.

The expression of the faith of past ages has been based always upon the New Testament, but today the New Testament is, in a manner of speaking, a new book. Men have learned to read and study it in a new spirit, critical and historical, and to find within it a growth and development of religious thought that formerly was not recognized. Its language is better known; many of its words and phrases, for long interpreted in the light of the creeds, are now seen to possess a

different meaning. The age that gave it birth is better known; the classics, formerly the only source of information, are now recognized to reflect the life only of a part, and a small part, of the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world, the cultured and aristocratic classes, while new sources of information, monuments, inscriptions, and papyri dug from the sands and rubbish-heaps of Egypt, have brought before us the life of the common people of the first centuries, among whom Christianity arose.

The New Testament then is to our age a new book. It grew up neither in a religious nor intellectual vacuum, nor did it speak a language of its own. It was born in an age which was keenly alive to spiritual things, and it spread among men whom it had to woo from competing faiths. It gave its message, it expressed its invitation, in a language and in concepts of thought that they would understand. It borrowed whatever might be useful for its salient need of interpretation, transmuting and impressing what was borrowed with a new meaning, finding at the same time that these new vehicles of thought were even more fitted to express the fulness and depth of the new spiritual power that had come to the world in Jesus Christ. Christianity went out to conquer the Hellenistic world. To accomplish this missionary purpose, it had in a manner to cast



aside the Jewish form in which its thought was clothed, and express itself in a different way. Greek philosophy, Eastern mysticism, the general categories of religious thought floating, as it were, in the spiritual atmosphere of the day, - to all of these Christianity made itself heir. It was the necessity of obeying its inherent missionary impulse, allied to the feeling of the inadequacy of Jewish thought to express the significance of its Lord for the world, that drove Christianity, within a few years of its birth, greatly to alter its form. Between the faith which St. Peter preached in the streets of Jerusalem and the faith which the leaders of the church promulgated towards the close of the first century there is seemingly a wide difference. At first presented as, and seeming to be no more than, a Jewish sect marked by certain distinctive beliefs concerning the Messiah, and holding to a particular custom, the new religion has now become a faith with intricate theological implications and sacramental associations.

The Hellenistic world is now generally recognized to have exerted a powerful influence during this process of development. There is, however, a tendency prevailing in many quarters to attribute too much to this influence, to affirm that Christianity is a syncretism of the general religious thought of the first centuries which has grown round a few simple ethical

truths that were taught by Jesus. "The simple Gospel", it is said, has been buried and lost beneath the mass of foreign material that has been super-imposed upon it in historic Christianity. According to M. Loisy, for example, the teaching, work and personality of Jesus do not constitute the essence of catholic Christianity but are only the nucleus of a great corpus of Graeco-Roman religious and philosophical thought. He writes of St. Paul's conception of Christ,<sup>1</sup> "He was a saviour-god, after the manner of an Osiris, an Attis, a Mithra. Like them, he belonged by his origin to the celestial world; like them, he made his appearance on the earth; like them he had accomplished a work of universal redemption, efficacious and typical; like Adonis, Osiris, and Attis, he had died a violent death, and like them, he had been restored to life; like them he had prefigured in his lot that of the human beings who should take part in his worship, and commemorate his mystic enterprise; like them he had predestined, prepared and assured the salvation of those who became partners in his passion". The implication is that the Christianity of Paul has no vital connection with the historic Jesus, but is more closely related to, and dependent on, the religious cults of the East. Of a somewhat similar nature is the verdict of

<sup>1</sup>Hibbert Journal Oct.1911, p.51.

Professor Kirsopp Lake, <sup>1</sup>"Christianity had been originally the worship of God, as He was understood by the Jews, combined with the belief that Jesus was he whom God appointed, or would appoint as His representative at the day of judgment. To this were now joined the longings for private salvation of the less fortunate classes in the Roman Empire, and their belief that this salvation could come from sacraments instituted by a Lord who was either Divine by nature or had attained apotheosis. It thus became, partly indeed, the recognition of the Jewish God as supreme, but chiefly the recognition of Jesus as the Divine Lord who had instituted saving mysteries for those who accepted him. Christianity became the Jewish contribution to the Oriental cults, offering as the synagogue never did, private salvation by supernatural means to all who were willing to accept it". The relation of New Testament thought to its Hellenistic background is therefore a question of first importance. Its answer must determine whether historic Christianity faithfully conserves the new spiritual factors which were born in the world with Jesus Christ or whether it is merely an accretion of the general religious tendencies of the Graeco-Roman world. Might the name of Serapis have taken the place of the name of Christ and the resultant faith have been the same? Was Christianity in the

✓ <sup>1</sup>Lake:- "Landmarks of Early Christianity", p.8.

growth of its expression governed by vital, distinctive, and selective principles whereby it was enabled to preserve its identity among the many and more complex forms it assumed, or by contact with the world's thought was the original gospel overlaid by elements alien to itself and so transformed into something different? Was its growth organic or mechanical? How did Christianity react to the larger environment into which it speedily was cast? Were the Pauline and Johannine doctrines of the person of Christ and His significance true to spiritual reality, disclosing the larger meanings inherent from the beginnings in the person and work of Jesus, or by recasting the message of the primitive Church in different moulds have they so altered its essential content as to make of it something new? Did Christianity in its many forms offer to the world something that was essentially its own, something new, or is it the result of the syncretism of the thought and life of many peoples which took place in the centuries preceding and succeeding the birth of the Church of Christ? These are the issues which today confront modern thought and to which it is proposed to turn our attention.

GENTILE INFLUENCES ON JUDAISM.

When Christianity went out to evangelize the world of the first century, there had already taken place a mingling of the civilisations of the world. Babylon, Egypt, Italy, Greece, the lands of Syria and Asia-Minor - each had played its part in building up a type of civilisation that was to a certain degree common to the world. When Alexander broke down the barriers which separated the nations of the world, then customs and beliefs which formerly had been the exclusive possession of a people became the possession of the world. Men became subject not to a few influences, that were narrowly parochial or of a type distinctively national, but to influences which came from different quarters of the world and which they had to harmonize in their own lives. The life of the first century was not national but cosmopolitan. The Mediterranean world was in a very real sense a crucible where the civilisations of the world had mingled. It was also in a sense an arena where forces that had formerly been confined within national boundaries jostled and competed for the possession of the world.

When Christianity entered this arena as a competitor for the homage of the world's soul it made a progress that is remarkable for its rapidity, and one of the reasons for this rapid success is that the new faith from its very birth was

already in possession of certain points of contact with the world-civilization. From Judaism it had inherited a world-view that had much in common with that prevailing elsewhere. Judaism itself was not exclusively national but had embedded in the framework of its thought elements that originally were foreign and now in the first century were common both to Christianity and to the world which it sought to win. The Gentile influences which had affected Judaism thus rendered the task of Christianity much easier, because they provided points of contact through which the new faith might enter Gentile life. The Gentiles recognized in Christianity certain things which were common to their own ancestral beliefs.

Heathen ideas had found their way into Judaism in the earliest times. It was a primitive Babylonian culture that underlay the structure of the whole of the Eastern world, and this is reflected in modified form in certain Jewish beliefs and institutions, such as the cosmogony, the Mosaic Legislation, and the institution of the Sabbath. While it is true that the borrowed elements had been materially altered and were penetrated by the Hebrew religious genius so that they served only as a background for the great belief in one God, yet, at the same time, these foreign elements, in as much as they

provided points of affinity or contact, made it easy for outside influences to gain entrance at a later date. It is however from the time of the exile that we have to date the decisive action of foreign influence. Israel uprooted from her ancestral home and almost immersed in alien peoples, surviving later only as a province within foreign empires, was subject to and indeed welcomed outside influences to so great an extent that, had not her national pride been roused by the foolish attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to hasten the assimilation of Hellenistic ideas and modes of life, she might soon have lost the characteristics that marked her as a distinctive people. Jewish exclusiveness as we understand it in later days was a thing of late origin. The fence was put round the Law at too late a date to preserve Judaism in its purity, and for three centuries before the Maccabees revolted, their religion had been subject to foreign influences.

#### PERSIAN INFLUENCE.

That which made itself chiefly felt was the Persian religion. Persian religious thought, which had taken over much of the Babylonian mythology, was founded upon a dualism - light and darkness, good and evil, two powers, almost two gods, in eternal conflict. Hebrew thought with its stern monotheism could accept this dualism only in a modified form,

yet the influence was real and penetrating and survived in certain features of post-Maccabean Judaism which provided common ground for Christianity and Gentile thought. To the Persian contact may be traced in Christianity the following :-

1. DOCTRINE OF SATAN AND THE DEMONS.

In the Old Testament Satan only appears in a casual manner in three books and then as a very subordinate character.

- a) In Job he is pictured as one of the sons of God, living like the other angels on familiar terms with Yahweh. He is man's accuser casting doubt upon the disinterested goodness of Job.
- b) In Zechariah he is again pictured as a son of God, rising up in debate amongst the angels. Again he is the accuser of Israel and God rebukes him.
- c) In 1 Chronicles it was Satan who caused Israel to experience the wrath of God by moving David to number the people.

Similarly demons in early Jewish literature play a very inconsiderable part. The Hebrews originally were Henotheists. They did not deny the existence of heathen gods. They granted them reality but denied them equality with Yahweh and reduced them from absolute god-hood. "They sacrificied to devils not to God; to gods whom they knew not". Deut. 32, 17.



A great change had taken place between the days of the exile and the days of Christ. In the New Testament we move in a different atmosphere of religious thought. Satan, not unlike Tiamat of Persian religion is now the enemy of God, head of a great organisation of evil spirits to whose malign influence may be attributed the disease and misfortune which dog the footsteps of men.

Christianity thus was possessed of a belief in the agency of spirits which was the common property of the world in the first century of our era and a common category of explanation for many of the phenomena of life. It was universal among the peoples and was so woven into the mental framework of educated thinkers like Plutarch that while they worshipped "the one eternal passionless spirit far removed from the world of chance and change and earthly soilure", they yet thought of the manifestations of Divine Providence as the work of a crowd of inferior powers, occupying a position hardly superior to that of man.

Among certain of the inhabitants of the Hellenistic world the name demon was not confined solely to those spiritual beings whose purpose was to injure man but was also extended to beneficent spirits whose purpose was to protect. Thus Porphyry writing to the Egyptian priest Anebo, says, "For it appears to certain persons that demons preside over the parts

of the body, so that one is the guardian of health, another of the form of the body, and another of the corporeal habits, and that there is one demon who presides in common over all these. And again, that one demon presides over the body, another over the soul, and another over the intellect; and that some of them are good but others bad".<sup>1</sup> This distinction corresponds in a general way to the Hebrew distinction between demons and angels. In the New Testament demons are always of an evil disposition and subjects of the kingdom of Darkness.

In New Testament times then belief in demons as spirits, innumerable and evil, was universal. To those who looked upon God as an ethical being they served as a solution of the problem of evil; and to all, Jew and Gentile alike, they served as a scientific explanation of many of the natural phenomena of life. If a thunderstorm laid flat the ripening crops, it was the work of devils. If a child was born deformed, devils had been at work. If a woman was sterile, demons had bound her womb. If a man was dumb, demons had bound his tongue. If another went to bed in perfect health and ere morning was in the grip of a burning fever, a demon had done it. Upon the shoulders of the demons, indeed was laid the responsibility of a multitude of things-trivial and of consequence - which men could not attribute to the agency of beneficent gods. Thus Plutarch <sup>2</sup>

reports Xenocrates as teaching that it is inconceivable that

1. "Iamblichus on the Mysteries" Taylor, p.14.

2. Plutarch de Is. et Os. 26.

"the unlucky days and festivals with their scourgings and fasts, their lamentations and lacerations, their impure words and deeds, are celebrated in honour of the blessed gods and good demons. They are rather in honour of the terrible and powerful spirits of evil in the air, whose dark and sinister character is perpetuated by such unholy and gloomy rites. These rites are performed to propitiate the demons in the hope that they may be induced not to work mischief". These deadly spirits, he goes on to say, assert their vast powers and display their malevolence in various ways. Not only are they the authors of the most destructive plagues, of the most frightful diseases, of death and all other desolating convulsions of the physical world, but they also by their influence and acts prostitute and debase the soul of man.

That these evil spirits were subordinate to the Great gods and through their agency could be controlled by man, was the one factor which saved the people of these early days from a debasing and paralysing fear - added perhaps to the fact that in the practical exigencies of life they had a superabundance neither of time nor inclination to trace all things to root causes. And so we find that from earliest times men had various devices by which they could counteract the work of these malevolent spirits. They sacrificed to them; they flattered them; and by a general appeal to their vanity, sought

to turn them from their evil purposes. They threatened them and sought to intimidate them. By the use of sacred and powerful names they drove them far from the homes they had usurped. By disinfecting and scourging the bodies of those whom they had possessed, they rendered their habitations so uncomfortable and their existence so miserable, that the poor demons were only too glad to depart to more comfortable quarters. Thus in the great Magical Papyrus in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris there occurs the following, ".... to those possessed by demons ..... write this phylactery upon a little sheet of tin 'Jaeo Abraothioch .. ' and hang it round the sufferer. It is of every demon a thing to be trembled at which he fears". Iamblichus<sup>1</sup>, also, seeking to explain how it is that men may command and threaten demons says, "The theurgist through the power of arcane signatures, commands mundane natures, no longer <sup>as</sup> man nor as employing a human soul; but as existing superior to them in the order of the Gods, he makes use of greater mandates than pertain to himself, so far as he is human. This, however, does not take place as if he effected everything which he vehemently threatens to accomplish; but he teaches us by such a use of words the magnitude and quality of the power which he possesses through a union with the Gods, and which he obtains from the knowledge of arcane

1 Iamblichus on the Mysteries. Taylor, p.281.

symbols. .... No one however threatens the Gods nor is such a mode of invocation addressed to them. Hence with the Chaldeans by whom words used to the Gods alone are preserved distinct and pure, no threats are employed. But the Egyptians mingling demoniacal words with Divine signatures sometimes employ threats".

Amongst the Jews there is a curious mingling of ideas; misfortune and suffering may be traced at one time to Satan and the demons, at another time to God. "And ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these **eighteen** years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?". Luke 13, 16. In Luke 13, 1 ff., on the other hand, misfortune would seem to be attributed by the Jews directly to the agency of God. "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you Nay!'. The explanation of this dualism is to be found in the fact that the Jews could never dethrone God from His place of absolute power and holiness by exalting Satan and his satellites to a position of complete autonomy. Satan though the enemy of God - sowing tares among the good grain, tempting Jesus, sifting Peter,

entering into Judas - is yet subject to the will of God, and in the opinion of Jesus contempor<sup>ar</sup>ies the instrument of God's punishment to those who had sinned. "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Jn.9, 2. Righteous men according to the rabbis, through their phylacteries and prayers were immune from his influence. "Each commandment kept becomes an angel to guard from demons".

Possession was the method by which demons were commonly supposed to operate. They were not merely evil influences resting upon or working within a man, but spiritual personalities actually dwelling within him and using him as their instrument, so that even his voice was but the vehicle of their thoughts. They could enter into a man - "because many devils were entered into him". Luke,8, 30; or into certain animals - "They went into the herd of swine". Matt.8, 32<sup>1</sup>. They could pass out of a man "and he departed out of him". Matt.17, 18; or be cast out "And he was casting out a devil" Luke xi, 14. Wherever they went abnormality resulted, and possession was the common explanation of various diseases, especially such as exhibit psychical causes - apoplexy, mania, neurotic dumbness and the like.

<sup>1</sup>This curious story whatever be the historic fact on which it rests, reflects the current belief that demons could be induced to transfer themselves from human beings to animals. In the Talmud there occurs the following. "May the blindness of M. the son of N. leave him and pierce the eyeballs of this dog".

That Jesus shared in these beliefs and accepted the popular diagnosis of disease cannot be doubted. He saw in the downfall of their power a proof of the nearness of the Kingdom. Yet the healthiness of his mental atmosphere may be seen in the method by which he effected his cures. The orthodox and magical methods of the professional exorcist are remarkable by their absence. His methods reflect the purity and loftiness of his faith. "This kind can come out only by prayer". He finds no place in his scheme of things for amulets or protective charms. He seems to despise those who adopt such defences as phylacteries. He utters no incantations. He manufactures no potions. He prays or simply speaks the word in the faith that God has given him this authority. The only real exceptions to this are to be found in the cure of the deaf-mute in Mark 7, 31-37, and of the blind man in Mark 8, 22-26. "And he took him aside from the multitude and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue" <sup>1</sup> The methods portrayed in these incidents were current in that age and largely practised by Egyptian magicians: and it may be that the omission of these stories by both Matthew and Luke can be traced to this fact, that the methods savour of magic. Yet the loftiness of His mental outlook is impressively borne in

<sup>1</sup>cf. also Jn. 9, 6. "When he had thus spoken he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay".

upon us when we examine the methods of exorcism practised by His contempor<sup>ar</sup>ies. In the papyri there are various directions given for the preparation of potions, to which magical powers were ascribed, and for the pronouncing of incantations, which were nothing else than non-sensical gibberish. "Take oil from unripe olives, together with the plant mastigia and lotus pith and boil it with margoram (very colourless) saying, "Joel, Ossathiond, Emori, Theochipsoith, ..... come out of such an one"<sup>1</sup> Josephus, born less than a decade after the death of Jesus, gives an account of the method pursued by a famous exorcist of his day, named Eleazar.<sup>2</sup> Josephus states that he himself saw the incident with his own eyes. A ring, to which was attached a magical root, was applied to the nostril of the demoniac; the man immediately fell down (this also is customary in New Testament cases), and Eleazar, using incantations, said to have been composed by Solomon, drew the demons out of the nostrils by which they were supposed to have entered. As they came out the exorcist caused them to pass into a basin filled with water which was at once thrown away. Jesus, through his unique spiritual insight, soared high above the gross superstitions of his contemporaries.

Amongst the ancients magic was often associated with the

<sup>1</sup>Great Magical Papyrus (Paris) 3010-3013.

<sup>2</sup>Antiq. 8, II, 5.



ideas of binding, tying up, nailing down and their opposites - so that a magical act is looked upon as *καταδεσμος* or *καταδεσις* and the removal of its effect as *ἀναλυσις*. The idea is probably related to primitive methods of sympathetic magic. Just as primitive man poured water upon the ground in the belief that his act would induce rain to fall, so magicians, believing that their deeds would be re-enacted in the persons of those against whom their spells were directed, tied knots in a rope as they uttered each formula and in this way symbolically strangled their victims, sealed their mouths or accomplished the specific purpose which at the moment they had in mind. So in the ancient world it became an almost universal belief that a man possessed was bound or fettered by demoniac influences. The idea is present in Greek, Syrian, Hebrew, Mandæan and Indian magic spells.<sup>1</sup> The following is a magical prescription which has for its object the binding of a man. It is inscribed upon a leaden Tablet found in Attica and dating from the fourth century B.C. "Gods! Good Tyche! I bind down and will not lose Anticles the son of Antiphanes, and Antiphanes the son of Patrocles, and ..... I bind them all down to Hermes, who is beneath the earth and crafty and fast-holding and luck-bringing and I will not loose them". The binding of a man's tongue received perhaps the most widespread attention and many spells have been found which have this for their object.

<sup>1</sup>Deissmann, "Light from the Ancient East" p.306 ff.

The following is an example:- "Bound and fast held be the mouth, and fast held be the tongue of curses, of ~~own~~ and of invocations of the gods. .... Bound ~~by~~ the tongue in its mouth, fast held be its lips, shaken, fettered and banned the teeth and stopped the ears of curses and invocations". In the story of the healing of the deaf and dumb man in St. Mark, 7,35, Deissmann accordingly finds a reflection of this belief, "And straightway his ears were opened and the bond of his tongue was loosed". The language, he says, is not figurative but technical. It is easy to see how, although no mention is made of possession, the idea would more or less colour all thinking upon such afflictions. Reasoning by analogy men would argue back from the fact that a man was dumb to the conclusion that he was possessed of a demon. Jesus himself speaks of a "woman whom Satan hath bound ( $\epsilon\beta\delta\epsilon\upsilon$ ), 10, these 18 years", and asks if it is not right that she ~~should~~ be loosed from this "BOND" ( $\alpha\pi\omicron\tau\omega\ \delta\epsilon\delta\epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon$ ) even on the Sabbath day.<sup>1</sup>

It was due to Israel's contact with the religion of Persia in earlier years that Christianity was able immediately to arrest the attention of the Mediterranean world when it preached Christ as the Deliverer from the power of the demons.

<sup>1</sup>Lk. 13,16.

## 2. DOCTRINE OF THE ANGELS.

To the influence of Persia can also be attributed the highly developed doctrine of angels which is found in later Judaism and in Christianity. Zoroastrianism did not really supply the belief but it played no small part in moulding the form which it was later to assume in Hebrew religion. The idea was latent in the Hebrew mind from early days. In the first chapters of Genesis it is God himself who talks with Adam and walks in the garden in the cool of the day; but as He becomes more transcendent and is pictured in less crude anthropomorphic terms, it is His angel who speaks with men. Yet the angel can hardly be looked upon as a distinct being, but must rather be regarded as a theophany, a self-manifestation of God. "And the angel spoke unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob. And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes and see; ..... for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am<sup>the</sup>God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar and where thou vowest a vow unto me" (Gen.31, 11 ff.) Throughout the pre-exilic literature then, though angels are occasionally mentioned there is little significance attached to them (they are sometimes hardly to be distinguished from the elements of nature), and it is not until the Book of Daniel that they acquire sufficient individuality to be awarded names. It is only after the exile that we hear of Michael and Gabriel and of the various ranks of angels - a hierarchy of

beings probably modelled somewhat on the plan of the Persian satrapy. "Then I lifted up mine eyes and looked and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded in fine gold of Uphaz. .... And I Daniel alone saw the vision. .... Then said he unto me Fear not Daniel .... But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael one of the chief princes came to help me."<sup>1</sup> "And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel make this man to understand the vision."<sup>1</sup> Thus it is seen to be due to Persian influence that the inchoate Hebrew thought was transformed into a doctrine of angels, organised in ascending ranks of dignity and function, intermediaries between a transcendent God and the world of men. From To.12, 15 we learn that there were seven angel princes ("I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels") and in Enoch and 2 Esdras 5,20 Uriel is named as the fourth. In a Jewish inscription in the theatre of Miletus the names of the seven archangels are given as follows - Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Suriel (lege Uriel), Zaziel, Zadokiel (written erroneously Βαδακιηλ) and Suliel. Of these Michael and Gabriel alone are mentioned by name in the New Testament, though it is probable that the reference is to them in Rev.1, 4, "Grace be unto you and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to

<sup>1</sup>Dan. X,5 ff. and VIII, 16.

come- and from the seven spirits which are before His throne".

The part which angels play in the New Testament is small. They can hardly be called a living reality in the mind of Jesus. Had they not been a composite part of the religious atmosphere which he breathed, he would never have found it necessary to use them as a category of explanation. His intercourse with the Father was personal, immediate and direct, requiring the intervention of no intermediary. With Paul also the living, indwelling Christ played the part which the angels played in the religion of many of his contemporaries. Yet on the few occasions on which they are pictured in the New Testament, the manner of their functioning, though coloured by the Christian outlook of the writers, was only in accordance with the more or less current beliefs of the day. When, for example, St. Luke<sup>1</sup> narrates that there was "with the angel of the Lord a multitude of the heavenly host", he is merely reflecting a widely-held doctrine, which Iamblichus expresses in the following words<sup>2</sup>:- "For the Gods are surrounded by either Gods or angels; but archangels have angels either preceding or co-arranged with them, or following behind them, or accompanied by a certain other multitude of angels who attend on them as guards".

In picturing the world as peopled by a multitude of unseen spirits, of good and evil disposition, Christianity was thus

<sup>1</sup>Luke 2,13.

<sup>2</sup>Iamblichus on the Mysteries. Taylor p.97.

at one with the thought of the Hellenistic world. The meaning of St. Paul and the other missionaries would at once be clear to their audience when they spoke such words as these, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".<sup>1</sup>

The Persian influence also made itself felt in other directions. The form which the Jewish belief in a future life assumed ~~was~~ undoubtedly moulded to a certain extent by the Persian belief. In the writings of the Old Testament there is no categorical statement on the truth of immortality. No doubt Israel ~~was~~ working her way to such a belief. Believing in Divine Justice and cherishing human fellowship with God she could not but arrive at some time or other at the belief in a future life; yet this tendency from within was greatly hastened by contact with Persian religious thought, in which the doctrine of a future life occupied a prominent place. Persia believed, too, in retribution after death; she held a doctrine of rewards and punishments, heaven and hell, which Judaism accepted as its own.

Then it was during the exile that the Jews were introduced to magical arts that had been highly developed by years of study. There had always been Jews from the earliest days, who in their own crude way had dabbled in the black arts,<sup>2</sup> but

<sup>1</sup>Eph.6, 12.

<sup>2</sup>1.Sam.28,7, Deut.18,10. 2 Kings,9,22.

in exile they were introduced to magic as a science, whose practice they recognized to be a profitable money-making occupation. There is little doubt that before long in residence many of them were keen and promising students. Jews were among "the wise men" decreed to die because of the inability of the magicians to interpret the king of Babylon's dream;<sup>1</sup> in the mounds which mark their settlement on the site of the ancient Babylon almost the only relics to be found are bowls inscribed with spells against enchantment; and in the Book of Daniel there is joyfully recorded that one of their number, through the power of their God, rose to eminence and defeated at their own game the "wise men" - i.e. the magicians (מַכְשֵׁפִים) a general term for the enchanters (מַגִּידֵי חֹסֶם), the sorcerers (מַכְשֵׁפִים), and the Chaldeans (כַּלְדָּאִים). From the captivity they thus brought with them a knowledge of divination and sorcery, astrology and oneiromancy, and what must have made a peculiar appeal to them, a recognition of the importance of the "Name" in magic, especially when used for purposes of exorcism of spells. While these things did not find their way into Judaism as a religion - the Rabbis forbade the practice of these arts - they yet found their way into the life of the common people, and early Christian missionaries were able to start their work with this advantage that they were not ignorant of the forces at work in the life of the men of the Mediterranean world in the days when the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber.

<sup>1</sup>Dan.2, 13.

### GREEK INFLUENCE ON JUDAISM.

For two centuries, from 539 - 333 B.C., the Jews had been under the dominion of Persia, but with the advent of Alexander, Palestine, with the rest of the Persian Empire, submitted to that monarch. When he died in 323, B.C. the lands he had conquered were divided among his generals, and Palestine fell to the portion of the new ruler of Egypt. Eventually, however, in B.C. 198, Antiochus III the Great, won the territory from Ptolemy, having already gained the good-will of the Jews by liberal promises, and Palestine passed into the possession of the Syrian king. Alexander had been no vulgar conqueror. In his conquests he had been inspired by a definite aim. It was to wed the East to the West, and establish throughout the world a common civilisation based on the supreme culture of the Greeks. This ambition was shared by his successors after his death, and their policy for Hellenizing the world met with no small success. The policy was pursued in Syria, and Palestine itself offered a welcome to Greek culture. Intelligent men everywhere indeed, readily recognized the vast superiority of Greek art and literature. Even Grecian customs and modes of life had a brightness and charm that attracted the popular mind, and it is possible that the Jews themselves might have been merged in the general life of the time and eventually have lost their distinctive national characteristics, had it not been for the



mad attempt of Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, to hasten on the process of assimilation. The Book of Ecclesiastes, which was written in Palestine probably about the beginning of the second century, shows traces of the Greek influence. Aristotle's idea of a chief good is thought to be reflected in Eccles.2,3, and the Stoic principle of living conformably to nature in Eccles 3, 1-8. The influence of Plato also is seen in 2 and 4 Maccabees; and in the development of the Jewish doctrines of "Wisdom" the influence of Greece was most powerful of all. Greek manners and customs, too, had gained a hold on the populace. The Sadducees, a priestly aristocracy who yet valued worldly privileges, were in power in Jerusalem during this period of Greek rule and welcomed the new Grecian fashions. From the Book of Maccabees and from Josephus it is learned that a gymnasium was set up even in the Holy city, that Greek games and athletic exercises were most popular and that even Grecian dress was affected by many Jews. A knowledge of the language itself soon became a common possession, and a visit to Alexandria or Antioch soon became a necessary part of the education of every Jew who had ambitions or hopes of advancement. The Greek spirit was steadily making its influence felt, when in 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes became impatient with the slow progress of this process of assimilation and tried by force

to suppress Judaism altogether. He prohibited by law distinctive Jewish customs like circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath. He pillaged the Temple, entering the Holy of Holies, and set up in the precincts altars to Greek gods. Copies of the Law were burnt, and the Jews were ordered, on the pain of death, to make sacrifice to heathen idols. The only result of this mad endeavour was to kindle to a white-hot intensity the slumbering spirit of Jewish nationalism. For ten years under the leadership of the priestly family of the Maccabees relentless war was heroically waged, from which the Jews emerged victorious and at long last independent. Now they were to be governed by a king of their own, a member of the Maccabean family, who because of his priestly descent, could also be high priest.

The Jews however were not to enjoy their independence for long. A new power was rising in the West - Rome. In 64 B.C., after enjoying roughly a hundred years of freedom, Palestine again passed under foreign rule. Pompey, called in to judge between the conflicting claims of two Asmonean princes to the throne, captured Jerusalem and added Palestine to the Roman province of Syria. Now the Romans frankly recognized the superiority of Greek culture to their own, and did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of their subject peoples so long as peace was observed and taxes were paid. They were

opportunists in the matter of local government. Hellenism was a force to which the Romans had no objection. Meanwhile in Palestine itself a reaction against Jewish exclusiveness had set in. There still existed amongst the people a fierce jealousy for the national faith and life; the Pharisees were yet a power in the land. But others had been attracted towards the life of the wider world. Herod, the Great, was enthusiastic in his pursuit of Hellenism. He gathered to his court a coterie of Greek artists and scholars, erected amphitheatres, and instituted festal games in honour of Caesar. The Temple itself which he re-built in Jerusalem had a golden eagle over the Great Gate. And in all this he was supported by the Sadducees.

Yet on the whole the final result of this impact with Hellenism was superficial and small. Though Greek cities, which were primarily homes of Greek culture, lay all around them, the better part of the nation kept strictly aloof. Judaism itself escaped almost untouched. At the time when our Lord was born the Greek influence was powerless to affect the Jewish religion. Whatever breadth and richness there are in the teaching of Jesus, for which we can find no parallel in the Old Testament nor in later Judaism, they are not to be explained as a result of the widening influence of Gentile

culture, but to the unique spiritual insight of Christ himself. It was in the cradle of Judaism and not of Hellenism that Christianity was born. The influence of Persia on the Jewish religion had no doubt been real and decisive, but when Judaism became the religion of a "Law", conserved in a "Book", it was armed with a weapon that was powerful to withstand the encroachments of foreign elements. Hellenism may have affected to some extent the lives of many of the people, but its influence on their religion was of no great moment. Alexander may have made the world easy of access and provided mankind with a common tongue - both of which were of first importance in the spreading of the Gospel - but on the Gospel itself, as it first was lived and preached in Palestine, no traces of his influence are anywhere to be found.

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD.

Though excavations in Troy and Crete have shown that Greek civilisation had been developing for many hundreds of years before the days of Homer, at which point our histories used to begin, yet the great period, in which this civilisation reached its height and produced nearly all its fruits of abiding value, lay roughly between the years 450-350 B.C. It was at this time that a strange spirit of genius awoke in the soul of the nation, producing in a wonderful profusion masterpieces of every kind that have never been rivaled. It was at this time, too, that the city-state of ancient Greece was brought to perfection, a factor which probably had no small influence in fostering the awakened genius of the people. Every city with its immediate environments formed a state, of which there were about a hundred in all. Slaves performed the manual labour and the free citizens formed a leisure<sup>d</sup> aristocracy whose interests lay in public affairs and in the pursuit of the higher interests of life. These independent city states were small and accordingly held the interest and encouraged the public spirit of every citizen. It was a time in which men had ample leisure and yet found life sufficiently interesting to call forth all their energies and talents. The result was an accomplishment in literature and sculpture, in nearly all the branches of art and science, that is almost incredible.

But this type of city-state which the Greeks had evolved was weak in the matter of defence. They further weakened themselves by mutual strife, until in the long struggle of the Peloponnesian War they reached a state of exhaustion. They lay an easy prey to the first invader. That invader was soon to appear in the person of Philip of Macedon who easily overcame the resistance that lay in his way, took away their political freedom, and brought them under his firm rule. With the advent of Philip, this wonderful creative genius that had flourished for a century, seemed to die.

Philip was succeeded on the throne of Macedon, in reality of Greece, by Alexander, his son, who lost little time in embarking upon the ambitious project of subduing the Persians. He met with immediate success. His forces were invincible. He defeated the Persians at the Granicus in 334 B.C.; was victorious over Darius in Cilicia in 333 B.C., advanced into Phoenicia, then into Egypt, where he was welcomed as a deliverer from the hated Persians, and finally broke the power of Persia on the plain of Gangamela in 331 B.C. Crossing the Indus he continued his victorious march, but died when only 32 years old in B.C. 323. In the meantime, however, he had brought the nations and empires of the world under the rule of Greece. On his death the great empire which he had founded was divided among his five generals, Macedonian princes

who had ~~been~~ his youthful companions, and they in their turn sought to carry out the project which, besides the desire of military conquest had been the great ambition of their leader. Alexander had studied under Aristotle, who had kindled in his pupil an enthusiastic love of Greek culture, and civilisation, and one of his great ambitions, as he proceeded on his ~~ward~~ of conquest, was to establish Greek culture in every barbarian country he subdued. His motive was the fusion of the East and West, the unifying of his empire by means of the Greek spirit. By kindly and sympathetic treatment, by a respect for their feelings and by a flattering regard to their national and religious habits, he sought and largely succeeded in gaining the good-will of his subjects. Throughout his empire he established Greek cities which were to be centres of Hellenic influence. He set up schools where the Greek language and literature were to be taught. Greek festivals, customs and games were transplanted in a systematic way. He encouraged the intermarriage of Greeks with natives and set an example by himself marrying Statira, the daughter of Darius, and Parysatis, the daughter of Ochus.

Now Greek culture was far superior to the native cultures of those to whom Alexander introduced it, and the contact immediately resulted in an intellectual and social ferment. There were men ~~ey~~everywhere who were eager to

welcome and adopt it, introduced, as it was, in this startling manner by one who seemed little less than a god. The Greek language, in the form of the *Koinē*, made its way everywhere, and with the language the ability to appreciate Greek literature and learning. The Greek spirit had undoubtedly gained a hold and exercised its fascination over men's minds everywhere. Even when after Alexander's death, his empire was divided into a number of different kingdoms, between which there was constant war, and even when, as in the case of the Jews, a people succeeded in gaining its freedom, the measure of Greek civilisation which had come to them was still cherished and maintained. Native customs, traditions, religion and language might still persist in their various homes, in the depths men might still be Egyptians, Syrians, Jews, yet still they were possessed of something that was common, a superficial garment of Greek culture. And it was this Greek culture which finally consolidated the work of Rome. Recognising its superiority to their own, they used it as an instrument to bind the Empire together and instil a unity of spirit into what would have remained a mere unity of organisation. When national barriers were finally destroyed by Rome and the world was thrown open to commercial enterprise, men of all nationalities could meet and mingle in a way that would never have been possible but for the work of Alexander.



From this meeting of the nations there grew up a common civilisation distinguished from the Greek, Hellenic, by the name Hellenistic. It was a mingling of the civilisations of the world, with the Greek influence as the chief and binding element. "All the elements of life and thought, contributed by the different nationalities, were thrown together, and the solvent which was to fuse them into one was the Greek spirit".<sup>1</sup>

### INDIVIDUALISM.

The political conditions of this age, established by Rome, had this important result that they threw men back upon themselves. The age is remarkable for the growth and expression of the spirit of individualism. In the Classical age culture grew out of political liberty. The ancient Greek cherished the ideal of service to his native city, and his achievements in literature and art were the offerings he laid at this altar. And what is true of the Greek is true generally. When Rome, therefore, established peace by force of arms, she at the same time destroyed to a certain extent the dynamic of life. She robbed men of one of the greatest interests in life and stimuli towards activity, when she robbed them of political freedom. Though in the inscriptions of the time municipal elections and honours are frequently mentioned, this municipal life was to a great extent artificial and unreal. Citizens felt that ultimately their deliberations and aspirations did not count, that

<sup>1</sup>W. Fairweather "Jesus and the Greeks". p.19.

falling upon them was all the time, the shadow of the Eagle. To this fact is due the failure of the Hellenistic age to create anything. A man's energies and activities could not find an outlet in service to the State. One of the motives of life was gone. Circumstances had forced him to realise his existence as an individual, as a soul standing alone in a cosmos.

The seeds of individualism had always existed amongst the various peoples. The Babylonian captivity had helped forward the tendency amongst the Jews to separate the individual from the social mass, and Jeremiah's historic expression of the principle of individual responsibility - "In those days they shall say no more. The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity"<sup>1</sup> - marked an important turning-point in Jewish thought. The same tendency had existed in Greece and consequently in Rome, which from early days had been under the intellectual dominance of its neighbour. The Sophists by asserting that 'man is the measure of all things', and by affirming the subjectivity and relativity of all truth, gave a powerful impetus to the movement. Socrates, endeavouring to buttress the idea of the city-state, in reality exalted the importance of the individual by emphasizing his eternal value, and by finding the ultimate basis of moral action in man's reason and consciousness. The end of this movement is seen

<sup>1</sup>Jer.31, 29.

in the teaching of Stoicism, which differed from that of Plato and Aristotle, who taught men how to perform the duties of citizenship, in that it taught men their duties to humanity. Then in Eastern countries individualism had always flourished. When government is by despotism men are naturally driven in upon themselves, and this characteristic of the East is reflected in the religious cults which had as their motive the saving of the individual soul.

When finally the political freedom of the peoples of the world was lost, these tendencies came to realisation. The horizon of man's life was immeasurably lifted. The exigencies of life tempted him to look beyond his native state. If a slave, he realised that the world was infinitely larger than his own village; if free, the opportunities of wealth to be gained by the traversing of the commercial high-ways of the world, now safe and open to all, by a powerful appeal to his cupidity and love of adventure, tempted him to become a citizen of the world. It was an age of travel, of emigration. Men went where their peculiar needs and ambitions could be met or gratified.

Yet man is by nature sociable. It seems to be a necessity of his nature that he have some loyalty, some altar on which to lay his affections. The empire was too big. In relation to it men felt like atoms lost in an immensity of space. A man might respect it, admire it, be thankful for the peace and good-

government it brought, but it could not evoke his loyalty and love. His own home might require his loving care but it could not fill his whole life. The trade-guilds and burial-societies of the age were but make-shifts, symptoms of an urgent need, a spirit that demanded a fuller satisfaction. The state-religions were void of living reality and impotent to satisfy the craving of this age, whose characteristic attitude is that of complaining against the emptiness and futility of life, while seeking a fuller satisfaction in the promise of life beyond the grave held out by the religions which had come from the East. What Professor Gilbert Murray writes of Greece is true of the Mediterranean world as a whole. "There is the Hellenistic period reaching roughly from Plato to St. Paul or the earlier Gnostics, a period based on the consciousness of manifest failure, and consequently touched both with morbidness and with that spiritual exaltation which is so often the companion of morbidness. It had behind it the failure of the Olympian theology, the failure of the free city state, now crushed by semi-barbarous military monarchies; it lived through the gradual realization of two other failures - the failure of human government even when backed by the power of Rome or the wealth of Egypt to achieve a good life for man; and lastly the failure of the great propaganda of Hellenism in which the long drawn effort of Greece to educate a corrupt and barbaric

world seemed only to lead to the corruption or barbarization of the very ideals which it sought to spread. This sense of failure, this progressive loss of hope in the world, in sober calculation and in organized human effort, threw the later Greek back upon his own soul, upon emotion, upon the pursuit of personal holiness, upon emotions, mysteries and revelations, upon the comparative neglect of this transitory and imperfect life for the sake of this dream-world far off, which shall subsist without sin or corruption, the same yesterday, today, and for ever".<sup>1</sup>

#### SYNCRETISM.

The political conditions of the age had this second important result that as the different races of the world mingled in the great cities establishing a common non-national type of civilisation, so the religions which they carried with them from their native homes tended to fuse and conform to a common type. It was an age of widespread borrowing and the Eastern religions, which invaded the West, though originally distinct eventually lost their distinctive characteristics and were little different one from the other. They were really sprung from a common source - the worship of nature - making it easy for them to coalesce, and as they looked upon one another with an easy and friendly tolerance, there was no barrier to prevent them from borrowing. The tendency too was greatly helped by the in-

<sup>1</sup>Gilbert Murray, "Four Stages of Greek Religion", p.17.

fluence of Greek philosophy. It had spread among educated men from the East who used it to find a rational and deeper element in their religious beliefs than they really possessed. Philosophy was used to interpret and justify the rites and ideas of their religion and men came to discover that they believed the same things, that the rites and customs of their ancestral faiths in reality enshrined the same ideas and reached towards the same end. Men thus were tolerant of other faiths than their own. They came to believe that the one truth was present in many forms, that there was one divine principle behind all organised religions, and that - as Celsus said - it made "no difference whether you call the Highest Being Zeus or Zen or Adonis or Sabaoth, or Ammoun like the Egyptians, or Pappaeus like the Scythians".<sup>1</sup> It was the same god whom men worshipped under different names. Apuleius expresses the belief thus, "I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements, ..... manifested alone and under one form of all the gods and goddesses. .... my name, my divinity is adored throughout all the world, in divers manners, in variable customs and by many names. For the Phrygians that are first of men call me the Mother of the gods at Persinus; the Athenians, which are sprung from their own soil, Cecropian Minerva; the Cyprians, which are girt about by the sea, Paphian Venus; the Cretans, which bear arrows,

<sup>1</sup>Origen c. Celsus. V, 41.

Dictynnian Diana; the Sicilians, which speak three tongues, infernal Prosperine; the Eleusinians their ancient goddess Ceres; some Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, others Rhammusia, and principally both sort of the Ethiopians, which dwell in the Orient and are enlightened by the morning rays of the sun, and the Egyptians which are excellent in all kinds of ancient doctrine, and by their proper ceremonies accustom to worship me, do call me by my true name Queen Isis".<sup>1</sup> It was natural therefore, as one might expect, that a man should be at the same time an initiate into various cults, and this was what often occurred. Lucius after exploring the mysteries of one cult was ordered to seek initiation into those of another; and the Emperor Alexander Severus honoured in his private chapel Orpheus, Abraham, Apollonius of Tyana, together with Christ.

For the most part this syncretistic movement amongst the religions went on unconsciously. They borrowed because they lived together, had an intrinsic similarity to one another, and appealed to the same system of thought for interpretation and justification. But there was also growing up a conscious desire for a universal religion. The hard distinctions of nationality had been broken down. The world was one. Men of all kinds jostled with one another in the slave establishments, in the Roman army, and in the cities. Unity on a large scale was being realised in other departments of life and it was felt

<sup>1</sup>Apuleius "Metamorphosis", Bk.XI, Ch.4.

to be unreasonable that there should still be so many religions. The idea of a universal religion commended itself to men.

Caesar-worship was one attempt to meet this need but a more serious attempt was the movement, which culminated and is best known to us in Gnosticism, the expression of the belief that if all the religions were combined the resulting eclectic religion would be superior to all.

This borrowing, conscious and unconscious, between the religions went on apace. Judaism stood apart - the Jews were always regarded as a peculiar people in matters both political and religious - but the Gentiles themselves did not ignore Judaism, and were quite prepared to welcome and to acquaint themselves with whatever of value might be conserved in Israel's faith. This was not without importance for Christian missionaries. Thus Deissmann says of the "Great" Magical Papyrus (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) "Anyone who can read this one leaf without getting bewildered by the hocus-pocus of magic words, will admit that through the curious channel of such magical literature a good portion of the religious thought of the Greek Old Testament found its way into the world, and must have already found its way by the time of St. Paul. The men of the great city in Asia Minor in whose hands St. Paul found texts of this kind were, though heathen, not altogether unprepared for Bible things. The flames of the burning

<sup>1</sup>~~Deissmann, "Light from the Ancient East", p.280.~~



Papyrus books could not destroy recollections of sacred formulae which retained a locus standi even in the new faith. But, apart from this, the magical books with their grotesque farrago of Eastern and Western religious formulae, afford us striking illustrations of how the religions were elbowing one another as the great turning-point drew near. They are perhaps the most instructive proofs of the syncretism of the middle and lower classes".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Deissmann. "Light from the Ancient East". p.260.

ROMAN RELIGION.

While it is true that the only religions in the Graeco-Roman world which were possessed of a real vitality were the cults that came from the East, yet the old state religions of Greece and of Rome still persisted and were not altogether without influence especially in the lives of country people. At Lystra Paul and Barnabus were worshipped as Mercury and Jupiter.<sup>1</sup> The religion of Rome was founded on animism. It was developed in an agricultural society and was suited to the practical ends of life. It sought to foster the simple domestic and civic virtues, prized amongst a practical and unimaginative people, and therefore was free from the wild extravagances which only too often accompanied nature-cults. The gods were those who presided over the various aspects of agricultural life, such as the sending of the rain, the sowing and reaping of the crops. They were conceived only in a vague manner, sometimes as little more than impersonal powers that had not gained sufficient individuality as to be awarded names; and the Romans worshipped not so much the separate divinities of their faith as the divine power or unity, which they dimly felt to be at work in these different activities of nature, but which they were not able to express nor represent in words.

Roman religion was fundamentally a family religion which finally had become the official religion of the state, without

<sup>1</sup>Acts, XIV.12.

losing any of its essential characteristics. It was a religion bound up with ritual. To observe the festivals on their proper days, to make the sacrifices in the approved traditional manner, to perform the rites exactly in their prescribed form were things of more than ordinary moment. At all costs the correct form had to be observed and the omission of a single word might destroy the efficacy of the whole service. Again it was not only a state-religion which had as its end the continued prosperity of the state, it was a religion whose very worship was under the control of the state and was administered, not by priests set apart for the purpose, but by state-officials or magistrates, whose duties were both of a political and religious character. The religious services were administered by civil authorities. The relation between the religion and the state was of the closest, and <sup>as</sup> it was felt that any change in the traditional forms of service might imperil the safety of Rome, no change of any kind was permitted. This relation was at once a strength and a weakness. It ensured survival but it prevented development, until eventually rites were being observed of which no one knew the meaning, prayers were being offered and hymns were being sung in a language that had been outgrown and was largely unintelligible.

But just as the excellence of Greece in the intellectual

and artistic spheres had won for her the homage of Rome, so Greek religion, with its warm aesthetic beauty and through the human appeal of its anthropomorphic gods, invaded the sphere of Roman religion and made its influence felt. Roman divinities, who bore a resemblance to certain Greek divinities, were identified with the latter and embellished with their characteristics. Zeus and Jupiter were originally different figures, but latterly were identical in all but name. The equation of Greek and Roman gods no doubt imparted a warmth to the religion of Rome, but it also had this important and evil result that it impaired the old feeling of reverence. The fables concerning the gods portrayed in Greek mythology were often frankly immoral and in spite of the beauty with which it was clothed Olympian theology was doomed from the first.

It was chiefly in the domain of art and poetry that this borrowing was effected and the fundamental character of the native religion was in the main little changed. It still remained largely a matter of political ritual, surviving even when outgrown and practised as a matter of good-citizenship even though incapable of exercising any true influence on life or conduct. Augustus, alarmed at its lack of vitality and foreseeing that the empire required the stabilising influence of a religious faith, attempted to instil new blood into the

old veins. He caused many temples to be built, enforced the old customs, and called the poets and artists of the time to assist him in his task. The religion indeed was widespread and had it possessed in itself the principles of growth and development might have been a power. Roman soldiers had carried it to all parts of the world, and wherever magistrates dispensed Roman law they had perforce to carry out the rites. It enjoyed also a great prestige. The gods of Rome who had enabled its army to vanquish every enemy were worthy of honour. But the religion itself did not contain the possibility of continued existence. As a force among thinking men it was dead, outgrown, and the views of Quintus Mucius Scaevola, himself a Roman pontiff, were widespread. He classified religion under three heads - the purely ornamental fiction of the poets, philosophy, and the religion of the state which was merely an instrument of statecraft to be used in keeping the lower orders under control.

It is possible that this religion of Rome exercised an indirect influence on Christianity. There were many factors at work directing the form which the church as an organisation was to assume towards the end of the first century, and in compelling it to formulate a body of doctrine and embrace a ritual, and one of these may have been the survival of the spirit of the old Roman religion especially in Rome. At any

rate the Christianity in that city has always placed its emphasis on loyalty to tradition, on proper order, on ritual, on organisation, on outward form, from as early a date as the First Epistle of Clement which advocates these very things.

### GREEK RELIGION.

The origin of the Greek religion is obscure. Probably the religion of the land was originally some sort of nature-worship, centreing round the forces of fertility, chthonian deities of the earth and underworld. Investigation into the three great religious festivals of Athens (the Diasia, the Thesmophoria, and the Anthesteria) has shown beneath the worship of the Olympians a substratum of belief in chthonian gods. Professor Gilbert Murray<sup>1</sup> affirms that the Olympians were the mountain gods of the old invading Northmen, the chieftains and princes, each with his loose following of retainers and minor chieftains, who broke in upon the ordered simplicity of tribal life in the pre-Hellenic villages. They were the gods of warriors, piratical buccaneers, whose interests did not lie in promoting agriculture, but who found it easier to live on the spoils they had won. It was the religion of these men that supplanted, pushed into the back-ground, or purified to a certain extent the grosser elements of the native cults. They exalted the patriarchal monogamous idea in contrast to the matrilinear customs of Aegean or Hittite races, with their

<sup>1</sup>Four Stages of Greek Religion.

polygamy, their agricultural rites, their sex-emblems and fertility goddesses, disposing of the rites - many of them obscene and indecent - whose object was the stimulation of the food and tribal supply, leaving a little inoffensive ritual, the agricultural festivals, and a large part of the worship of the dead. Yet throughout the more remote parts of Greece the old native cults lingered on, though Greek literature, the fruit of the city, is silent concerning them. They kept alive in Greece the religious tendencies which secured a welcome for the religion of Dionysus and at a later date for the more highly developed Oriental cults which swept over the Western world.

The force which was most powerful in securing for Greek religion a widespread prestige was the Greek aesthetic sense. The gods were clothed in the finest imagery that Greek imagination could suggest, and beliefs, that were in reality primitive, were accepted because of the beautiful myths in which they were expressed. The gods of Olympus were hauntingly human and possessed of an intrinsic appeal. The continuance of their worship was further secured in that each divinity was associated with a city-state which he was pledged to guard in return for the strict observance of religious rites. Greek religion was like the Roman in this respect, that it was bound up with the idea of patriotism, and exalted the civic virtues. Its great

weakness was that it had no close relation to personal life, offered nothing for the inner life of man as man. In this respect it was irretrievably weak and not all the beautifying endeavours of art and poetry could conceal its great poverty. It was incapable of spiritual development, destined to be outgrown when the age of reflection dawned, and to be condemned when the Greek moral sense advanced. No gods could survive, above whom man's moral sense compelled him to place other powers *Θεμίσ* and *Μοίρα* - to which it was possible to appeal over the heads of the gods, and to which gods and men were alike subject. Philosophy seeking for a unifying principle in the universe could not tolerate a multitude of gods, whose exploits sung by Homer were offensive to the moral sense. The Olympians "are artists' dreams, ideals, allegories; they are symbols beyond themselves. They are the gods of a half-rejected tradition, of unconscious make believe, of aspiration. They are gods to whom doubtful philosophers can pray, with all a philosopher's due caution, as so many radiant and heart-searching hypotheses. They are not gods in whom anyone believes as a hard fact"<sup>1</sup>. That is the best that a sympathetic appreciation can say of them.

But along with the worship of the Olympian gods, there were in Greece other religious practices which had made their way in from the East. They were possessed of deeper and more spiritual elements, and made their influence greatly felt. The cult

<sup>1</sup>Professor Gilbert Murray "Four Stages of Greek Religion".



of Dionysus, the god of wine, must have been introduced to Greece at a comparatively late date. It is not known to Homer. Its chief difference from the official religion lay in the orgiastic rites with which its worship was celebrated and in the mystic emotion which the frenzy of these rites generated. Wild music and dancing and the eating of the raw flesh of the bull induced a state of intoxication, wherein the worshippers established a union with the divine, felt themselves lifted out of the conditions of earthly mortality and united to the divine power behind nature. It brought into Greece the mysticism of the East.

Orphism too invaded Greece from the East about the sixth century B.C. It was related to the Dionysiac cult but was an advancement on the latter in that it rejected the wild frenzy of its worship and expressed its savage ritual in more stately forms. It is first traceable in Thrace. Miss Harrison<sup>1</sup> affirms that Orpheus was a real man who reformed the Dionysiac cult.. "The great step which Orpheus took was that, while he kept the old Bacchic faith that a man might become a god, he altered the conception of what a god was, and he sought to obtain that godhead by wholly different means. The grace he sought was not physical intoxication, but spiritual ecstasy; the means he adopted not drunkenness, but abstinence and rites of purification". The main doctrine of Orphism was that immortality

<sup>1</sup>Prolegomena, 477.

was possible for all through the celebration of the secret rites of the cult. The Greeks, as in Homer, had played with the idea of a shadowy existence after death, men surviving as ghostly shades that lacked true existence and were bereft of personal activity; they also had the concept of apotheosis - super-men exalted to the sphere of the gods after death; but Orphism brought a new conception of immortality in affirming that in every man a divine element is imprisoned. The soul after death is subject to a weary cycle of reincarnations, which is in itself an evil, since the body is the prison-house of the soul. The aim of the religion was to deliver the soul from the pollution of the body by means of sacramental rites and esoteric teaching; and this privilege was reserved for the few who had undergone the experience of initiation. The cult concerned itself with the myth of the rending of Zagreus (a Chthonian designation of Dionysus) by the Titans, in the form of a bull. They devour the body, but the heart, reserved by Athene, is given to Zeus who swallows it. The new Dionysus, in whom the old Zagreus is come to life, is born of this. Zeus blasts the Titans by a lightning flash and from their ashes springs the race of men, thus possessed of good element from Zagreus and an evil element from the Titans. Man must free himself from his evil element, the body, that his soul may return in purity to the god from whom it came. Mystic formulae

of the cult are preserved in the Compagno tablet.<sup>1</sup> "Out of the pure I come .... For I also avow me that I am of your blessed race .... I have flown out of the sorrowful weary wheel .... I have passed with eager feet from the circle desired". "Happy and blessed me, thou shalt be god instead of mortal". Amongst the mystery cults, Orphism was distinguished too by the relatively high moral note which it struck. Alongside its sacramentarianism it placed a doctrine of sin, of purity which demanded a life of asceticism.

The contact established between Greek and Eastern religion made its influence felt, and is seen especially in the worship of Demeter at Eleusis. The cult of Demeter is supposed to have been current in Attica as early as the eleventh century B.C. Probably its original aim was the furtherance of the life of nature, the ensurance of the return of vegetation in the spring by rites of sympathetic magic. Even in the complex and organised form which these Eleusinian mysteries later assumed, a central place was given in the rites to the reaping of an ear of corn in silence. Under the influence of the Orphic sects and perhaps too under the influence of Egyptian religion - for Egyptian objects have been found in the temple at Eleusis recently explored - a deeper element was introduced which totally transformed the nature of the worship, whose aim now was to secure blessedness in the future life for those

<sup>1</sup>J. Harrison. Prolegomena. p.596.

who had been initiated. The central figure was Demeter, the corn goddess, who mourns for her daughter Persephone and eventually recovers her to the joy of the worshippers. The nature of the rites and the manner of their celebration was kept secret and were known only to the initiated. Apuleius<sup>1</sup> records this prayer to Demeter, "O great and holy goddess, I pray thee by thy plenteous and liberal right hand, by thy joyful ceremonies of harvest .... by the earth that held thy daughter fast, by the dark descent to the unillumined marriage of Proserpina, by thy diligent inquisition of her and by thy bright return, and by the other secrets which are concealed within the Temple of Eleusis in the land of Athens, take pity on me thy servant Psyche". With these secret ceremonies was associated the assurance of immortality. Probably it was the content of the future life which was impressed upon the initiates by a series of dramatic representations, in which they themselves no doubt took part, experiencing in symbolic fashion the passing from darkness into light. In the Temple there are cellars and much substructure. A drama portraying the suffering of Demeter in search for her daughter would be exhibited. Writers speak of "things done, things shown, things spoken". Sacred relics no doubt would be shown at certain times and their meaning and significance explained. There is great doubt as to

<sup>1</sup>Metamorphosis. Book VI. Ch. 2.

the exact nature of the rites and the experiences which the initiates were supposed to have undergone. It is possible that the notion of sacramental union with the goddess was present, but possible too that all the initiate received was a pledge that he should gain immortal life. Little demand was made upon him; initiation seems to have secured everything; though the references in Aristophanes may be taken as evidence of moral demands ("All we who have been initiated and lived in pious wise". The uninitiated, whom Dionysus beholds lying in thick slime, are those who wronged strangers, maltreated parents, swore false oaths)<sup>1</sup>.

There was one factor that prevented these Eleusinian Mysteries from exercising the power that they might have wielded. It was that the rites could only be celebrated at Eleusis in the autumn of each year. The initiation ceremonies could only be celebrated in the Temple of Eleusis. There was this further limitation that admission was confined at first to Greeks, though at a later date membership was thrown open to those who had a knowledge of the Greek language and possessed the status of Roman citizens. These were disadvantages which did not hamper the rapid spread of the Oriental cults which in the Hellenistic age were to sweep over the Greek world.

The Greek religion in itself exerted little influence on

<sup>1</sup>Aristoph. Frogs. 456f. 148f.

Christianity. The systems of religious thought were poles apart and could not even approximate at points. Greek religion never advanced beyond the point of superstition. It was blessed by the poets, it was ignored by the philosophers, it offended those of spiritual insight. Yet in a manner its indirect influence was of great moment. It was probably through Orphism that the doctrine of immortality entered Greece and found its place in Greek philosophy. Plato in maintaining the divinity and immortality of the soul, and in his mysticism, is reflecting the influence, not of native, but of Eastern religion, from which source he almost certainly drew his inspiration. These ideas, inasmuch as they found their expression in Greek philosophic thought were not without their influence on the statement of Christian doctrine at a later date.

### GREEK PHILOSOPHY.

The great period of Greek philosophy lay roughly between the years 400-300 B.C. when Socrates, Plato and Aristotle gave a mighty impulse to speculative thought and pointed out the road which it was ever afterwards to follow. Plato, seeking for a unity, ascribed reality not to the material world or its sense phenomena but to the principles or ideas of which these were but the expression, and found his ultimate reality in the

unifying principle above these, in the Idea of ideas, the God of Platonism. Plato's teaching thus resulted in the absolute transcendentalism of God and in the dualism of spirit and matter, a gulf which it was the task of later philosophy to bridge. He had affirmed too that God was accessible to human thought, yet admitted that the gaining of this end was a difficult task and that "having discovered Him, it is impossible to speak of him at all";<sup>1</sup> and when Clement<sup>2</sup> represents Plato as saying, "I do not say it is possible for all to be blessed and happy; only a few", he is giving an accurate description of the spirit of this philosophy. It was this weakness in his system to supply to the "many" a practical guide for life, that is the clue to the despair of human reason which afterwards prevailed in the Hellenistic world. Even amongst the schools of thought, which remained faithful to Plato's idea of the transcendence of God, the despair of man's intellect to rise to the Divine was boldly recognized and knowledge of God - as in Philo - was not gained by processes of pure reason but as the result of a vision or union with God, granted to the most holy of men in a state of rare ecstasy. Thus when men had lost faith in the national religions and were turning to philosophy, or in their despair of reason to oriental religions of authority, it was not an

<sup>1</sup>Tim. 28, c. . . . .  
<sup>2</sup>Strom. V. 1. . . . .

uninspiring nationalism to which they turned but to systems of thought that were strongly religious in character and whose goal was a mystic experience.

The problem, which philosophy was left, the bridging of the gulf between the real and the phenomenal, was solved by later Platonists by affirming that the phenomenal world was the creation of intermediate agents or demons, corresponding to the "ideas" in the thought of Plato. The materialism of Stoicism was hateful to Platonists like Plutarch, likewise its tendency to allegorize the gods of mythology into processes of nature. They themselves could not find a place for them alongside Plato's Absolute or Supreme Idea but they identified them with the demons, and thus provided Christian polemic with a weapon of attack. The Gods of Paganism were not unrealities that men could ignore, they were active agents of evil, they were evil spirits.

But of the schools of philosophy which came into being under the influence of the early masters, there was one which gained so widespread a following and so dominant a position that for our purposes it is almost unnecessary to take account of any others. In our period when men spoke of philosophy they almost invariably meant some form of stoicism. Stoicism was founded by Zeno who taught in Athens at the end of the 4th century B.C. He had appeared in an age when Greek society, robbed of the old moral and religious sanctions, was



in a state of disorder. The old customs and traditions of the city state had been shaken with the passing of the political conditions to which they were bound. There was lacking in life an authority to which men might appeal for guidance, and it was with this fact in view that Zeno developed his position. The circumstances of the period had forced men back upon themselves, and Zeno sought to provide men with an authority that was independent of time and place, to show them that the tribunal to which they must appeal lay within themselves, in the reason, which was the divine part of their own being. This ethic, or rule of life, had to be justified, to satisfy the Greek mind, at the bar of philosophy; it had to be shown to be part of the inner nature of things, true to reality and not merely convenient. Zeno therefore grounded his ethic upon a metaphysic. This latter was an attempt to solve the dualism of Platonism, to bridge the gulf between the ideal or real world and the world of phenomena or unreality. Zeno did so by substituting for the Platonic doctrine of transcendence the Stoic doctrine of immanence. He founded his system upon the teaching of Heraclitus, (about 500 B.C.), who affirmed that there is no principle in the universe but matter, also making use of the Aristotelian idea that matter is possessed of an active or directing, and of a passive, principle. To the former principle was given all the

characteristics of reason, the Logos of philosophy. Logos or reason was the true and ultimate reality, but this material or phenomenal world was in a certain sense real inasmuch as it was transfused, penetrated by the logos as by an essence. The true reality was not transcendent, it was immanent in all things, it expressed itself in all parts of the cosmos. In man it is his reason, logos, that is his true reality; it is that portion of his being which alone survives, a fragment of the universal logos. On this principle the ethics of Stoicism was based - man must live in accordance with nature, in accordance with the directing principle which reveals itself in the scheme of things, he must seek to bring his individual reason into conformity with the universal reason, to live in accordance with the divine harmony of the universe. But this logos, or reason, of Stoicism was not the logos of Idealism; it was conceived in a materialistic manner; it was an essence infinitely mobile that pervaded matter, resembling in its properties fire. Stoicism was ultimately a materialistic philosophy.

A new impetus, and one that at the same time directed the courses of its development, was given to Stoicism by Posidonius. Born about 135 B.C. he opened a school at Rhodes, which attracted pupils from far and near. It seems to have been he who introduced the element of Oriental

mysticism into this system. He imparted to it a new emotional note so that it became more of a religion than a philosophy, emphasizing the idea of communion with the universal reason or, as later Stoics came to call the logos, God. It was no doubt the contact of Eastern religion that was making its influence felt; many of the great Stoic teachers were Orientals; Zeno himself was of Phoenician extraction. It was now, too, that Stoicism incorporated the doctrine of astral immortality - also from the East. The soul of man, the logos, was of an essence like fire. What more natural than that after death his soul should be united to those great balls of fire that illumine the heavens and rouse in man a depth of mystic emotion? The Emperor Julian says, "From my earliest years my mind was completely swayed by the light which illumines the heavens that not only did I desire to gaze intently at the sun, but whenever I walked abroad in the night season, when the firmament was clear and cloudless, I abandoned all else without exception and gave myself up to the beauties of the heavens; nor did I understand what anyone might say to me, nor heed what I was doing myself".

Stoicism was pantheistic in its nature, so that personal immortality was always an open question. The divine spark of fire which was man's soul might be reabsorbed into the cosmic soul or it might conserve its personal identity, say as a star

which, though part of the cosmic fire, yet has an existence of its own. Even as late as the days of Marcus Aurelius, the issue was unsettled. Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus might both be designated sceptical. "When He sounds the recall, He opens the door and says 'Come! 'Where?' To nothing you need fear, but to that whence you were born, to your friends, and kindred the elements. So much of you as was fire shall pass into fire, what was earth shall pass into earth, the air into air, the water into water".<sup>1</sup> The general belief, however, in our period was more hopeful. The doctrine of personal immortality was prized by many, and among them were Stoics.

The aspect of Stoicism, which was of most importance, was undoubtedly its ethical teaching, founded on the principle that all men share in the divine nature, in the universal reason. This principle was of decisive power in all matters pertaining to man's conduct. In intercourse with his fellows, the thought governing his actions must be the realisation that all were akin, alike partakers of the divine being. Stoicism thus raised men above the barriers of nationality, race, or class. It showed that these differences which separated men were superficial, it reduced men to a common denominator and enthroned the idea of individual worth. "All of us have the same origin, the same source; no man is nobler than another save he who has a more up--

<sup>1</sup>Epictetus. Disc.3, 13-14.

:right character and one better fitted to honourable pursuits".<sup>1</sup>  
Then in his life as an individual the Stoic must live always under the guidance of reason, freeing himself from all earthly influences, remembering always the unreal and temporary character of the external circumstances of daily life. These must not enslave his will. Reason must always be the guiding force. That he may free himself from passion, he must cultivate the Stoic apathy (*ἀπαθεία*), the absence of all feeling. Even duty towards one's fellow-men must not be pursued from any feeling of sympathy or pity or love, but solely as a dictate of reason, because they too are of the divine nature and therefore akin. The Stoic must find his life within himself. Circumstances - wealth, poverty, sickness, health, home, friends - because they are not under the control of his will, have no power to move him. His inner life, his thoughts and actions, - these he can control. Self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*) is the rule<sup>αε</sup> of his life. What comes to him from without, the happenings of daily life, are directed not by him but by the world reason, which permeates all things. These he must accept with a tranquility of spirit, concentrating on his inner life and leaving the ordering of external circumstances to the Divine Providence that rules the cosmos.

The influence of Stoicism was by no means a negligible factor in the preparation of the Mediterranean world for the

<sup>1</sup>Seneca (De Ben. 111. 28).

receiving of Christianity. It gave a new impetus to spiritual and religious life. It was elastic in form and its doctrine of a universal logos was so comprehensive as to embrace the gods of many religions or cults. Stoicism became the ally of religion, imparting to the religious cults of the age a new prestige. The gods, which these worshipped, were but the universal reason under different names, and the myths which they narrated were but allegorical expressions of deeper truths. In this way the existing religions were able to win for themselves a new vitality and to disguise with a cloak of rationality the crass superstitions on which many of them were founded. In this way too they felt that they were related to one another, conserving and expressing the same truths and worshipping the same god. Religious syncretism was greatly aided by the teaching of philosophy. In this contact with religion the nature of Stoicism itself underwent a change. It became religious in colour. Its hard rationalism became less prominent, and instead of reason it spoke of God. "God is near you, with you, within you". "This, I say, Lucilius; a holy spirit sits within us, watcher of our good and evil deeds, and guardian over us".<sup>1</sup> It also, however, became allied with the grossest superstitions, which received a new lease of life by being fused with metaphysical theories.

<sup>1</sup>Seneca. Epist. 41. 2.

This philosophy, whose vogue had become so widespread, was of influence in preparing the world for the coming of Christianity. It was pantheistic but in reducing the world to a unity, it helped to prepare men for the monotheistic idea. In our period the old polytheistic beliefs were impossible owing to the influence of Stoicism, and Christianity was possessed from the beginning of this advantage that it found like philosophy a unity in the cosmos, ~~there was~~, it was founded upon Jewish monotheism. For this reason it commended itself to men and found a point of attachment in their common basic belief. Christianity, or Judaism really, had arrived by the quicker avenue of religious instinct at the same goal which Greek philosophy had reached. Christians, therefore, could present ~~their~~ message in a manner that would commend itself to intelligent men. The speech of St. Paul at Athens is an example of this. He presents his message in the very terms of Stoicism, quoting in aid of his message one of their own poets.<sup>1</sup> Again, besides proclaiming the unity of the God-head, Stoicism had urged the unity of mankind. The human race was one inasmuch as it participated in the one nature, the logos. It was on this thought that Paul based his theories of sin and redemption. In the Fall of Adam, the whole race was involved, and in the breaking of the power of sin and death by Christ, the consequences of that act were extended to all.

<sup>1</sup>Acts, 17. 23-29.

This aspect of Paul's teaching was one which Gentiles, accustomed to the belief in the solidarity of the race, would readily understand. Again, the Stoic conception of a Providence operative in all the phenomena of the cosmos was one which was common to Christians. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground", said Jesus. "All things work together for good", might as easily have been spoken by a later Stoic as by St. Paul. Again in Paul's emphasis on conscience, on the law of God written in the heart, whereby the Gentiles though ignorant of the law of Moses may sin or may live righteously,<sup>1</sup> and in John's conception of "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" we have a direct echo of Stoic teaching.

There is no doubt that Stoicism had an influence on Christian thought, but this influence was more formal than vital. It supplied Christianity with the vehicles whereby it might express certain aspects of its thought. But those things which Christianity borrowed were completely transformed, stamped with a new spirit. The Logos of St. John was not the logos of Stoicism, but the logos of Stoicism became for St. John a vehicle of thought through which he might express the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Stoicism did not absorb Christianity but Christianity absorbed as much of Stoicism as was useful for its purpose of expression and development, and was not at the same time contradictory to its own inner spirit.

<sup>1</sup>Romans. 2, 15.



Between the two there was in reality a vital difference of spirit. Stoicism maintained a high ethical standard, but these ethics were grounded on a purely rational principle. Stoicism was always self-regarding, seeking for a passionless tranquility of soul. Christianity was grounded on passion. It put Love at the centre of the universe, and preached love as the motive principle of all human conduct. Christianity and Stoicism differed greatly from one another in inmost spirit, but they had certain superficial resemblances - a fact which proved of value to the religion, when it sought to win a world whose thought was permeated by the doctrines of the philosophy. For a knowledge of philosophy was not in the Graeco-Roman world confined to the intelligentsia. Earnest thinkers had found in philosophy a substitute for the ancestral religions in which only the most ignorant now believed. They had been helped by philosophy and were inspired with the idea of passing on to their fellow-men this aid to right-living and right-thinking. In the first century there was a movement to popularize philosophy. Philosophers, even of the first rank like Epictetus, settled for a time at various places and invited all, who cared, to attend their public lectures and discussions. Sometimes they moved from place to place like itinerant preachers. This too was not without its influence on the spreading of the Christian faith. Missionaries to secure an audience, besides

resorting to the synagogue, could catch the ear of the Gentile population, by following the example of the itinerant philosophers. No doubt, too, the manner of presenting the case was moulded on the example of these public lecturers. They had found the diatribe to be effective. It was a homely discourse, which was mid-way between a speech and a conversation, and imparted information in answer to rhetorical questions. This was the model which Christian missionaries followed. Epictetus and St. Paul present their respective messages in the same manner.

#### PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA.

The religion of the Old Testament has little in it that is philosophical. It was the offspring of man's moral and spiritual instinct rather than of his powers of rational thought. In Palestine Judaism always remained more or less faithful to its original character, but the Judaism of the Diaspora, when it came into contact with the culture of Greece, underwent a radical change. Educated and cultured Hellenistic Jews felt the lack of the speculative element in the religion of their fathers and conceived it their task to reconcile their faith with the philosophic wisdom of Greece, or to express

their faith in the terms of speculative thought. It was their task to find a philosophic medium by which they could with safety express the two elements of their faith which every Jew held to be vital - the transcendency of God and His relationship of closest intimacy to the world and mankind. At first there would be a natural and unconscious rapprochement between their religious beliefs and philosophic modes of thought; concepts that bore a resemblance would almost unconsciously be endowed with the qualities of one another. One Jewish concept which lent itself to this process of assimilation was that of Wisdom. Wisdom had always been an attribute prized by this people, reflecting their practical outlook on the affairs of life. It was not the wisdom of the schools they sought after, but a knowledge of the universe and of human nature, such as would be of use to man in solving his problems and in mapping out his course amid the varying circumstances of life. It expressed itself in maxims of conduct. This primitive conception of wisdom underwent development, and as an attribute of the Divine was personified and hymned with all the extravagances of poetic imagery in the Books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiasticus. In Jewish works of Alexandrian origin Greek ideas began to attach themselves to

the Jewish Term. Wisdom tended to be equated to the Greek, especially the Stoic, conception of Reason until c. 50 B.C. in "The Wisdom of Solomon", which plainly shows the influence of Greek thought in many respects,<sup>1</sup> its functions are practically identified with those of the Logos. "For she that is the artificer of all things taught me, even wisdom. For there is in her a spirit quick of understanding, holy, alone in kind, manifold, subtil, freely moving ----- all-powerful, all surveying, and penetrating thro' all spirits that are quick of understanding, pure, most subtil. For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; yea, she pervadeth and penetrateth all things by reason of her pureness". "And with thee is wisdom which knoweth thy works and was present when thou wast making the world". "For thine incorruptible spirit is in all things". Once this movement had been established, the chance that the Greek term Logos bore a double meaning - reason and word - enabled the Alexandrian school of Jewish thinkers, by means of the allegorical method, to affirm with even greater credibility that the Old Testament really set forth a body of spiritual truth such as is discoverable in philosophy. In Jewish

<sup>1</sup>vd. ix.15. vii.7. "For she teacheth temperance and prudence, righteousness and courage".

thought the "word" of God had played an important part. It was spoken of as the messenger, the creative activity of God. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is.55.xi.). All that was required was to attribute to the Jewish "word" the functions of the Greek "Logos". The philosophizing of Judaism reached its height in Philo.

He lived from c. 20 B.C. - 50 A.D. in Alexandria. It was a city of great commercial activity and consequently had a large Jewish population. It was also a great centre of learning and its famous library drew scholars from all parts of the world. The Jewish inhabitants, while remaining faithful to their religion, mixed freely with their Gentile fellow-citizens and played a prominent part in the intellectual life of the city. Apart from his influence on the expression of Christian doctrine, Philo is worthy of a place among the foremost thinkers of that age. His work had an influence on the subsequent history of philosophy. His aim was to reconcile Judaism with Greek philosophy and to show that his religion was not, as might appear on the surface, intellectually barren but that Moses had really prevented and surpassed the

Greek thinkers in their discovery of the truths expressed in the philosophic systems.

"But Moses, who had early reached the very summits of philosophy, and who had learnt from the oracles of God the most numerous and important of the principles of nature, was well aware that it is indispensable that in all existing things there must be an active cause and a passive subject".<sup>1</sup>

"But the lawgiver being full of the most modern wisdom in everything".<sup>2</sup>

"Very beautifully, therefore, has the interpreter of the writings of nature ----- taught everyone of us in an invisible manner as he does now to arrange everything in such a way as to produce an exact opposition. ----- Is not this the thing which the Greeks say that Heraclitus that great philosopher who is so celebrated among them, put forth as the leading principle of his whole philosophy, and boasted of it as if it were a new discovery? For it is in reality an ancient discovery of Moses, that out of the same thing opposite things are produced having the ratio of parts to the whole as has

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World ii.

<sup>2</sup>Unchangeableness of God. xxvi.

here been shown".<sup>1</sup>

Philo's method, whereby he was enabled, not to discover, but to read the truths of Greek philosophy into the Scriptures was that of allegory. At times his exegesis proceeds on Rabbinical lines, when he presses the letter of the sacred writings, but almost invariably the allegorical is his method of approach. Borrowed from the Greeks it was evidently in favour with the Jewish school of thinkers in Alexandria. Traces of it are found in the Wisdom of Solomon<sup>2</sup> and Philo occasionally gives his own allegorical interpretation as differing from that advanced by others.

"Now some persons say that these cherubim are the symbols of the two hemispheres ----- But I myself should say, that what is here represented under a figure are the two most ancient and supreme powers of the divine God".<sup>3</sup>

"Therefore, when he says "fathers", he means not those whose souls have departed from them ----- but as some say the sun and the moon and the other stars. --- But as some other persons think he means the archetypal ideas ----- Some, again,

<sup>1</sup>Heir of Divine Things XLIII.

<sup>2</sup>XVIII.24. cf. Life of Moses II.12.

<sup>3</sup>Life of Moses II.8.

have fancied that by "fathers" are here meant the four principles and powers by which the world is composed - the earth, the water, the air and the fire".<sup>1</sup>

Even in the application of this method he was arbitrary. If the literal meaning of the passage under discussion was acceptable to him he allowed it to stand alongside his own allegorical interpretation but if it was at all offensive, involving for example some anthropomorphic conception, he denied altogether its original meaning putting forward his own as the true interpretation.

"And these statements appear to me to be dictated by a philosophy which is symbolical rather than strictly accurate. For no trees of life or of knowledge have ever at any previous time appeared upon the earth ---- But I rather conceive that Moses was speaking in an allegorical spirit, intending by his paradise to intimate the dominant character of the soul. ---- ----- And these things are not mere fabulous inventions, in which the race of poets and sophists delight, but are rather types shadowing forth some allegorical truth, according to some mystical explanation. And anyone who follows a reasonable train of conjecture will say with great propriety that the

<sup>1</sup>Heir of Divine Things LVII.



aforesaid serpent is the symbol of pleasure".<sup>1</sup>

"----and let him flay the victim and divide it into large pieces, having washed its entrails and its feet, And then let the whole victim be given to the fire of the altar of God, having become many things instead of one, and one instead of many. These things, then, are comprehended in express words of command. But there is another meaning figuratively concealed under the enigmatical expressions. And the words employed are visible symbols of what is invisible ----".<sup>2</sup>

His work survives in the form of a number of treatises which originally were the connected parts of larger works. From references scattered throughout these his philosophic position can be reconstructed with some difficulty owing to its eclectic nature and on account of the writer's rather provocative habit of stopping short of a full exposition that he may wander off into some other by-path of thought.

The predominant influence in his mind was Plato. Reality did not live in the phenomenal world perceptible by the senses but in the world of ideas discoverable by the

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World LIV and LVI.

<sup>2</sup>Animals for Sacrifice V.

intellect. Reality was an attribute of God alone<sup>1</sup> and the only existence that could be ascribed to corporeal objects was that they were the perishable stamp of a divine seal, the shadow of ideas which found their unity and reality in the Idea of Ideas, the Logos of God.

"I emigrated from my sojourn in the body when I learnt to despise the flesh, and I emigrated from the outward sense when I learnt to look upon the objects of the outward sense as things which had no existence in reality".<sup>2</sup>

"When He had determined to create this visible world, He previously formed that one which is perceptible only by the intellect, in order that so using an incorporeal model formed as far as possible on the image of God, He might then make this corporeal world, a younger likeness of the elder generation, which should embrace as many different genera perceptible to the external senses, as the other world contains those which are visible only to the intellect. But that world which consists of ideas, it were impious in any degree to attempt to describe or even to imagine; but how it was created we shall know if we take for our guide a certain image of the things which exist among us. When any city is founded through the exceeding ambition of some king ---- then

<sup>1</sup>Alleg. of Sacred Laws.XXVI.      <sup>2</sup>Heir of Divine Things XIV.

it happens at times that some man coming up who, from his education, is skilful in architecture, and he ---- first of all sketches out in his own mind nearly all the parts of the city which is about to be completed - the temples, the gymnasia ----. Then having received in his own mind as on a waxen tablet the form of each building, he carries in his heart the image of a city, perceptible as yet only by the intellect ---- and engraving them in his mind like a good workman ---- he begins to raise the city of stones and wood, making the corporeal substances to resemble each of the incorporeal ideas. Now we must form a somewhat similar opinion of God, who, having determined to found a mighty state, first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses using the first one as a model. As therefore the city, when previously shadowed out in the mind of the man of architectural skill had no external place, but was stamped solely in the mind of the workman, so in the same manner neither can the world which existed in ideas have had any other local position except the divine reason which made them".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World IV. and V.

"It is manifest also that the archetypal seal which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must be itself the archetypal model, the idea of ideas, the Reason of God".<sup>1</sup>

The denial of reality to the created and corporeal and the ascription of true existence only to God and whatsoever participates in the Divine Reason was the predominant influence in Philo's whole philosophy.

He found the Platonic system of thought peculiarly appropriate to express the Hebraic view of God's transcendence, though it was only with some difficulty that he was able to harmonize it with Jewish religious ideas of God's interest and activity in the world. Philo's God occupies something of the position of an Absolute. God "alone has a real being".<sup>2</sup> He is "one".<sup>3</sup> He is "alone, a single Being, not a combination, a single nature". "God exists according to oneness and unity; or we should rather say, that oneness exists according to the one God, for all number is more recent than the world as is also time. But God is older than the world and is its Creator".<sup>4</sup> "He himself is full

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World VI. Vd.also The Worse against the Better XXI. Alleg. of Sacred Laws IX.

<sup>2</sup>Alleg. of Sacred Laws XXVI. <sup>3</sup>Creation of World LXI. <sup>4</sup>Alleg. of Sacred Laws II.1.

of himself, and He himself is sufficient for himself, filling up and surrounding everything else which is deficient in any respect, or deserted or empty; but He himself is surrounded by nothing else, as being himself one and the universe".<sup>1</sup>

"He is not susceptible of any subtraction or addition, inasmuch as He is completely and entirely equal to himself".<sup>2</sup>

He is omnipresent; being "of older date than any created thing, He will be everywhere, so that it cannot be possible for anyone to be concealed from him".<sup>3</sup>

While showing in some of these pronouncements on God the influence also of Stoic thought, Philo is yet careful to make clear the necessity of God's transcendence.

"Moses indeed appears to have in some degree subscribed to the doctrine of the common union and sympathy existing between the parts of the universe, as he has said that the world was one and created ----- but he differs from them widely in their opinion of God, not intimating that either the world itself, or the soul of the world, is the original God, nor that the stars or their motions are the primary causes of the

<sup>1</sup>Alleg. of Sacred Laws. XIV.

<sup>2</sup>Sac. of Abel and Cain III.

<sup>3</sup>Alleg. of Sacred Laws II. 2.

events which happen among men; but he teaches that this universe is held together by invisible powers, which the Creator has spread from the extreme borders of the earth to heaven ----- for the dissoluble chains which bind the universe are his powers".<sup>1</sup>

"And being superior to, and being also external to the world that He has made, he nevertheless fills the whole world with himself; for, having by his own power extended it to its utmost limits, He has connected every portion with another portion according to the principles of harmony".<sup>2</sup>

God is the Creator of the world. "For God never ceases from making something or other; but as it is the property of fire to burn, of snow to chill, so also it is the property of God to be creating. And much more so in proportion as He himself is to all other beings the author of their working ----- He himself never ceases from creating".<sup>3</sup> While affirming in many passages the personal activity of God in creation and government, Philo is equally explicit at other times in affirming that God himself does not create unless through the agency of the Logos or the Powers.

<sup>1</sup>Migs. of Abraham XXXII.

<sup>2</sup>Posterity of Cain V.

<sup>3</sup>All. of Sacred Laws I. 111.

"It is out of that essence that God created everything, without indeed touching it himself, for it was not lawful for the all-wise and all-blessed God to touch materials which were all misshapen and confused, but He created them by the agency of His incorporeal powers, of which the proper name is ideas, which He so exerted that every genus received its proper form".<sup>1</sup>

The consistency of his position in relation to this matter will call for further consideration, but affirming the activity of God in creation, Philo deduces a knowledge of the Creator from what has been created.

"It has invariably happened that the works which they have made have been in some degree the proofs of the character of the workmen; for who is there who, when he looks upon statues or pictures, does not at once form an idea of the statuary or painter himself? ----- He therefore who comes into that which is truly the greatest of cities, namely this world, and who beholds all the land, both mountain and ----- and the revolutions and regular motions of all the other planets and fixed stars, and of the whole heaven; would he

<sup>1</sup>Those who offer sacrifice.XIII.

not naturally, or I should rather say of necessity, conceive a notion of the Father and creator and governor of all this system? ----- It is in this way we have received an idea of the existence of God".<sup>1</sup>

The material universe bearing all the marks of temporality, changeability, corruptibility, creation, yet showing of in the cohesion and symmetry all its parts the operation of a permeating reason, demanded a first cause, a self-determining Power, a rational Creator, God.

Yet in His essence God is unknowable and lies beyond the limits of human comprehension. "The mind which is in each of us is able to comprehend all other things but has not the capability of understanding itself. For as the eye sees all other things, but cannot see itself, so also the mind perceives the nature of other things, but cannot understand itself. ----- Are not these men then simple who speculate on the essence of God? For how can they who are ignorant of the nature of their own soul, have any accurate knowledge of the soul of the universe? For the soul of the universe is according to our definition - God".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Monarchy IV.

<sup>2</sup>All. of Sacred Laws I.XXIX.



Unknowable in His essence, God is void of qualities.<sup>1</sup>  
What Philo means by quality is evidently characteristic of  
created things, that which can be predicated of things  
belonging to a class.

"I also partake of quality, inasmuch as I am a man; and  
of quantity, inasmuch as I am a man of such and such a size".<sup>2</sup>

"For he who conceives either that God has any distinctive  
quality, or that He is not one, or that He is not uncreated  
and imperishable, or that He is not unchangeable".<sup>3</sup>

"For as things endowed with distinctive qualities are by  
nature liable to origination and destruction, so those  
archetypal powers which are the makers of those particular  
things, have received an imperishable inheritance in their  
turn".<sup>4</sup>

While God, then, is void of qualities certain attributes,  
can be predicated of Him - for example, eternity, goodness,  
power, authority - which do not bring God within the category  
of a class; for while certain of these could be predicated of  
man, man is a unique creation having been made in the Divine  
image, partaking of the Divine nature so far as the limitat-

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sacred Laws. I.XlIII.

<sup>2</sup>Ten Commandments Vlll.

<sup>3</sup>All. of Sacred Laws I.XV.

<sup>4</sup>Cain and His Birth XV.

:ions of his constitution allow. Having affirmed the unknowableness of God, unless as to his existence, Philo justifies the ascription of these attributes to God on the ground that while they are true of God, they do not exhaust the truth, since God lies above and beyond them. His Absolute is not a mere negation, but comprehends and surpasses the aspects of His being comprehensible by the human reason.

"None of those beings which are capable of entertaining belief, can entertain a firm belief respecting God. For He has not displayed his nature to anyone; but keeps it invisible to every kind of creature. Who can venture to affirm of him, who is the cause of all things, either that He is a body, or that He is incorporeal, or that He has such and such distinctive qualities, or that He has no such qualities? or who, in short, can venture to affirm anything positively about his essence, or his character, or his constitution, or his movements? But He alone can utter a positive assertion regarding himself, since he alone has an accurate knowledge of his own nature ----- For no man can rightly swear by himself, because he is not able to have any certain knowledge respecting his own nature, but we must be

content if we are able to understand even his name, that is to say, his Word, which is the interpreter of his will".<sup>1</sup>

Philo believed, however, that there was another method, beside rational thought, of apprehending God. It was given to a few, not to arrive at God by the strenuous way of deductive thought, but by an immediate vision. This also calls for future consideration.

"They then who draw their conclusions in this manner" - from the world, and its parts and the powers existing in these parts - "perceive God in his shadow, arriving at a due comprehension of the artist through his works. There is also a more perfect and more highly purified mind which has been initiated into the great mysteries, and which does not distinguish the cause from the things created as it would distinguish an abiding body from a shadow; but which having emerged from all created objects receives a clear and manifest notion of the great uncreated, so that it comprehends him through himself, and comprehends his shadow too, so as to comprehend what it is, and his reason too, and this universal world. This kind is that Moses who speaks thus, "Show

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sacred Laws III. LXXIII.

thyself to me, let me see thee so as to know thee", for do not thou be manifested to me through the medium of the heaven, or of the earth, -----, and let me not see thy appearance in any other thing, as in a looking-glass, except in thee thyself, the true God. ----- On this account "God called Moses to him and conversed with him", and He also called Bezaleel to him, though not in the same way as He had called Moses, but He called the one so that he might receive an idea of the appearance of God from the Creator himself, but the other so that he might by calculation form an idea of the Creator as if from the shadow of the things created".<sup>1</sup>

One of the most difficult aspects of Philo's philosophic system is his conception of the divine "Powers" and their relation to God. The universe owes its continued existence, is held together in its various parts, by a pervasive divine power. Yet it is a unity in diversity, presenting an endless variety of forms, and indicative therefore of the operation of a multiplicity of powers, or aspects of the divine Reason. This was the simple basis of Philo's more

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sacred Laws III. XXXII and XXXIII.

complex and highly developed doctrine.<sup>1</sup> It shows strongly the influence of Stoic thought. The Powers were that which held the universe together, and lent to phenomenal existence whatsoever reality it possessed, impressing upon matter form, quality and symmetry. Since however the Divine was transcendent as well as immanent, the powers were immaterial, invisible and intelligible; they were the Platonic "ideas".

"The powers which you seek to behold are altogether invisible, and appreciable only by the intellect; since I myself am invisible and appreciable only by the intellect. And what I call appreciable only by the intellect are not those which are already comprehended by the mind, but those which even if they could be so comprehended are still such that the outward senses could not at all attain to them, but only the very purest intellect. And though they are by nature incomprehensible in their essence, still they show a kind of impression or copy of their energy and operation; as seals among you, when any wax or similar material is applied to them, make an innumerable quantity of figures and impressions,

<sup>1</sup>Migt. of Abra, XXXII and XXXIV.

without being impaired as to any portion of themselves, but still remaining unaltered and as they were before; so also you must conceive that the powers which are around me invest those things which have no distinctive qualities with such qualities, and those which have no forms with precise forms ----- And some of your race speaking with sufficient correctness call them ideas".<sup>1</sup>

These powers of which the phenomenal world was a stamp or impression were the agents of God in creation<sup>2</sup> and fulfilled other functions which Philo expressly asserts in other references to have been fulfilled by God himself.<sup>3</sup> A close unity exists between God and the powers, the determination of which is not easy. Yet it is evident that Philo mainly regarded the powers as aspects of the rational activity of God. As the sole reality is the "ideal" proceeding from the mind of God, so the powers have a real existence and may be spoken of as realities.

"It is only one of the forms of error maintained by impious and unholy men to say that the immaterial ideas are

<sup>1</sup>Monarchy VI.

<sup>2</sup>Those who offer sacrifice XIII.

<sup>3</sup>Unchangeableness of God. VI.8. "He is in truth the father, the creator."

an empty name without participation in real fact<sup>1</sup>. Those who affirm this remove from things the most necessary substance ( $\sigma\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha$ ) which is the archetypal pattern of all the qualities of substance, in accordance with which everything is ideally formed and measured".<sup>1</sup>

Philo refers to the more important by name as standing in closest relation to God, the unifying superiors of a host of minor powers, occupying positions of prominence in a logical hierarchy and finding their own unity in the Logos or Reason of God. Examples of these are the creative Power, by which God executes His purpose of creation, or the Regal by which God rules. The powers are aspects of God's activity.

"Then the creator of the world, having attached to himself the two most lasting powers of cogitation and deliberation - the one being the conception conceived within his own breast, and the other the discussion of such conception - and since he continually employs them for the contemplation of his own works".<sup>2</sup>

Regarded from a different angle, aspects of God's activity are Divine attributes, and so we find that Goodness

<sup>1</sup>Those who offer Sac. XlII.

<sup>2</sup>Unchangeableness of God VII.

is a Power.

"It told me that in the one living and true God there were two supreme and primary powers - goodness and authority; and that by his goodness He had created everything, and by his authority He governed all that He had created; and that the third thing which was between the two, and had the effect of bringing them together was Reason, for that it was owing to Reason that God was both a ruler and good".<sup>1</sup>

In the following reference Philo is even more explicit in revealing that his conception of the powers was but different aspects of the one, self-existent, incomprehensible God. He is dealing with the allegorical interpretation of the three visitors whom Abraham hospitably entertained. (Gen. XVIII. 1 ff.).

"When the soul is shone upon by God ----- and is free from all shade and darkness, it perceives a three-fold image of one subject; of one as actually existing, but of the other two as if they were shadows cast from this. ----- the one in the middle is the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scriptures is called by his proper name the Self-existent, and those on each side are the oldest and nearest

<sup>1</sup>Cherubim IX.



powers of the Self-existent, one of which is called Creative, the other Regal. And the Creative Power is Deity, for by this He made and arranged the universe; and the Regal Power is Lord, for it is right for the creator to rule and hold sway over the created. The middle one, then, being attended by each of the two powers as by a body-guard presents to the mind endowed with the faculty of sight a vision now of one and now of three; of one when the soul being completely purified ----- hastens onward to that idea which is unmingled, free from all combination, and by itself in need of nothing else whatever; but of three, when <sup>not</sup> yet initiated into the great mysteries, it ----- is not able to attain to a comprehension of the self-existent Being ----- but apprehends it through the effects as creating and ruling ----- . There are three different classes of human dispositions each of which has received as its portion one of the aforesaid visions. The best ---- has received the sight of the self-existent. The one which is next best -- the sight of the beneficent power. And the third --- of the governing powers. ----- But that <sup>not</sup> what is seen is in reality a three-fold appearance of one subject is plain --".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Abraham XLIV f.



never rest, as being by nature a hater of evil and looking upon the chastisement of sinners as her own most appropriate task. For it is proper for all the ministers and lieutenants of God, just as for generals in war, to put in practice severe punishments ----- but it becomes the great King that general safety should be ascribed to him ----".<sup>1</sup>

"For it is out of that essence that God created everything, without indeed touching it himself, for it was not lawful for the all-wise and all-blessed God to touch materials which were all misshapen and confused, but He created them by the agency of his incorporeal powers, of which the proper name is ideas".<sup>2</sup>

The Powers have now become not distinctions in the Divine being, but real divisions - not independent personalities if we allow for Philo's constant use of figurative language - so that the self-existent God is not personally or directly involved in their creation of the world. It is a position which we find difficult to understand unless we frankly admit that Philo is not consistent. His contradiction seems to spring from his necessity of maintaining

<sup>1</sup>Teh Commandments XXXI.11.

<sup>2</sup>Those who offer Sac. XI.11.

the incomprehensibility of the essence of God, as of the mind of man, from his assumption that personality exists other than in the unity of self-conscious activities.

What has been said of the Divine Powers is more or less applicable to the Logos, the highest of the Powers. The term itself has a variety of meanings. It signifies generally mind or the faculty of reason; and from this the meaning easily passes into the expressions of reason, such as speech and the various natural laws of harmony and relation.

The reality of the things of the phenomenal world are the ideas of which the former are but impressions. These ideas are rational, and as the universe is a unity, so the ideas are unified in, are but expressions of, the universal Reason of God. The human mind cannot rise to a higher conception than reason, but as reason does not exhaust God but is exhausted by Him, so the "idea of ideas" or the Logos is but the "image" of God.

"It is manifest also that the archetypal seal which we call that world perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the idea of ideas, the Reason of God".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World VI.

"And the invisible divine reason, perceptible only by intellect, he calls the image of God".<sup>1</sup>

Then the Logos is also the intelligible cosmos, as is affirmed in the first of these quotations; that is, it is the thought of God. The Logos stands not only for the faculty of reason, but for the function or fruits of reason - thought. On a parallel to this is Philo's use of Logos as equivalent to word, also the expression of reason. The Logos is a Term elastic enough to embrace the Divine reason as subjective and as objectively expressed.

Man thus is an expression of the Logos. The true man, that is the ideal not the corporeal, is an image of the archetypal model, the Logos.

"God, who bestows on the race of mankind his especial and exceedingly great gift, namely, relationship to his own Word; after which as its archetypal model, the human mind was formed".<sup>2</sup>

So far Philo's doctrine has moved largely on Platonic lines, but he shows the influence of Stoic thought when he regards the Logos as the cosmic force which penetrates every portion of the universe, binding the parts into a symmetrical

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World VIII.

<sup>2</sup>Curses VIII.

whole.

"Therefore it is very naturally taken as an emblem of that greater nature, which being extended and diffused everywhere so as to penetrate in every direction is wholly full of everything, and also connects all other things with the most admirable arrangement."<sup>1</sup>

The Logos is the constitution of nature,<sup>2</sup> in accordance with whose laws man ought to live. For the Logos that is in nature, or in the natural laws, is the reason that is in man.

"but man, as it seems, has been assigned the most pre-eminent position among the animals, being as it were a near relation of God himself, and akin to him in respect of his participation in reason".<sup>3</sup>

"Therefore the two natures are indivisible; the nature I mean of the reasoning power in us, and of the Divine Word above us".<sup>4</sup>

The Logos then stands in a close relation both to God and the world. It is the pervasive reason that gives

<sup>1</sup>Heir of Divine Things XLIV  
<sup>2</sup>Joseph VI.

3. Special Laws. Kidnappers.  
4. Heir of Divine Things XLVlll.

reality to, and yet being immaterial and intelligible, is distinct from the world. It belongs to God and yet is comprehended and surpassed by the Self-existent. It thus mediates between the transcendent God and the material world.

"And the Father who created the universe has given to his archangelic and most ancient Word a pre-eminent gift to stand on the confines of both, and separated that which had been created from the Creator. ----- And the Word rejoices in the gift and, exulting in it, announces it and boasts of it saying, "And I stood in the midst between the Lord and you"; neither being unbegotten as God, nor yet begotten as you, but being in the midst between these two extremities like a hostage as it were to both parties".<sup>1</sup>

The Logos is neither unbegotten, self-existent, like God, nor yet begotten, created, like the world. It is not a second and independent God but the highest aspect of God's activity perceptible by men. This seems to be Philo's position, though it is doubtful if in the mediatorial function he ascribes to it, he does not, as in the case of the Divine Powers destroy the consistency of his philosophic system.

Personality is a unity and the whole personality is involved

<sup>1</sup>Heir of Divine Things XLII.

in any aspect of personal activity.

It is only in keeping with his figurative and rhetorical style, and with his mode of thought, that he often speaks of the Logos as though it were a distinct personality.

" - His first-born Word, the eldest of his angels, the great archangel of many names; for He is called the Authority, and the Name of God, and the Word, and man according to God's image, and He who sees Israel, ----- God's eternal image".<sup>1</sup>

"The Man of God, who being the reason of the everlasting God".<sup>2</sup>

"If you examine the great high priest, that is to say reason".<sup>3</sup>

"Why is it that He speaks as if of some other God, saying that He made man in the image of God and not in his own image? ----- for no mortal thing could have been formed on the similitude of the supreme Father of the universe, but only of the second God the Logos".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Confusion of Langs. XXVlll.

<sup>2</sup>Confusion of Langs. Xl.

<sup>3</sup>Mig. of Abraham XVlll.

<sup>4</sup>Quests. and Sols. II. LXll.



From these and other scattered references it might seem as though Philo ascribed personality to the Logos, but from a consideration of his whole philosophic position the conclusion is that he looked upon the Logos merely as the reason of God, personal only in so far as it was the reason of a personal God. Yet in this connection we should remember that personality was not a conception with which ancient thinkers were greatly conversant.

Philo's doctrine of man like the rest of his philosophy is a blending of Jewish, Platonic, and Stoic ideas. The true man was the ideal man, made after the image of God which is the Logos; the corporeal man was a mixture of earth and spirit.

"By this expression he shows most clearly that there is a vast difference between man as generated now, and the first man who was made according to the image of God. For man as formed now is perceptible to the external senses, partaking of qualities, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal. But man, made according to the image of God, was an idea, or a genus, or a seal, perceptible only by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature. But he asserts that the formation of the

individual man, perceptible by the external senses, is a composition of earthy substance and divine spirit. For that body was created by the Creator, taking a lump of clay, and fashioning the human form out of it; but that the soul proceeds from no created thing at all, but from the Father and Ruler of all things. ----- that, even if man is mortal according to that portion of him which is visible, he may at all events be immortal according to that portion which is invisible. ----- mortal as to his body, immortal as to his intellect".<sup>1</sup>

"Every man in regard to his intellect is connected with divine reason, being an impression of, or a fragment or ray of that blessed nature; but in regard to the structure of his body he is connected with the universal world --- composed of earth, water --".<sup>2</sup>

" -- God is the archetypal pattern of rational nature, and man is the imitation of him and the image formed after his model; not meaning by man that animal of a double nature, but the most excellent species of the soul which is called mind and reason".<sup>3</sup>

The ideal man thus stands through the Logos in a close

<sup>1</sup>Creation of World XLVI.

<sup>2</sup>Creation of World LI.

<sup>3</sup>Worse against the Better XXII.

relation to God. He is "the image of the image of God",<sup>1</sup>  
"the all-beautiful copy of an all-beautiful model, a representation admirably made after an archetypal rational idea".<sup>2</sup>  
Man, according to reason, that is the human mind, is the ideal man. "God bestows on the race of mankind his especial gift, namely, relationship to his own Word; after which as its archetypal model the human mind was formed".<sup>3</sup>

The corporeal man of all created things thus stands in a unique relation to God through his participation in reason.

"For nothing that is born on the earth is more resembling God than man. And let no one think that he is able to judge of this likeness from the characters of the body:----- but the resemblance is spoken of with reference to the most important part of the soul, namely the mind: for the mind which exists in each individual has been created after the likeness of that one mind, which is in the universe as its primitive model ----- In the same rank that the Great Governor occupies in the universal world, that same as it seems does the mind of man occupy in man; for it is invisible

<sup>1</sup>Alleg. of Sac. Laws III. XXXI.

<sup>2</sup>Special Laws. Murderers I.

<sup>3</sup>Curses VIII.

thought it sees evêrything itself; and it has an essence which is undiscernible though it can discern the essences of all other things".<sup>1</sup>

Man in his reason is related through the Logos to God; but through his body he is related to earthly things. Man is "a sojourner in a foreign land, that is in the body perceptible by the outward senses".<sup>2</sup> His soul is in "the bondage of the flesh".<sup>3</sup> The body is the tomb<sup>4</sup> and prison of the soul.<sup>5</sup> The body and the flesh are evil because they belong to the created and phenomenal and stand in the way of man's union with God. They interfere with the true functioning of reason.

"For God is not unaware that that leathern mass which covers us, namely the body, ----- is an evil thing, and one which plots against the soul, and which is at all times lifeless and dead. ----- And it is evil by nature, as I have said before, ----- For when the mind busies itself with sublime contemplations --- it judges the body to be a wicked

<sup>1</sup>Creation XXIII.

<sup>2</sup>Confusion of Langs. XVII.

<sup>3</sup>Humanity IV.

<sup>4</sup>Unchangeableness of God XXXI.

<sup>5</sup>All. of Sac. Laws. III. XLV.

and hostile things. ----- The philosopher being a lover of what is virtuous cares for that which is alive within him, namely his soul, and disregards his body which is dead, having no other object but to prevent the most excellent portion of him, his soul, from being injured by the evil and dead thing which is connected with it".<sup>1</sup>

In what manner Philo looked upon the flesh as evil is not easy to determine. The evil lies somehow in its connection with matter. But matter is in no way related to an active evil principle; it is non-moral, and able to become everything.

"The Father did not grudge the substance a share of his own excellent nature, since it had nothing good of itself, but was able to become everything. For the substance was of itself destitute of arrangement, of quality ---- and it received a change and transformation to what is opposite to this condition being invested with order, quality ----".<sup>2</sup>

In this treatise Philo seems to assume (vd.ll.) the eternity of matter as the negative and passive subject on which the active cause, God, operated at creation; but his

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sac. Laws III.XXII.

<sup>2</sup>Creation V.

view is by no means clear. It was the substratum of the created phenomena of the universe, and as the phenomenal is the antithesis of the eternal and is the cause of error, so created things are evil. "Sin is congenital with every created thing. ---- inasmuch as it is created".<sup>1</sup> Philo's view probably was that as goodness was the attribute of the true, the eternal, so the opposite must be ascribed to the opposite, evil to the phenomenal and temporal; especially so as the phenomenal interfered, broke the union between man and God, by connecting him with the world of the senses. God was eternal, but whatever was created was liable to destruction. "The fact of having been created implies a liability to destruction, even though the thing created may be made immortal by the providence of God".<sup>2</sup> What men esteem good, apart from the life of reason, such as health, beauty, and vigour, may be common both to the wicked and the good; they are fleeting, phenomenal and therefore not truly a good. All things dependent on the material world are phenomenal, corruptible. No good thing accordingly can ever flourish in "corruptible matter".<sup>3</sup> His position in the

<sup>1</sup>Life of Moses XVll.

<sup>2</sup>Ten Commandments Xll.

<sup>3</sup>Posterity of Cain XLVll.

matter however is not clear. He speaks of the flesh as being a "most heavy burden" of the soul.<sup>1</sup> And at other times he speaks of it as though it were actively evil.

"Whose way the flesh endeavours to injure and corrupt".<sup>2</sup>

His real complaint against it seems to be that through its connection with corporeal things it is a danger to the soul, interfering with the life of pure reason. It is "the greatest cause of our ignorance",<sup>3</sup> in this way:- "All flesh corrupted the perfect way of the everlasting and incorruptible being which conducts to God. And know that this way is wisdom. For the mind being guided by wisdom, while the road is straight and level and easy, proceeds along it to the end; and the end of this road is the knowledge and understanding of God. But every companion of the flesh hates and repudiates, and endeavours to corrupt this way; for there is no one thing so much at variance with another as knowledge is at variance with the pleasure of the flesh".<sup>4</sup>

It interferes with man's communion with God, involving a

<sup>1</sup>Unchangeableness of God I.

<sup>2</sup>Unchangeableness of God XXX.

<sup>3</sup>Giants VII.

<sup>4</sup>Unchangeableness of God XXX.

relationship with a phenomenal and corruptible world. "For those souls which are devoid of flesh and of body remain undisturbed ----- occupied in hearing and seeing divine things. ---- But those which bear the heavy burden of the flesh being weighed down and oppressed by it are unable to look upwards ---".<sup>1</sup> "It is not possible for one who dwells in the body and belongs to the race of mortals to be united with God".<sup>2</sup> The phenomenal is the antithesis of the eternal and real. While in the flesh therefore men cannot enjoy communion with God in virtue of their fleshly natures. In the second place, the flesh is a bias in the constitution of man's nature, working against the life of reason. It is probably this second aspect of the evil of material things that Philo has in mind when in spite of the ascription of sin to all created things he describes the actions of animals as non-moral, on the ground that since man alone has intellect he alone has freedom of choice.

"For in the case of other plants and animals, we cannot call either the good that is caused by them deserving of praise, nor the evil that they do deserving of blame; for all their motions in either direction, and all their changes,

<sup>1</sup> Giants Vii.

<sup>2</sup> All. of Sac. Laws III. XLV.



have no design about them but are involuntary. ---- For He made him free from all bondage or restraint, able to exert his energies in according with his own will and deliberate purpose on this account: that so knowing what things were good and what, on the contrary were evil, ----- he might exercise a choice of the better objects and an avoidance of their opposites".<sup>1</sup>

It is only in accordance with expectation, then, that Philo regards <sup>the</sup>senses through their connexion with the body in a double light - as evil and as good. They are good inasmuch as they are the creation of God, and the ally of the mind, providing it with nourishment. In many references he speaks of this aspect of the activity of the senses.

"For immediately after the creation of the mind, it was necessary that the external sense should be created, as an assistant and ally of the mind; therefore God having entirely perfected the first, proceeded to make the second ----- created for the perfection and completion of the whole soul and for the proper comprehension of such subject matter as might be brought before it".<sup>2</sup>

"And if one must tell the truth, that which nourishes our minds is the outward sense, which by means of our eyes sets

<sup>1</sup>Unchangeableness of God X.  
<sup>2</sup>All. of Sac. Laws II.VIII.

before us the distinctive qualities of colours and forms, and by means of our ears presents us with all the various peculiarities of sounds -----."1

On the other hand he constantly speaks of the senses in a disparaging manner, as hampering the exercise of reason.

"but since innumerable circumstances are continually escaping from and eluding the human mind, inasmuch as it is entangled among and embarrassed by so great a multitude of the external senses, as is very well calculated to seduce and deceive it by false opinions, since in fact it is, as I say, buried in the mortal body which may properly be called its tomb ----"2

"And again when the mind is awake the outward sense is extinguished; and the proof of this is, that when we desire to form an accurate conception of anything, we retreat to a desert place, we shut our eyes, we stop up our ears, we discard the exercise of our senses; and so when the mind rises up again and awakens, the outward sense is put an end to".3

The reconciliation of these views is found in this, that the senses, though irrational, are not necessarily evil, but only so when they are allowed to usurp the place of reason,

<sup>1</sup>Planting of Noah XXXll.

<sup>2</sup>Creation of Magistrates Vlll.

<sup>3</sup>All. of Sac. Laws II. Vlll.

as the guide of the soul, leading men to seek their good in pleasure and passion - "gold and silver and glory and honours and powers and the objects of the outward senses",<sup>1</sup> - and to accept opinion as truth. Senses may be pure or impure.

"These seven senses are unpolluted and pure in the soul of the wise man, and here also they are found worthy of honour. But in that of the foolish man they are impure and polluted and ----- worthy of punishment and chastisement".<sup>2</sup>

When reason is exercised on the deliverances of the senses, they are allies leading man to a knowledge of God's existence through his works in the world.<sup>3</sup> When the authority of reason is lost, the senses are an unmitigated evil, leading men into error and confusion, making them the slaves of appetite, passion, pleasure.

"as rulers they will do him manifold and great injury, since folly reigns among them; but as subjects they will serve him obediently in suitable matters, and will not at all raise their heads in arrogance, as they will if they are rulers".<sup>4</sup>

Based on a metaphysic and a psychology such as have been described, it is not surprising to find that

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sac. Laws II.XXVI.

<sup>2</sup>Worse against the Better XLVI.

<sup>3</sup>Posterity of Cain XLVIII.

<sup>4</sup>Confus. of Langs. XIII.

Philo's conception of religion gives chief place to the exercise of reason. The goal of human striving is union with God and this goal is to be sought by intellectual effort. "The intellect is the only thing in us which is imperishable".<sup>1</sup> Philosophy, which, enquiring into the nature of things created and of the cosmic force by which they are moved and regulated, leads men to a knowledge of God's existence, is the highest good that has entered into human life.<sup>2</sup> There is a road from which men should not stray - following nature they may find the best of all things, the knowledge of the true and living God.<sup>3</sup> "Philosophy is the fountain of all blessings, of all things which are really good".<sup>4</sup> "As the encyclical branches of education contribute to the proper comprehension of philosophy, so does philosophy aid in the acquisition of wisdom; for philosophy is an attentive study of wisdom, and wisdom is the knowledge of all divine and human things, and of the respective causes of them".<sup>5</sup> "It is very suitable for those who have made an association for the purpose of learning, to desire to see Him; and if they are unable to do that, at

<sup>1</sup>Unchangeableness of God X.

<sup>2</sup>Creation of World XVII.

<sup>3</sup>Ten Commandments XVI.

<sup>4</sup>Special Laws.Female Immodesty IV.

<sup>5</sup>Seeking instruction XLV.

least to see his image, the most sacred Logos, and next to that the most perfect work of all the "things perceptible by the outward senses, namely the world. For to philosophize is nothing else but the desire to see these things accurately".<sup>1</sup>

This knowledge which philosophy seeks is the food of the soul. "The soul, inasmuch as it is a portion of the ethereal nature, is supported by nourishment which is ethereal and divine, for it is nourished on knowledge, and not on meat or drink, which the body requires".<sup>2</sup> Knowledge is divine since it is apprehension of the Logoi, the activities of the divine Logos, which give form and quality to the things of the world.<sup>2</sup> In Philo's system the intellectual element is more prominent than the ethical, though the latter is not forgotten. "Right Reason is the everlasting fountain of virtues".<sup>3</sup> To live virtuously is to live in accordance with reason - as the Stoics also held - in harmony with Nature,<sup>4</sup> or in obedience to the commandments of God.

Yet finally Philo reflects the despair of his own age in the power of human reason to solve man's problems. God in

<sup>1</sup>Confusion of Langs. XX.

<sup>2</sup>All. of Sac. Laws III.LV.

<sup>3</sup>Planting of Noah XXVIII. & XXX.

<sup>4</sup>Special Laws XI. Freedom of the Virtuous XXI. Migration of Abraham XXIII.

the last resort lies beyond the reach of human knowledge.

"None of those beings which are capable of entertaining belief, can entertain a firm belief respecting God. For he has not displayed his nature to anyone; but keeps it invisible to every kind of creature. ----- He alone can utter a positive assertion respecting himself, since He alone has an accurate knowledge of his own nature".<sup>1</sup>

"What, then, is the object of having right wisdom? To be able to condemn one's own folly and that of every created being. For to be aware that one knows nothing is the end of all knowledge, since there is only one wise being, who is also the only God."<sup>2</sup>

Philo however saves himself from final scepticism by his belief in divine grace, that human reason is supplemented from above.

"Reason, which is the leader of the outward sense, thinking that the decision about all things, which are perceptible only by the intellect and which are always the same and in the same condition, belongs to itself, is convicted of being in error on many points. For when it directs its view to particular instances which are innumerable

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sac. Laws III.LXXIII.

<sup>2</sup>Fig. of Abraham XLV.

it finds itself powerless and unequal to the task, and faints under it -----; but the man to whom it has been granted to see and thoroughly examine all corporeal and all incorporeal things, and to lean upon and to found himself upon God alone, with firm and steadfast reason and unalterable and sure confidence, is truly happy and blessed".<sup>1</sup>

"Sometimes when I have desired to come to my usual employment of writing on the doctrines of philosophy, though I have known accurately what it was proper to set down, I have found my mind barren and unproductive -----; and sometimes when I have come to my work empty I have suddenly become full, ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me and implanted in me from on high; so that through the influence of divine inspiration I have become greatly excited and have known neither the place in which I was, nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what I was writing".<sup>2</sup>

"For without divine grace it is impossible either to abandon the rank of mortal things, or to remain steadily and constantly with those which are imperishable. But whatever soul is filled with grace is as once in a state of exultation

<sup>1</sup>Rewards and Punishments V.

<sup>2</sup>Mig. of Abraham VII. vd. Unchang. of God I. et al.

and delight and dancing; for it becomes full of triumph, so that it would appear to many of the uninitiated to be intoxicated and agitated and to be beside itself".<sup>1</sup>

In the highest experiences of this divine inspiration reason is not only supplemented, it is superceded. Man is brought into a closer union with God than can be embraced under the term "knowledge". It is a mystical union, that can only be described as the pouring of the divine light into the soul.<sup>2</sup> It is an ecstatic vision of God.

"Therefore if any desire comes upon Thee, O Soul, to be the inheritor of the good things of God, leave not only thy country, the body, and thy kindred the outward senses and thy father's house, that is speech; but also flee from thyself and depart out of thyself, like the Corybantes or those possessed with demons, being driven to frenzy and inspired by some prophetic inspiration. For while the mind is in a state of enthusiastic inspiration, and while it is no longer mistress of itself, but is agitated and drawn into frenzy by heavenly love, and drawn upwards to that object ---".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Drunkenness XXXVI.

<sup>2</sup>Creation of World XXIII.

<sup>3</sup>Heir of Divine Things XLV.



"Do you not see that in the case of Abraham, "when he had left his country, and his kindred, and his father's house", that is to say the body, the outward senses, and reason, he then began to become acquainted with the powers of the living God? For when he had secretly departed from all his house, the Law says that God appeared unto him, showing that He is seen clearly by him who has put off mortal things".<sup>1</sup>

"Having broken all the chains by which it was formerly bound, which all the empty anxieties of mortal life fastened around it, and having led it forth and emancipated it from them, he has stretched and extended and diffused it to such a degree that it reaches even the extreme boundaries of the universe, and is borne onwards to the beautiful and glorious sight of the uncreated God".<sup>2</sup>

This supreme experience however seems to be possible only for a very few like Moses and Abraham: - "If when you search you will find God, is uncertain; for there have been many persons to whom He has not revealed himself, but they have expended a vain labour all their time. But the mere act

<sup>1</sup>Worse against the Better XLVI.

<sup>2</sup>Drunkenness XXXVII.

of seeking him is sufficient to entitle you to a participation in good things, for the desire for what is good, even if it fails in attaining the end it seeks, does at all events always gladden the heart of those who cherish it".<sup>1</sup>

And Philo ultimately falls back upon the revelation of the Scriptures which present us with the words or logoi of God.<sup>2</sup> The Scriptures enshrine the revelation that came from God Himself. Even the Septuagint is verbally inspired.

"they like men inspired prophesied, not one saying one thing and another another, but everyone of them employed the self-same nouns and verbs, as if some unseen prompter had suggested all their language to them".<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish Law is binding; it leads towards God and eternal life.

"But the enactments of this law-giver are firm, not shaken by commotions not liable to alteration, but stamped as it were with the seal of nature herself, and they remain firm and lasting from the day on which they were first promulgated to the present one, and there may well be a hope that they will remain to all future time as being immortal as long as the sun and the moon, and the whole heaven and the whole world shall endure".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>All. of Sac. Laws III.XV. Posterity of Cain VI.

<sup>2</sup>Life of Moses II.VII. <sup>2</sup>Mig. of Abraham IX. <sup>3</sup>Life of Moses II.III.

There are other elements in Philo's vast eclecticism which do not call for description. His mind was stored with ideas drawn from many sources; which find their way into his written work and often stand but loosely co-ordinated. His real work however was the providing of a philosophic system of thought wherein a transcendent God was brought into a real relationship with the world and mankind through the Logos. His system had its weaknesses, some of which we have seen, and it remains doubtful, in spite of his insistence on the Platonic doctrine of reality, whether Philo in his conception of the unknowable essence of God, of the Logos, of the Powers, and of the human mind, altogether escaped the materialism to which Stoicism fell a prey.

Philo really imparted a new character to Hebrew religion. He grafted on to the parent stem a new branch-mysticism. The Jewish religion had always been marked by two prominent features; those were morality and ritual. The union which the Jews sought with God was a union of will and heart - obedience to God. But the highest point in religious experience, according to Philo, was a mystic <sup>union</sup> gained in a state of ecstasy, wherein the soul was freed from all earthly and personal associations and through the kinship of human

reason to divine reason was able to enter into immediate union with Him, who is the ultimate and sole reality. Yet in thus transferring the religious accent from ritual, the outward symbol, to the inner spiritual experience, Philo rescued Judaism from externalism and emphasized the inner and spiritual nature of true religion. Union with God was not merely a matter of behaviour, the performance of prescribed acts; it was a condition of soul; it was realized in the inner depths of human personality. The outward act had no virtue in itself, but only in so far as it was the expression of a spiritual reality within.

"Now if anyone using washings and purifications soils his mind but makes his bodily appearance brilliant: not if again out of his abundant wealth he builds a temple -----; nor if he offers up hecatombs and never ceases sacrificing oxen --- still let him not be classed among pious men, for he also has wandered out of the way to piety, looking upon ceremonious worship as equivalent to sanctity, and giving gifts to the incorruptible being who will never receive such offerings, and flattering him who can never listen to flattery, who loves genuine worship - and genuine worship is

that of the soul which offers the only sacrifice, plain truth".<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Philo or of Alexandrian Judaism upon the development of Christian thought was potent and far-reaching in its consequences. No doubt Christian missionaries were open to the influence of other schools of thought, but none exerted so compelling an influence as that of Alexandria. It supplied a world view, ultimately derived from Plato, that differed radically from that which prevailed in Palestinian Judaism, and in which it was necessary for Christian theologians to find a place for Christ, if they were to present their message in a form intelligible to the Hellenistic world they sought to win. The two ages of primitive Christian thought, became the two worlds, higher and lower, real and unreal of Platonism. Salvation on the Day of Judgment, though never wholly set aside, was superceded by deliverance from the flesh and earthly conditions, realized by participation in the Divine Being. The centre of emphasis was changed from the

<sup>1</sup>Worse against the Better VII.

desire to enter the Divine Kingdom to the desire to participate in the Divine Being, which is life eternal. But it was due to the work of Philo that Christianity found a system of Hellenistic thought in which all that was vital to her view of God and man was conserved and in which a place was ready waiting to receive Christ. The Logos doctrine of Philo was just such a conception as that in search of which Christian thinkers were groping in order to express the significance of Christ. Religious experience had proved Him to be more than was embodied in the title Messiah, and His work more than that of God's vice-regent in the Messianic Age to come. By interpreting His person and work by means of the Logos doctrine, Christians were able to do fuller justice to all that He was and meant to them. It was only when they embraced this doctrine that they were able to express in thought what had for long been a datum of religious experience: the oneness of Christ with God. "And the word was God".<sup>1</sup>

By thus possessing itself of the riches of speculative thought, Christianity was able to express more adequately its own inherent meaning. The Logos doctrine was so well suited to its purpose that, from now on, it became the starting-point

<sup>1</sup>St. John 1.1.

for all Christian thought. It became the norm by which all subsequent theological speculation was judged. Yet this union of Christian experience with philosophic thought, though inevitable, was not an unmixed blessing. In the course of expression, significant elements in the original message tended to lose the foremost place, and things that were incidental to the new world view and not to Christianity itself tended to acquire too great an importance. The New Testament writers were still too close to origins not to appreciate the things that were of first importance, yet it is in these later writers that the possibility of later errors found their entrance. The Logos doctrine though it enabled Christians to express the Godhood of Christ, required theology to express the Christian experiences, such as salvation, in the terms of metaphysics. The result was, and still sometimes is, strangely remote from the teaching of Jesus himself. The Logos doctrine served a great purpose, but at the same time it introduced into Christian thought a world view that might easily obscure the true spirit of the religion. It attached to Christ a cosmic significance. His oneness with God secured, the door was open at the same time

to forces that tended to make of Christianity a speculative system, of Christ a secondary principle of ultimate Being divorced from the Jesus of history, and of salvation a metaphysical process.



# ASTOLOGY.

It is hardly possible to appreciate the mental atmosphere of the Hellenistic world without some knowledge of the astrological beliefs which at that time were universally entertained. In the Old Testament there is no evidence that prior to the exile the Jews had any knowledge of this science. The reference in Jeremiah is excepted as the interpolation of a redactor. "Thus saith Jehovah, Learn not the way of the nations and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven".<sup>1</sup> In Deutero-Jsaiah we find the first reference, when the prophet taunts the Babylonians with their approaching doom and derides the impotence of astrology and the magic arts to save them. "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee".<sup>2</sup> In the Book of Daniel, however, written at a much later date, we find that astrology is countenanced, and Jews are pictured as amongst the number of the 'wise men' - that is, of all the diviners, whether they divine by observation of the stars or by other methods. It was during their sojourn as exiles that the Israelites were introduced to this new science.

It was formerly believed that star-worship had existed in Babylon and that priests had studied the phenomena of the sky from earliest days - about 3,000 B.C., - but modern re-

<sup>1</sup>Jer.X.13.

<sup>2</sup>Is.47.13.

search has established that astrology even in Babylon was a comparatively late development. Prior to the eighth century B.C. no progress in the study of the celestial bodies was possible owing to the lack of an exact system of Chronology. It was only from 747 B.C., when the "era of Nabonassar" was adopted, that data, which were to be of scientific value, could be collected.

The primitive religion of Babylon no doubt was similar to that of other Semitic peoples, a form of animism ascribing spirit value to animals and stones, vegetation and phenomena of weather, such as wind, rain, and storm. Between these and mankind a mysterious relationship existed, which it was possible for men to turn to their advantage by processes of divination. In this the Chaldeans were expert. In the movements of clouds, the direction of the wind, and especially in the markings of the liver of animals or birds they read signs and omens that revealed future happenings. The gods were multitudinous and local and in later days worshipped in particular cities, whose welfare it was their function to guard. Eventually in the 7th century B.C. these local deities were identified with a particular star - that of Babylon itself being equated with the sun - and the belief was evolved that the fortunes of the city, or of the king who also had his heavenly double, could be read from the motions of the stellar deity. The old methods of



divination were now utilized in reading the movements of the stars. The star was but the heavenly counterpart of some earthly reality. The appearance of a brilliant new star in heaven would portend the birth of a great man on earth. It was only a matter of time, once this belief took shape, till each individual was embraced in this system of "fravashi" or heavenly-counterparts, and soon astrology became a science of universal interest, which was to make its influence felt in every part of the civilized world. On the plains of Chaldea, where the clear atmosphere afforded ideal conditions, the Babylonian priests made careful observation of the motions of the heavenly bodies, marked down eclipses, noted coincidences and from these were prepared to divine.

But the great impetus, which was to render astrology a real power in the world, came from the West after the conquests of Alexander - namely, the Greek scientific spirit. When the Greek mind turned to this study of the stars, by the application of trigonometry and the principles of deductive thought, which were native to its genius, it almost converted what was haphazard into a real science. Working upon the data gathered by the patient labours of the non-speculative Eastern priests, they deduced real astronomical laws, and by clothing astrology in a scientific dress, doubled its influence and appeal. The position of the stars at a given time in the future could now

be fixed with scientific exactness and, granted their major premise that the fortunes of men were bound up with the movements of the stars, astrologers found it an easy matter to foretell the fortunes of those who sought their aid - for just as the stars moved in a regular and pre-arranged order, so were fixed the destinies of men. For their guidance there were drawn up astrological tables, classifying from the future position of the heavenly bodies those days which would be unlucky for certain activities. Nothing was left to guesswork; the principle of divination was as certain as the law of gravitation is today. The following is an example of an early Babylonian Table:- "In the month of Nisan 2nd day, Oenus appeared at sunrise. There will be distress in the land. ... An eclipse happening on the 15th day, the king of Dilmun is slain and someone seizes his throne. .... An eclipse happening on the 15th day of the month Ab the king dies and rains descend from heaven and floods fill the canals. .... An eclipse happening on the 20th day, the king of the Hittites in person seizes the throne .... For the 5th month an eclipse of the 14th day portends rain and the flooding of canals. The crops will be good and king will send peace to king. An eclipse on the 15th day portends destructive war. The land will be filled with corpses. An eclipse on the 16th day indicates that pregnant women will be happily delivered of their offspring. An

eclipse of the 20th day portends that lions will cause terror and that reptiles will appear; an eclipse on the 21st day that destruction will overtake the riches of the sea".<sup>1</sup>

The prestige of Astrology was thus greatly enhanced by being clothed in a scientific garb. The Babylonians had studied astronomical facts, they worked empirically, but with the impact of the Greek mind a process of study was set in motion that would ultimately have resulted in a real science and rendered impossible the crude superstitions with which the study of the stars was accompanied. The outstanding representative of this scientific movement was Seleucus, a Greek immigrant or a Hellenized Babylonian, who had settled in the new city of Seleucia on the Tigris. Reviving a hypothesis of Aristarchus of Samos, he sought to show on scientific grounds that the earth and the planets revolve round the sun and that the earth has a double motion, circling the sun and spinning on its own axis. He also maintained true views about the tides by relating their cause to the moon. He anticipated Copernicus by hundreds of years. But the continued progress of the science was arrested by the Parthian invasion and the sack of Babylon in 125 B.C. The Euphratian priestly colleges were broken up and the members scattered. Even then astronomy rested on a sufficiently scientific basis as to arouse in some minds a questioning attitude towards its sister pseudo-science

<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry Rawlinson "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia."  
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of Astrology, but all the power of an old tradition fostered by a powerful priest-craft ensured its continued hold on superstitious peoples.

Its prestige was also greatly enhanced by the alliance which it formed in the West with Stoicism. The Western mind was to a great extent prepared for star-worship. There was no room in the warm worship of the living humanized Gods of Olympus for these distant stellar-powers, but with the fall of the Olympian system, the philosophers found room in their scheme of things for the sun and the stars. Aristotle found that man's knowledge of the Divine had two sources, the phenomena of the human soul and the phenomena of the heavenly bodies, which are regarded as divine. In them, ~~He~~ as in the First Cause, there are eternal substances, principles of movement, and therefore they are divine. In his Republic, Plato ascribes to the sun the authorship of light and life in the material world. Beneath the supreme God, he pictures the stars as "visible gods", animated with the life, and manifesting the power, of the Supreme, and accuses Anaxagoras of atheism for suggesting that the sun is merely a glowing mass. As early as Pythagoras indeed the stars had been animated by an ethereal soul that was akin to man's. But the system of philosophic thought to which Astrology found itself most closely related was that of Stoicism. Stoicism was a pantheistic materialism which found its ultimate Being in the

"reason" which diffused itself through all nature and in man attained to self-consciousness. It was a pervasive essence, of an ethereal or semi-physical nature, resembling fire in its properties. The heavenly bodies, therefore, meant more to Zeno and his followers than to the other philosophers. Fire, ultimately one with reason, the animating diffused principle of the universe, is most clearly manifest in the stars. It is easy to see how astrology would find a powerful ally in this philosophy, which was accepted universally in one or other of its forms in the Mediterranean world of the first century. Fire was resident in the sun and stars. Fire constituted man's true being. Man therefore must be identified with the stars and with the stars his soul must unite after death, surviving individually or being reabsorbed into the cosmic logos. And so astrology, along with its scientific garb, had now a philosophical basis, and following in the steps of its new ally found an open doorway into all thought and religion of the time.

Another factor, which rendered easy the invasion of the West by this Eastern system, was that it was not religiously exclusive. It had no quarrel with the gods of other faiths, but simply transferred their abode to the sphere of the stars or identified them with these heavenly bodies.

Along with the stars the Chaldeans had worshipped the Earth, the Ocean, the Rain, the Wind, Fire, all the primordial

forces which lie behind nature. This aspect of Eastern thought, related to the religious atmosphere of astrology, had its parallel in Greek thought. If the stars are divine - as Plato taught - so too is the earth; if the earth, so too the other elements. So the four elements, - earth, air, fire and water - are all divine. They are given the name "Stoicheia", and it is difficult in the religious thought of the Hellenistic world to distinguish between the spirits of the planets and the spirits of these "elements", with which the former are sometimes included.

Astrology, by thus allying itself with Stoicism and with the various religions of the age, cast its net wide. In all countries and amongst all classes it gained an almost immediate acceptance. Emperors, as well as merchants and the common people, had faith in its ability to foretell the future, and constantly consulted its priestly professors before engaging in affairs of state. Augustus believed in it, so too Tiberius, and later emperors accorded it their official protection. The following is an account of its vogue and importance given by Diodorus (11.30.) :- "Other nations despise the philosophy of Greece. It is so recent and so constantly changing. They have traditions which come from vast antiquity and never change. Notably the Chaldeans have collected observations of the stars through long ages and teach how every event in the heavens has



its meaning, as part of the eternal scheme of divine forethought. Especially the seven Wanderers or Planets are called by them Hermêneis, Interpreters: and among them the Interpreter in chief is Saturn. Their work is to interpret beforehand τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἐννοίαν, the thought that is in the mind of the gods. By their risings and settlings and by the colours they assume, the Chaldeans predict great winds and storms and waves of excessive heat, comets and earthquakes, and in general all changes fraught with weal or woe not only to nations and regions of the world, but to kings and to ordinary men and women. Beneath the seven are thirty Gods of Counsel, half below and half above the Earth; every ten days a messenger or angel star passes from above below and another from below above. Above these gods are twelve Masters, who are the twelve signs of the Zodiac; and the planets pass through all the Houses of these twelve in turn. The Chaldeans have made prophecies for various kings, such as Alexander who conquered Darius, and Antigonus and Seleucus Nikator, and have always been right. And private persons who have consulted them consider their wisdom as marvellous and above human power".

On the general religious life of the time astrology had certain broad influences. Just as science today makes men broaden their religious conceptions to suit a universe that has grown in its space and time dimensions, so astrology turning



their minds to the contemplation of heavenly bodies, that pursue their appointed paths, through the cycle of the ages, the same today, tomorrow, and forever, tended to give to the thought of that age, a new comprehensiveness, a new depth, a new breadth. It compelled men to relate their own lives to an infinitely wider background than any national religion could have supplied, to view themselves not as citizens of a particular state, but as units in a mighty cosmos.

It also tended to deepen religious feeling. There were two things which filled Kant with awe - the starry heavens above and the moral law within. And what was true of Kant is more or less true of universal man. The spectacle of a star-spangled heaven never fails to touch the deep places of the human heart and to awaken an emotional awe. When to this natural response of man's aesthetic sense to the beauty of the night, there was added the religious emotion involved in the belief in the identity of man's ultimate being with the essence of the stars, and of his fortunes with the courses of their orbit, a depth of feeling was engendered that was interpreted sometimes as a mystical experience. There were indeed various influences at work to foster in the religious life of the age the element of mysticism and one of the most powerful of these was astrology. It diminished the distance between heaven and earth and found its religious sentiment in an easily-aroused cosmic emotion. Many writers of this period declared that in contemplating the

heavens they found themselves in direct contact with God.

"Mortal as I am, I know that I am born for a day, but when I follow the serried multitude of the stars in their circular course, my feet no longer touch the earth; I ascend to Zeus himself to feast me on ambrosia, the food of the gods".<sup>1</sup> "If the pretensions of astrology are genuine, why do not men of every age devote themselves to this study? Why from our infancy do we not fix our eyes on nature and on the gods, seeing that the stars unveil themselves for us and that we can live in the midst of the gods? Why do we exhaust ourselves in our efforts to acquire eloquence or devote ourselves to the profession of arms? Rather let us lift up our minds by means of the science which reveals to us the future, and before the appointed hour of death let us taste the pleasures of the Blest".<sup>2</sup>

A third beneficent result that followed from Astrology was that it impressed on men's minds the idea of a Higher Power behind the happenings of daily life. Things did not happen just by chance or according to the whim or caprice of an arbitrary deity. All things were ordered. Man must learn to cultivate a sweet resignation of will, a cheerful acceptance of the inevitable decrees of Fate. Astrology was at one with Stoicism in teaching the lesson of man's dependence.

But it was just this third characteristic of Astrology,

<sup>1</sup>Anthol. Pala., IX., 577.

<sup>2</sup>Arellius Farcus reported by Seneca (Sausor.4.).

which, when carried to its logical conclusion, was to prove so harmful to the higher interests of religion. Astronomy had proved that the stars were governed by law, their course irrevocably decreed. They moved in their appointed orbits without the power to deviate to the right or to the left. They were governed by Necessity. If man's fortune was bound up with his star, then his life too was foreordained, he too was under the rule of a strict necessity, he was the slave of 'Ἀνάγκη'. The fatalism and universal determinism involved in the theory of a heavenly counterpart had not been recognized so long as the study of the stars had been followed on empirical lines as in early Babylon, but in the Hellenistic world, where it was pursued in a scientific manner, the problem of free-will became one of considerable moment. Men felt themselves the victims of a crushing fatality, that paralysed initiative and rendered vain all human striving. Man was not master of his fate: neither piety nor wit could alter the destiny written for him in the skies. The Emperor Tiberius "fully convinced that everything is ruled by Fate, neglected the practice of religion".<sup>1</sup>

A second harmful effect of Astrology was that it lent an impetus to the practice of Magic. Men, like Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, believing in the truth of a forecast or prophecy, will yet be illogical enough as to take steps to

<sup>1</sup>Suetonius (Vita Tib., 69).

ensure, if possible, that the thing forecasted will not come to pass. The appearance of comets or falling-stars suggested, too, to others, the idea of a possible interference in the ordered movements of nature. When a thing cannot be secured by legitimate human effort, the door of the human mind is open to the belief in more questionable methods. And this was an age in which magical practices flourished. When men felt that the power to order their lives did not belong to them, that their destinies were fixed, they were driven in despair to seek any possible avenue of escape that presented itself. Then the Eastern priests emphasized less the idea of necessity than that of the divinity of the stars, and professed by magic, by incantations and the use of powerful names, to drive away the evils which they themselves foretold, to raise men indeed from the enslavement of destiny out of this earthly plane into a world of freedom. "Those who maintain energetically in their discourses that Fate is inevitable and who attribute all events to it, seem to place no reliance on it in the actions of their own lives. For they call upon Fortune, thus recognizing that it has an action independent of Fate; and moreover they never cease to pray to the gods, as though these could grant their prayers even in opposition to Fate; and they do not hesitate to have recourse to omens, as though it were possible for them, by learning any fated event in advance, to guard themselves against

it. The reasons which they invent to establish a harmony between their theories and their conduct, are but pitiful sophisms".<sup>1</sup>

Direct and unmistakable reference to Astrology is made in the New Testament, in St. Matthew's account of the wise men who came from the East to worship the infant Christ; and from the manner in which he records the story it is evident that the writer had implicit faith in the historicity of his narrative. The wise men were cognisant of the birth of Christ because they had seen His star in the East; and even in their journey the star went before them to guide them to the place where He was found. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod, the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East ...."<sup>2</sup>

But the influence of Astrology upon early Christianity is reflected in more than an incidental reference: it coloured to a great extent the manner in which Christianity was presented to the world. What men craved for most in that day was freedom. Their natural state was one of slavery. They looked for escape from the powers that weighed down on human life, from the evil that was in life itself, from the paralysing fixity of destiny, the crushing determinism which denied any result to human in-

<sup>1</sup>Alexander of Aphrodisias "De Anima Mantis":—Cumont "Astrology and Relig. among the Greeks and Romans". Cap.V.

<sup>2</sup>Matt.2. lff.

initiative or effort. Such a deliverance was offered by the Mystery Religions. By the Rite of regeneration men were lifted above the earthly plane, and, gifted with a new nature, attained to freedom in union with the Divine. It was offered too by Christianity which placed above the spiritual powers that inhabited the elements an ethical God, whose chief attribute was not necessity but love, and who offered men salvation in Christ. "Giving thanks unto the Father ..... who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son".<sup>1</sup> The emphasis which St. Paul places on Christian liberty is only accounted for by the nature of the world-view prevailing in that age. Time and again, he is setting the freedom, which men find in Christ, over against the bondage in which Astrology pictures them as enslaved.. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman...."<sup>2</sup> "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".<sup>3</sup> In these and other passages St. Paul has in the background of his mind the bondage of fear in which men lived through their belief in the powers of the agencies in the heavenly sphere. Against the fatalism

<sup>1</sup>Col.1. 12.  
<sup>2</sup>Gal.4. 3.  
<sup>3</sup>Eph.6. 12.

of Astrology, against the fear inspired by spiritual beings, he places the Christian liberty. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ to the elements ~~(of the world)~~ ~~(of the world)~~ of the world".<sup>1</sup> "But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage".<sup>2</sup> Probably Paul, like the writer of the First Gospel, accepted certain of the beliefs of Astrology. He knew a man who had been snatched up into the third heaven,<sup>3</sup> and when he says, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God",<sup>4</sup> he is using technical phrases belonging to this very science. But Astrology in no way exerted a vital influence on Christian doctrine. There was no point of attachment. Its ultimate power was a blind mechanical necessity, while that of Christianity was an active beneficent heavenly Father. Its chief service was that it acted as a foil to Christianity, a dark background against which the gospel of Christian freedom might shine more clearly.

<sup>1</sup> Col. 2. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 4. 9.

<sup>3</sup> 2. Cor. 12. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8. 38.



CAESAR-WORSHIP.

What is at first sight one of the most perplexing features of Hellenistic life was the worship of the Roman Emperor, the ascription of divine honours to a living man by the inhabitants of a civilized world. The first step was taken when Julius Caesar was proclaimed "divine" by a formal vote of the Senate after his assassination. The title "Divus" was added to his name, he was granted a place alongside Jupiter and Quirinus, and temples were built to him at Ephesus and Nicaea. In an inscription found in Ephesus he is spoken of as the "God made manifest .... saviour of human life". This deification of the deceased emperor became the custom and was continued in the case of those who succeeded him. But it was undoubtedly from the East that the real impetus came towards the establishment of the Caesar-cult. Once a practice like this had found an origin, its spread would be rapid. Each province and each city, jealous for the reputation of its loyalty, would try to outdo all others. In 29 B.C. a most significant advance was made when at Pergamum a temple was raised to the living emperor. Augustus, according to Dio Cassius,<sup>1</sup> gave permission for this temple to be raised and dedicated on condition that the genius of Rome should be worshipped along with himself. It was his desire also that the cult should be confined to the provinces and that in Rome itself divine honours should be granted only to the deceased emperor.

<sup>1</sup>Dio Cassius (L1.20).

The worship which began in this way spread rapidly, but in a great many quarters it was not viewed in a serious light. Several of the Emperors had a sufficiently great sense of humour as to reject it; amongst their number was Nero. Vespasian laughed at it. In 95 A.D., however, Domitian insisted that his divinity be recognized, and the worship of the Emperor became established. Festivals were appointed, sacrifices were instituted, a magnificent ceremonial was served by a regular priest-hood, and participation in the cult was required by law.

That so revolutionary a change was accomplished so easily in the Roman world is only to be accounted for by the influx of Eastern peoples. The divinity of kings was a belief of great antiquity in the East. While the Persians did not originally regard their sovereigns as gods, in their presence they prostrated themselves, rendering homage to the "genius" of the king, whom divine grace had lifted above the level of ordinary men. In Syria the Seleucidae had assumed divine titles. In Egypt the ruler had from great antiquity been regarded as a god. The royal house was descended from the sun-god Ra; the Pharaohs were worshipped as successive incarnations of the great day-star. The succeeding dynasties inherited their divine honours. Number 43 of the second volume of the Amherst Papyri (173 B.C.) opens with the words, "In the reign of Ptolemy, the son of Ptolemy and Cleopatra Gods". No. 33 of the same volume (157 B.C.) opens, "To King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, the sister,

Gods, Philometores, greeting." No. XI of the Fayum Papyri (c.115 B.C.) opens, "To Queen Cleopatra and King Ptolemy, Gods, Philometores, Saviours, greeting." It was only natural, therefore, that this native doctrine of royal divinity should be applied to the Caesars. An inscription from Socnopaei Nesus in the Fayûm, dated 17th March, 24 B.C., gives the title 'god of god' to Augustus.<sup>1</sup> No. 89 of the Fayûm Papyri (A.D.9.) commences thus, "In the 38th year of the dominion of Caesar Augustus, son of God" (Θεῶν υἱὸς) Hundreds of papyri, rescued from the sands of Egypt, illustrate the prevalence of this growing fashion of referring to the Caesars as "gods". Caesar-worship was thus, in the main, only one of the symptoms of the supremacy which Eastern ideas were establishing in the West.

A second contributory factor was the feeling of genuine relief in the world at the establishment of the Pax Romana. Augustus had built up a splendid system of provincial government which went on functioning mechanically however badly subsequent Emperors might exercise their powers. Rome itself, as a city, might suffer at the hands of an unscrupulous Caesar, but for the provinces the blessings of peace and good government were largely secured. Travel was safe, trade was good, the law was dispensed with equity, the world was tranquil and at rest. For these blessings men were grateful to Rome, and this gratitude found expression in veneration for the figure in whom

<sup>1</sup>Dittenberger. *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*. No.655.

they saw Rome personified, and upon whose word the destiny of countless men depended.

In the third place political considerations played a part in fostering the growth of the cult. The Empire was one. With the destruction of national barriers and the decay of state-religions, the multiplicity of cults was somehow felt to be out of place. The Oriental mystery-cults, while they were not national in their character, were yet useless politically as a binding force. They tended rather to subvert political interests in that they led men to seek the fullest interests of life within themselves, to aim at personal salvation, rather than to interest themselves in the affairs and well-being of the state. The value of Caesar-worship as a political expedient was not lost sight of in later days, and it was this consideration which was largely responsible for the great conflict which was waged with Christianity. Even in the early days a part was played by the natural feeling that as men were one politically, so they should be one in religion. The political conditions of the age were turning men's minds in the direction of a universal religion.

This political consideration was reinforced by the influence of philosophy reducing all things to a unity. Stoicism had found a universal divine cause operating throughout the world. Polytheism was doomed, and different cults could only survive by finding that they were worshipping the same god under

different names. This unity between different religions, which was felt to exist in the back-ground, was formally supplied by the worship of the one great figure to whom all men were equally related. Stoicism, moreover, had given an impetus to morality. Social virtues, the performance of one's duties towards humanity, were a measure of fidelity to the Logos within; and no man had an opportunity of helping his fellow-men on so magnificent a scale as the Caesar. If, as Cicero<sup>1</sup> says, "one should conceive the gods as like men who feel themselves born for the work of helping, defending, and saving humanity", then the one man who had the opportunity of expressing god-hood in his person was the Emperor.

With this cult of the Emperor it was inevitable that Christianity should ultimately come into conflict. Deissmann<sup>2</sup> when writing of the dictum of Christ - "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's", says, "It was an age in which the Caesar was honoured as a god; Jesus showed no disrespect towards Caesar, but by distinguishing so sharply between Caesar and God He made a tacit protest against the worship of the emperor". While the words undoubtedly have a peculiarly appropriate sound when read in reference to the situation occasioned by Caesar-worship, it was only at a comparatively late date - towards the end of the first century - that the cult came into prominence, and it would

<sup>1</sup>Cicero. Tusc.1.32.

<sup>2</sup>Deissmann. "Light from the Ancient East". p.246.

require more evidence to justify the reading into the words of a meaning other than that suggested by their context in the Gospels. Jesus, challenged by His Jewish enemies on the question of tribute-money, affords a situation, that in itself is a sufficient explanation of their significance. By a great many of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean world the worship was not viewed in a very serious light, and it was only when its observance was enforced by law and men were compelled to treat it as a serious issue, that real and bitter feeling was aroused. Ultimately the ascription of divine honours to the emperor and the performance of the rites associated with the cult were insisted upon by the authorities as a test of loyalty. No real religious feeling could attach itself to this worship, and in such the authorities were not interested - a man was free to worship other gods as he pleased - but they were interested in the question of loyalty to Rome. Participation in the cult was made the equivalent of an oath of loyalty. Men were compelled to observe the rites and to produce, when called upon, certificates from the temple authorities. The papyri yield examples of these. "To the superintendents of offerings and sacrifices at the city from Aurelius - son of Theodorus and Pantonymis of the said city. It has ever been my custom to make sacrifices and libations to the gods, and now also I have in your presence in accordance with the command poured libations

and sacrificed and tasted the offerings together with my son Aurelius Dioscurus and my daughter Aurelia Lais. I therefore request you to certify my statement".<sup>1</sup> It was their inability to produce such certificates that caused many Christians to die a martyr's death. On the occasions when they had recourse to the law-courts or had need of a document that required official endorsement, Christians would be confronted again by this problem of the worship of Caesar. The oath which they had to swear was the oath of the Emperor. "Swearing the divine and holy oath of our all-victorious masters, the Augusti:",<sup>2</sup> was a common type. Another such was to swear by the "fortune" of the Caesars. "And I swear by the fortune of the Aurelii, Antoninus and Commodus, Caesars, Lords (Κυρίων)".<sup>3</sup>

It was inevitable that Christianity should sooner or later face the issue raised by this official religion. I Peter and the Book of Revelation bear witness to the intensity of the struggle that ensued and to the horror and depth of bitter feeling with which Christians viewed the claims of a living man to be God. Under its thin guise of Apocalyptic phraseology, the Book of Revelation is a fierce denunciation of this blasphemous worship, - "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God..."<sup>4</sup> - and like the Epistle from Rome

<sup>1</sup>O.P. IV.658.

<sup>2</sup>Amh.II.140.

<sup>3</sup>Amh.II.71.

<sup>4</sup>Rev.XIV.9.

calls on Christians to endure and be comforted. It is possible, too, as Deissmann affirms, that there was a tacit protest implied in the words of earlier Christians like St. Paul when they gave expression to such phrases as "our only Master and Lord"; but there is no proof that Caesar-worship was in their minds when they used this ascription, while the possibility must be considered that, if St. Paul were making a protest, it would not be tacit, and veiled, but outright and denunciatory.

It is sometimes said that Caesar-worship ~~has~~ hastened the process of the complete deification of Jesus. One purpose, which the Emperor certainly did effect, was to throw into relief the real greatness of Christ. The Lord of the Empire acted as a foil to the Lord of the Christians. Both religions were based on the worship of a human being, and by an unconscious but almost inevitable comparison of the spiritual supremacy of Jesus with the temporal greatness of the Emperor men were led to appreciate wherein the qualities of divinity lay. The uniqueness of Christ was confirmed, the exclusiveness of Christianity was made apparent and the necessity was impressed upon the mind of the church of establishing the universal sovereignty of its Lord. The universality of the rival cult brought home to Christians the universal mission of the Church.



GNOSTICISM.

Gnosticism, as it is known to us today, is properly a feature of second and third century religious life; but the later Gnostic systems, with which alone we are conversant, are the fruits of an earlier movement that existed even before the days of earliest Christianity. The Gnostic systems were the mature expression of the mind of the Mediterranean world in its tendency towards syncretism. Gnosticism was the endeavour, by men dissatisfied with existing religious and philosophic systems, to blend what they considered was best in these into one **eclectic** system which would be superior to all. It was only from the latter half of the second century that Christianity was really subject to danger from men with Gnostic or syncretistic tendencies, and Gnosticism itself is nowhere reflected in the pages of the New Testament unless perhaps in the writings of St. John, where the reality of Christ's incarnation is strongly insisted upon<sup>1</sup>, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God".

The Church did not suffer the writings of the Gnostics to survive and their work is consequently known to us only through the references of the Christian Fathers, endeavouring to refute their teaching, and through the rediscovery of some original documents - like the Pistis Sophia - which are however of late origin and shed little light on the early nature of the movement.

<sup>1</sup> Jn. IV. 1-3.

It is probable that the anonymus sects belong to the early days; Christianity is not greatly made use of in these systems, which reflect a pagan world not yet greatly exercised over nor interested in the truths of the religion of Christ. In those systems however that bear the name of a teacher - Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides - the Christian influence is prominent and central, and they accordingly reveal the movement when it had reached its height. Christianity is now becoming a force worthy of consideration in the intellectual and religious life of the world.

It follows from the nature of the case that Gnosticism is not capable of any exact definition or description. It was the endeavour to produce a superior system out of all the existing systems of mental and spiritual life. Religion, philosophy, mythology, magic all contributed their quota and were blended on no principle but the arbitrary decision of the individual thinker. It was a movement therefore which could reach no finality. The ways were endless in which men might combine the different elements of the world's thought. From another point of view the various systems do bear a strong resemblance. They belong to the one family; they reach towards the same goal; they proceed on the same general principles; they are founded on the same world-view.

In thought all the Gnostic schools were dualistic. The real world is purely spiritual; the material world is an error,

the creation of an inferior God - Demiurgos - who in Christian Gnosticism is identified with the God of the Old Testament. The true God is unknown; he includes all things and dwells in the *πληρωμα* or fullness. From him, as his attributes, there proceed in couples thirty aeons. The lowest of these - in most systems Sophia - sins in seeking to rise higher to the supreme God and from her sin the material world is born. It is essentially evil and yet in some manner has comprehended part of the divine essence in the souls of men. These seeds of divine light, imprisoned on earth, are delivered by another heavenly being who descends to restore them to their home. This deliverance is accomplished by imparting to those in whose souls the divine element is imprisoned a gnosis or revelation, and by the institution of rites and sacraments that are able to cleanse from the pollution of matter.

The name Gnosticism truly describes this movement because of this gnosis or revelation which is a characteristic of all the systems. The knowledge on which they prided themselves was not of the nature of intellectual perception or discrimination, but a revealed knowledge of the true God, the nature of the soul, and the hidden mysteries. It could be revealed to men only of spiritual nature. The majority of men belonged to the material world; they were incapable of sharing in this secret gnosis, because lacking the divine element in their souls they were destined to perish. This intellectual arrogance which made

salvation depend upon gnosis was accompanied by a disregard of the ethical element in religion. It was upon the revelation he had gained, not the manner in which he lived his life, that the spiritual man based his claim to redemption. In some sects asceticism was the rule of life, in others libertinism.

Gnosticism came into definite contact with Christianity in the second century. The greatest Gnostic thinkers were drawn to this religion and were willing to accord it a central place in their systems. The framework was still definitely Pagan and of the nature described above, but the heavenly Redeemer who descended from the spiritual world was identified with Christ. The Christ however is not the historical person Jesus, but an aeon of highest rank, who descends to seek the fallen aeon and to redeem the seeds of light lost in the fall. This he does by uniting himself with the holy man Jesus, whom he again leaves just prior to his Crucifixion. The suffering and death of a divine being are inconceivable; and the redemption wrought by Christ is not involved in the Cross but in the gnosis or revelation he gave to his disciples.

Gnosticism might be described as the climax of the movement towards a world syncretism which existed in the Hellenistic Age. In its relation with Christianity the impetus towards an alliance between Pagan thought and the religion which Jesus founded probably came from both without and within. Pagan thinkers, attracted by the new religion, wished to embrace it in their systems; and

Christian thinkers, attracted by Pagan thought, wished to enrich their religion by embracing Paganism. Semi-Christian pagans and semi-pagan Christians were both seeking a more comprehensive creed. But the result of this alliance would have been to destroy in Christianity all that was distinctively Christian.

Almost from the earliest days Christian thinkers like St. Paul had availed themselves of pagan modes of thought in order that they might more fully express and develop their message. They could do so with impunity because they were in close touch with the historical foundations of their faith, and were keenly alive to what constituted the vital elements of their religion. But when men of a later date, whose Christianity was sometimes only of the nature of a veneer, attempted to continue this process, they discarded what in Christianity was irreconcilable with the Pagan framework of thought in which they wished to place it, and so doing discarded those elements which were most vital to the religion - the historical life and teaching of Jesus. The failure of Paganism to effect this alliance, or rather its failure to absorb Christianity into its own systems of thought, is in itself almost a sufficient answer to the charge that historic Christianity is a "snow-ball" religion, a syncretistic mass of Hellenistic thought imposed upon a few ethical truths taught by Jesus. The church, while willing to avail itself of Hellenism that it might express its thought, was always conscious of its own distinctive message, of the essential elements which were the

heart of its faith. Whatever was useful as a vehicle of expression, while not irreconcilable with its own essential content, the church had always welcomed, but against what was contradictory to its own inner spirit it firmly closed the door. The formation of a canon and of a creed was Christianity's answer to the invitation to join forces, extended by Paganism.



### THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS.

When our knowledge of the Hellenistic age was drawn from purely Classical sources, the view was prevalent that this was an age of religious dearth. One of the reasons ascribed to Christianity's rapid success was that it was alone in offering to fill this blank space in the world's life. This is a view of things which has now been greatly altered. It is true that amongst the members of the ruling class, as their writers reveal, there was widespread scepticism; but these writers reflect the mood only of a small part of the population. The ancient state religions, the ritual of which the rulers were compelled to observe as a matter of statecraft, were indeed bereft of all vitality; but other religions, concerning which the literary artists of the day were silent, had come in from the East, and had found a ready welcome. It was in reality an age that was intensely religious. "There has probably been no time in the history of mankind when all classes were more given up to thoughts of religion or when they strained more fervently after high ethical ideals."<sup>1</sup> "The world was in the throes of

<sup>1</sup>. Legge - "Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity" l. p.XLIX.



a religious revolution, and eagerly in quest of some fresh vision of the Divine, from whatever quarter it might dawn."<sup>1</sup> The mood of the age was frankly religious, engendered in part by political and social conditions. There was abroad at this time a sense of weariness, indifference to, and disappointment with the world. The establishment of the Empire had robbed men of what is always one of the greatest interests of human life, active civil and political life. Suicide was a very frequent form of death amongst the members of the aristocratic class; while the formation and growth of guilds, burial clubs and other associations were symptomatic of the desire of the poorer classes to escape from the oppressive sense of monotony which life in the Empire entailed, to find a means of realizing their individuality in a circle of interested fellow-beings. There was in this age, "a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life and of faith in normal human effort; a despair of patient enquiry, a cry for infallible revelation; an indifference to the welfare of the state, a conversion of the soul to God. It is an atmosphere, in which the aim of the good man is not so much to live justly, to help the society to which he belongs, and enjoy the esteem of his

1. Dill - Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius" p.82.





fellow-creatures;.....There is an intensifying of certain spiritual emotions, an increase of sensitiveness, a failure of nerve."<sup>1</sup>

This lack of interest in, and pessimistic view of, the larger affairs of human life was to a certain extent fostered by the Eastern religions which had come in to take the place of the old national faiths of Greece and Rome. The Mystery Cults helped to create as well as to fill the need they professed to meet. They were suited to the age in that they themselves were pessimistic in their attitude towards life on this earth. Founded on dualism and teaching that life is inherently evil they offered men escape from the bondage of material things, pointing to a possible spiritual life beyond the grave, accessible to those who had been initiated into the mystery of their secret rites. They were suited also to the age in that they were individualistic in their appeal. Democratic government is not native to the genius of Eastern peoples, and the soil of despotism is not one in which patriotic feeling can flourish. Religion in Eastern countries always tends to divorce itself from the affairs of the state, for which the citizen feels no great sense of responsibility,

<sup>1</sup>. Gilbert Murray - "Four Stages of Greek Religion."



and to concentrate on the needs of the soul of the individual as such. In this respect the Mystery Cults made a powerful appeal. A third respect in which they agreed with the mood of the age was that they enshrined the principle of revelation. There was abroad at this time an almost universal despair of the power of human reason to solve the problems of life, or to afford man trustworthy guidance on his earthly pilgrimage. This despair had infected even philosophy itself, so that fullest knowledge was regarded not as the reward of the process of abstract thought but rather - as in Philo - as the gift of divinely inspired moments, during which human reason was quiescent and the true man was illuminated from above. At this time there was prevalent the belief that knowledge required to be supplemented from above; relying on his own powers man was helpless. It was on such supernaturally revealed knowledge that the Eastern cults were based. A fourth characteristic which contributed towards their success in this age was their adaptability. Christianity alone was marked by its exclusiveness. These religions were willing and ready to form alliances and to borrow one from another. Springing as they did from a common source -



the worship of the returning earth-life in Spring - their basic ideas were very similar; they found it easy to borrow and coalesce, with the result that it is difficult today to determine how far the ideas they expressed in the Hellenistic Age were native to the individual religions. They formed an alliance too with philosophy - especially Stoicism. Their rites and myths were interpreted in the light of the truths of philosophy and were granted a profounder meaning than they really possessed.<sup>1</sup> Their prestige thus was greatly enhanced, and at the same time they found it easier to draw close to one another in that the philosophic expression of their myths revealed that they all believed in the same things. The Mystery Religions were thus suited to an age whose political conditions had suggested the rationality and inevitability of syncretism.

While these cults engaged in public processions and services, and indeed did their utmost to catch the public eye, they were marked on the other hand by the utmost secrecy. Those who had been initiated into the rites were sworn to silence. Our knowledge of them is therefore scanty; especially concerning the details of their inner religious beliefs.

1. e.g. Plutarch "De Iside et Osiride."



They figure little in the literature of the age, because it was chiefly amongst the common people that they spread, while in the writings of educated men like Plutarch, Porphyry, or Iamblichus, where they are discussed, their secrets are safely guarded. "The study of the antique mysteries," says De Jong, "is extremely difficult, since we have at our disposal only fragmentary and often very scanty material."<sup>1</sup> "Perhaps no loss" says Cumont, "caused by the general wreck of ancient literature has been more disastrous than that of the liturgic books of Paganism. A few mystic formulas quoted incidentally by pagan or christian authors, and a few fragments of hymns in honour of the gods are practically all that escaped destruction." From such limited sources of information, our knowledge concerning these cults can therefore only be possessed of a greater or less degree of probability. And yet the diligence of a great number of scholars, gathering evidence from every possible source, has succeeded in presenting us with a picture, which, though lacking detail, is yet suggestive. Our sources of information are :-

(1) Allusions in Classical Writings.

(2) Allusions in Christian Writings. The Christian Fathers often attack these oriental Cults, their indignation

<sup>1</sup>. De Jong - "Das Antike Mysterienwesen."



being specially roused by the similarity which they bore in certain details to Christianity and which they ascribed to the workings of the Devil. The bitter feeling, with which they regarded these religions, is at the same time a witness to their widespread vogue and to their strength. They were rivals whom Christianity could not afford to ignore.

(3) A few writings which have survived and seem to embody cult ideas. Such as the "Hermetic Writings" and the so-called "Mithraic Liturgy."

(4) Monuments, inscriptions, and papyri. By excavating the ruined chapels, temples and shrines of the past, new evidence of first hand value has been brought to light. Inscriptions, epitaphs, cult-emblems wrought on bas-reliefs, the nature of the temple's construction, all help to increase our knowledge of the cults. The papyri of Egypt are also of value.

(5) Knowledge of the ancient religions from which the cults were descended.

For several centuries before the birth of Christ these religions had been establishing themselves in the Western world. We have already seen how at a comparatively early date their influence had made itself felt in Greece, even though they were for long regarded with suspicion and distrust because of the orgiastic nature of their rites.

(Demosthenes thought it possible to prejudice an Athenian jury against Aeschines and his mother, by telling of their religious activities.) In Italy too, especially in the South, they had gained a footing at an early date. Then in



204 B.C. a step of far-reaching importance was taken, when the Senate, in despair of resisting the invasion of Hannibal, introduced into Rome the worship of Phrygian Cybele, the "Great Mother of the Gods."<sup>1</sup> When victory resulted, the worship of the Goddess was assured of a place in Roman life. Yet it was so remote in spirit from the genius of Roman religion, that it was for long looked upon with suspicion. No Roman was allowed to become a priest, and until the time of Claudius the rites were performed by a Phrygian priesthood. Soldiers, slaves and traders helped to introduce into Italy other Eastern Cults, especially those of Egypt. These were even less welcome to Rome, but at the time of the dawning of the Empire so many of the population were Orientals that official opposition was powerless to check their growth. Augustus in 28 B.C. ordered that all the temples of Isis and Serapis should be outside the "pomoerium"; and in 19 A.D. Tiberius gave the order to expel all Orientals, including Jews, from Rome, and to dismantle the temple of Isis, whose worship he forbade. These measures could not check the progress of the foreign religions - the character of Rome itself had undergone too radical a change since the days of

1. Livy XXIX - 14, XXXVI - 36.



the Carthaginian War - and when Caligula ascended the throne the Imperial policy was reversed. Official recognition was granted by Claudius.

These cults which invaded the Western world were very numerous. They bear so close a resemblance to one another, however, both as a result of blending and as a result of their common origin that, with the exception of Mithraism, there is little to be said in the differentiation of them.

#### PHRYGIAN CYBELE.

One of the most important of the cults was that which came from Phrygia. It centred round the worship of Cybele, the mother of the gods, who must originally have occupied the place of honour. With her was associated a youth, Attis, beloved of the goddess. He died. (There are different accounts regarding the manner in which he met his death). The death of Attis, who in our period has become the central figure of the cult, the grief of Cybele, the return of Attis to life and the consequent joy of the goddess, formed the basis of the great festival which was celebrated each year in the Spring. The cult undoubtedly had its basis in the revival of vegetation. Cybele is a personification of mother-earth, Attis



of the springing to life of the forces of nature after the dead period of winter. The celebration of the festival occupied several days. On the first day the sacred pine-tree was cut down and wrapped up like a corpse, was carried through the streets to the sanctuary accompanied by religious symbols, among which was a statue of the god. On the second day the worshippers fasted and lamented the death of Attis. The third day was the day of blood; the tree was solemnly buried, and the worshippers surrendered themselves to a frenzy of grief, in which they gashed themselves with knives. On the following night a vigil was held within the temple; the grave was reopened and the rite of initiation was celebrated. The priest anointed the lips of the worshippers with holy oil, saying "Be of good cheer, mystae of the god, who has been saved, for to you there shall be salvation from your troubles."<sup>1</sup> The next day, known as Hilarion, was marked by an unbridled outburst of joy. Processions accompanied the statue of Cybele to a fountain where it was purified, and the day was given over to licentious rejoicing. Somewhere in the course of these celebrations, a sacred meal was partaken of. Firmicus Maternus quotes the formula "I have eaten





out of the tympanum, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have become an initiate of Attis." Then from the middle of the second century A.D. at least, the taurobolium, or bath of blood, perhaps borrowed from Mithraism, assumed a central place in the rites of this cult, as a vehicle whereby the quality of immortality was conferred on the initiates.

#### EGYPTIAN SERAPIS.

Another cult of first importance was that of the Egyptian Serapis. The objects aimed at in this cult can be spoken of with greater certainty because of our fuller knowledge of the primitive religions in the country of its origin. The life of the soul after death had been for many years an integral part of Egyptian religious faith. From an early date bodies were mummified, and even when the belief in the soul's separate existence was evolved the practice was still continued. This emphasis on the after-life, characteristic of the native religions, was continued in the hybrid cult which sprang from them.

Isis and Osiris had been objects of worship in Egypt for two thousand years before the dawning of the Christian era. According to the religious myth Osiris was a god who

had lived in Egypt and taught the people how to cultivate the soil. J.G. Frazer contends that he was the god of corn: others put forward the hypothesis that Osiris enshrines the memory of a real king: but the consensus of opinion is that Osiris was originally the Nile; waters from the Nile always played a part in the temple services. The later view is credible in that the life of agriculture in Egypt has always been vitally dependent on the rise and fall of the river. Osiris was slain by his brother Set and his body, enclosed in a chest, drifted down the Nile. Isis, his wife and sister, set out to seek for the body and found it among the bull-rushes. She was deprived of it by Set, who dismembered it and scattered the portions. Isis again succeeded in finding them; and with the help of the supreme god Osiris was brought to life. Before his throne every soul must appear for judgment. This religion like that of Adonis and Attis was a nature cult, having to do with the springing of the corn through the fructifying influence of the river, and like these cults, its rites were somewhat of an orgiastic nature. The festival of Osiris was observed dramatically. The worshippers sympathetically reproduced the acts and feelings of the god and goddess in a dramatic portrayal of the incidents of the myth.



At the beginning of the third century B.C. this native religion underwent a profound change. Ptolemy Soter (306-285 B.C.), one of Alexander's generals, had seized as his portion of the Empire the throne of Egypt. Like his master he harboured the ideal of introducing Hellenic culture into his domain and of blending it with the native culture. As a step towards this end he endeavoured to graft Greek elements on to the Egyptian religion. According to a tradition found in Plutarch he invited to his court representatives of the priesthood of Eleusis to evolve a new religion. The new cult centred round the figure of Serapis. Greek customs and ideas played a part, but in essentials it was still the religion of Osiris. It spread however at a rapid pace. "It is found at Athens as early as the third century B.C.; at Pompeii about the end of the second; in Rome by the time of Sulla."<sup>1</sup>

#### PERSIAN MITHRA.

Another of the best known of the Oriental religions is that which centres round the figure of Mithra. Though it did not attain to any prominence in the West till the second century A.D., it was a cult of long standing and had spread eastwards to Pontus, Cappadocia and Armenia about the time of



Alexander. It was first brought to Italy by the Cilician pirates on whom Pompey made war in 67 B.C. But it was not until the second century that it became prominent, at the close of which century it received a great advertisement by its conversion of the Emperor Commodus (180-192 A.D.).<sup>1</sup> Its vogue was chiefly in military and official circles. It never really established itself in the life of the Western world. The Mithraic monuments are mostly the dedicatory offerings of soldiers, imperial officials and oriental slaves.

Mithra was originally an Indian god. Cumont says that "in that unknown epoch when the ancestors of the Persians were still united with those of the Hindus, they were already worshippers of Mithra. The hymns of the Vedas celebrated his name as did those of the Avesta." In both religions he is the god of light and with his name are associated high ethical qualities. At a later date when the Chaldean theology was blended with the more primitive Mazdean beliefs, Mithra was identified with the sun. Like the gods of the other cults which spread Westwards he was not originally the supreme god but a lesser deity through whose good offices his worshippers could secure blessings.

The myth, which his religion enshrined and whose details



are unknown, is in some close way associated with the slaying of the bull. According to the old Indian-Persian belief it was from the blood of the slain bull that the life on the earth had sprung. On the Mithraic sculptures it is Mithra who is represented as the slayer of the animal, wielding his knife with a reluctant and grieved expression on his face. Attached to the tail of the bull is an ear of corn. Mithraism thus in spite of its differences and its higher spiritual tone is ultimately one in kind with the other cults, in that it was associated with the worship of nature.

There were seven degrees of initiation, as a text of S. Jerome and various inscriptions reveal. The initiate was called Raven, Occult, Soldier, Lion, Persian, Runner of the Sun, Father, according to his degree and dressed himself in a garment appropriate to his title. Cumont thinks that this probably goes back to pre-historic times, when the gods were represented under the forms of animals and the worshipper believed that by assuming the form of the god he was identified with him; and that the seven degrees were also related to the seven planetary spheres, each guarded by an angel of Ormazd, through which the soul had to pass after death on its upward flight to the region of bliss. It is probable that as he

went through each degree, the worshipper would learn secret formulae by the use of which he might pass the angels on guard.

In the chapels, which are either natural caves or subterranean vaults, there was always a supply of water either from a spring or a conduit. Lustrations or baptisms played some part as in the other cults. The Taurobolium was a particular form of baptism of a repulsive nature associated with this cult, though it was not an exclusively Mithraic rite. Professor Halliday<sup>1</sup> finds its origin in a primitive stratum of Anatolian religion, saying that the primary idea which lay behind it was the magical prolonging of physical life by the absorption of the life-force of the sacred animal and also by the sacrifice of a surrogate. In our period the rite was looked upon as a vehicle whereby the initiate was "renatus in aeternum."<sup>2</sup> He stood or lay in a pit and let the warm blood of the sacrificial bull, slaughtered on a latticed platform, trickle down upon his body, moistening his tongue with it and drinking it as a sacramental act. This baptism, as the inscriptions on many tomb-stones reveal, endowed him with the

1. W.R. Halliday - "The Pagan Background of Early Christianity."

2. Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VI. 510; VIII. 8203.

principle of immortality though its efficacy may have been looked upon as lasting only for twenty years.<sup>1</sup>

Along with baptisms Mithraism also had its sacred meals or sacraments. Justin Martyr<sup>2</sup> relates how bread and a cup full of water were brought forward with some words of blessing. Tertullian also refers to it, while protesting against the imitation of the Christian sacraments in the mystic rites of the pagan religions. "And if my memory serves me, Mithra there (in the kingdom of Satan) sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread and introduces an image of a resurrection, and before a sword wreathes a crown."<sup>3</sup> A bas-relief affords a picture of the sacred meal. "Before two persons stretched on a couch, is placed a tripod bearing four tiny loaves of bread, each marked with a Cross. Around them are grouped initiates of the different orders, and one of them, the Persian, presents to the two a drinking horn; whilst a second vessel is held in the hands of one of the participants. These love feasts are evidently the ritual commemoration of the banquet which Mithra

1. Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VI. 512.

2. Justin Martyr. Apol. 1.66 and Prudentius. Peristeph X. 1011 ff.

3. Tertullian - "De Prescript. Haeret". c.40.

celebrated with the Sun before his ascension. From this mystical banquet and especially from the inbibing of the sacred wine, supernatural effects were expected. The liquor gave not only vigour of body and material prosperity but wisdom of mind; it communicated to the neophyte the power to combat the malignant spirits and conferred on him as on his god a glorious immortality."<sup>1</sup>

The first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, was also observed by the worshippers of Mithra as holy to the Sun. Prayers were offered to him thrice daily and on the Sunday special services were probably held. The twentyfifth of December was celebrated as the birth-day of Mithra, when the sun reached its winter solstice and began to return. Its reviving strength was probably interpreted as a new birth and suggested the date for the birth-festival of Mithra. Many scholars ascribe the Christian observance of the birth of Christ on this date as due to the influence of the Mithraic festival: but there is such a thing as coincidence. The day of the week observed as sacred by both religions coincided, but that the change on the part of Christians from the Sabbath of Judaism was the result of borrowing from Mithraism is

<sup>1</sup>. Cumont - "The Mysteries of Mithra."



precluded by its early adoption. Paul, writing to Corinth, (about the year 50 A.D.) bears witness to the change long before Mithraism had become prominent.

Mithraism did not differ greatly from the other cults unless perhaps in that it moved on a higher moral level. It laid more emphasis on the ethical element in religion. Mithra, the god of light, identified himself with truth and righteousness and demanded a holy life from his followers. It was a soldier's creed, enthroning the virtues of manhood - courage, fidelity, truth.

This is a brief description of the religion of which Renan said "On peut dire que si le christianisme eût été arrêté dans sa croissance par quelque maladie mortelle, le monde eût été mithriaste." Probably more prominence has been given to this rivalry between the two religions than the facts warrant. The popularity of Mithraism has been exaggerated. No doubt the patronage of the Emperors helped to commend it in official circles and among the soldiers, many of whom were drawn from the East, but with the exception of some oriental slaves there is no evidence from the monuments that it appealed to the civil population without the camps, unless perhaps in Rome itself. "Almost the entire domain of

Hellenism was closed to it..... Greece, Macedonia, Thrace, Bithynia, Asia (pro-consular), the central provinces of Asia Minor (apart from Cappadocia), Syria, Palestine and Egypt - none of these ever had any craving for the cult of Mithra. And these were the civilised countries by pre-eminence..... Now these were the very regions in which Christianity found an immediate and open welcome....."<sup>1</sup> In the second place the fact that no women could be initiated into the secret rites of this cult was an insuperable barrier in the way of it ever becoming a world religion. None of the inscriptions mentions a woman's name, either as initiate or priestess: and while there is reason to believe that Mithraism was closely associated with the cult of Cybele and that in this way some provision for the spiritual needs of the women folk of Mithraists might be made, the confining of the membership to men was an undoubted weakness. Then in the third place, although Mithraism spread geographically, there is no evidence that it was strong numerically. The mithraeum or chapel was always small. The largest discovered could not accommodate more than about thirty worshippers. The extreme smallness of these

1. Harnack - "The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries."

chapels would tend indeed to prove that congregational worship at least in the West was not greatly observed. They could hardly have been used for much besides initiation services, and even then only a few initiates could have been admitted at one time.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CULTS.

Partly as the result of borrowing and partly due to the fact of their common origin in nature-worship, the cults have several broad features in common. It is impossible at present to say what elements were native to each individual religion, (and how far they have been adapted to suit the needs of the Hellenistic age), but it is nearly safe to assume that though some of the sources, from which information has been gathered, are later in date than the first century A.D., the cults were practically fixed in form before the Christian era. The elaborate nature of their ritual presupposes a long history, and even if we allow the fact of development, development takes time. Sources that are far removed from each other in the matter of time reflect elements that are common to the various cults. They may, or must, have differed somewhat in detail, but by the first century A.D. they all conformed to a common



type and are marked by common features.

They were missionary religions. They were actuated by as keen a desire as Christianity to gain converts, and they had this advantage over their great rival that by the public splendour of their temple services they caught the public eye. Although, as Tertullian ("it is their secrecy that is their disgrace")<sup>1</sup> and other Christian Fathers complain, the inner rites of their worship were kept a close secret, they were always seeking by self-advertisement to draw the attention of the world. Beautiful and stately temples were served by a regular staff of priests in impressive vestments, and the general public were allowed to see sufficient of the ceremonial, especially that which was conducted daily on a raised platform in front of the temple, as would arouse a natural curiosity or ambition to know more of that which was kept secret. There is no doubt that their efforts to catch the public eye would be impressive in that age. They also on festal days made a feature of public processions. Choristers and trumpeters, arrayed in white vestments, preceded the company of worshippers and priests who bore sacred emblems and images aloft. "Then came a fair company of youth apparelled in white vestments and

<sup>1</sup>. Tertullian - "Against the Valentians" c.1.

festal array, singing both metre and verse with a comely grace  
.....blowers of trumpets which were dedicate unto mighty  
Serapis.....and likewise there were many officers and beadles,  
crying room for the goddess to pass. Then came the great  
company of men and women of all stations and of every age,  
which were initiate and had taken divine orders, whose garments  
being of the whitest linen, glistened all the streets  
over.....and held in their hands timbrels of brass, silver and  
gold, which rendered forth a shrill and pleasant sound. The  
principal priests leaders of the sacred rites, which were  
apparelled with white surplices drawn tight about their  
breasts and hanging down to the ground, bare relics of all the  
most puissant gods. One that was first of them carried in his  
hand a lantern shining forth with a clear light.....The second,  
attired like the other, bare in both hands those pots to which  
the succouring providence of the high goddess herself had  
given their name. The third held up a tree of palm.....The  
fourth showed a token of equity, that was a left hand deformed  
in every place and with open palm.....The same priest carried  
a round vessel of gold, in form of a breast, whence milk  
flowed down.....By and by after the gods deigned to follow  
afoot as men do, and specially Anubis, the messenger of the

gods, infernal and supernal, tall with his face sometime black, sometime fair as gold, lifting up on high his dog's head..... After him straight followed a cow with an upright gait, the cow representing the great goddess that is the fruitful mother of all.....Another carried after the secrets of their glorious religion closed in a coffer. Another was there that bare in his bosom the venerable figure of the godhead, not formed like any beast, bird, savage thing or human shape, but made by a new invention and therefore much to be admired, an emblem ineffable, whereby was signified that such a religion was at once very high and should not be discovered or revealed to any person.....And when they had lost sight of the ship, by reason that it was afar off, every man of them that bore the holy things carried again that which he brought and went towards the temple in like pomp and order as they came to the sea-side. When we were come to the temple, the great priest and those which were deputed to carry the divine figures, but especially those which had a long time been initiate in the religion, went into the secret chamber of the goddess, where they put and placed the lively images according to their order. This done, one of the company which was a scribe or interpreter of letters in form of a preacher stood up in a chair before the

place of the holy college of the Pastophores (shrine-bearers) and calling together their whole assembly, from his high pulpit began to read out of a book, praying for good fortune to the great Prince, the Senate, to the noble order of chivalry, and generally to all the Roman people.....The people gave a great shout, and then replenished with much joy, bare all kind of leafy branches and herbs and garlands of flowers home to their houses, kissing and embracing the feet of a silver image of the goddess upon the steps of the temple."<sup>1</sup>

A second characteristic of these religions, and one which again would contribute to their popularity, was their close alliance with astrology and the magical arts, divination, oneiromancy and the like. It was an age of superstition and this feature of the religions was at once a strength and a weakness. It doubled the force of their appeal to the common people, while the charlatans who under a religious cloak practised their impostures tended at times to bring them into bad repute. At the same time it served to weaken any real spiritual quality of which they were possessed. The ethical element was pushed into the background, or prevented from coming into the foreground, and by developing along the line of popular demand, the mystery religions presented as their

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius. Metamorph. XI. c.9. ff.

essential content the magical power inherent in sacred and secret names, formulae and regenerative rites. During initiation much of the secret revelation imparted to the neophyte would no doubt be formulae, embodying powerful names, whereby he could control elemental spirits and after death secure a safe passage through the spheres. And these formulae would be after the manner of those conserved in the papyri - nonsensical combinations. Then aside from the part which magic played in the secret rites, the popular practice of the arts was pursued by many of the priests as a means to replenish their coffers. By this means they established a reign of terror over many of the people, while their abuses repelled others. Apuleius himself, an initiate of Isis, relates how a company of priests of the Syrian (Adonis) cult went throughout all the villages, bearing an image of the goddess, how with music and dancing they worked themselves into so great a frenzy that they were impervious to the pain of the blows and gashes that they inflicted upon themselves, how when they had thus played upon the feelings of the inhabitants, they then prayed upon their purses, receiving "into their open bosoms copper coins, nay silver too, vessels of wine, milk, cheese, flour and wheat." Then "after that we



had tarried there a few days at the cost and charges of the whole village, and had gotten much money by our divination and prognostication of things to come, those good priests invented a new mean to pick men's purses; for they had one lot whereon was written this cheating answer, which they gave for every enquiry; and it was: 'The oxen tied and yoked together do plough the ground to the intent that it may bring forth her increase.' And by these kinds of lots they deceived many of the simple sort: for if one demanded whether he should have a good wife or no, they would say that his lot did testify the same, that he should be tied and yoked to a good woman and have increase of children:.....if one demanded the advice of heaven whether he should have a good and prosperous voyage, they said that he should have good success because that now these gentlest of beasts were joined together and ready to go and that of the increase of the soil should be his profit: if one demanded whether he should vanquish his enemies, or prevail in pursuit of thieves, they said that the oracle foretold victory, for that his enemies' necks should be brought under the yoke, and that a rich and fertile gain should be gotten from the thieves booty."<sup>1</sup> This alliance with, or trafficking in, the

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius. Metamorph. 8.24 ff.

arts of magic may have proved of temporary value to the cults in strengthening their appeal to a superstitious age, but in the end the result could only be detrimental to whatever in them was of real and abiding value.

Then these mystery-religions were all marked by secret rites of initiation. The details of procedure are unknown but the general course which was followed in each may be confidently surmised. Before initiation the worshipper was reduced to a state of nervous susceptibility. His desire to proceed was whetted by being for a time denied. He was encouraged to frequent the temple precincts, and was at the same time led to believe by hints dropped by the priests that initiation, while conferring salvation, was a dread experience not to be entered upon lightly. The bait was held before him, while he was gently repelled by being told that he must await the will of the god. At the same time he was instructed to refrain from profane and unlawful meats in preparation for the reception of the secrets of the religion. The mystery, with which the rites were surrounded, was used to its utmost in inducing a state of nervous tension. "I went to the temple and tarried there till the opening of the gates in the morning: then I went in and when the white curtains were drawn aside, I began

to pray before the face of the goddess, while the priest prepared and set the divine things on every altar with solemn supplications, and fetched out of the sanctuary the holy water for the libation.....my courage increased every day more and more to take upon me the orders and sacraments of the temple: in so much that I oftentimes communed with the priest, desiring him greatly to make me initiate in the mysteries of the holy night. But he.....very gently and kindly deferred my affection from day to day with comfort of better hope.....saying that when anyone should be admitted into their order is appointed by the goddess.....considering that it was in her power both to damn and to save all persons, and that the taking of such orders was like a voluntary death and a difficult recovery to health: and if anywhere there were any at the point of death and at the end and limit of their life, so that they were capable to receive the dread secrets of the goddess, it was in her power by divine providence to make them as it were new born and to reduce them to the path of health.....that I must refrain from profane and unlawful meats.....I daily served at the temple: and in the end the wholesome greatness of the goddess did nothing deceive me, for she tormented me with no long delay but in a dark night she

appeared to me in a vision, declaring in words not dark that the day was come which I had wished for so long: she told me what provisions and charges I should be at for the supplications and how she had appointed her principal priest Mithras, that was joined unto my destiny (as she said) by the ordering of the planets to be a minister with me in my sacrifices."<sup>1</sup>

The rite of initiation itself took place within a secret and sacred place of the temple. It was preceded by a long fast, lasting in some cases at least ten days, and serving among other purposes physically to exhaust the worshipper so that he was easily ushered into the state of emotional excitement or ecstasy, which is a feature of all these religions. Ecstasy no doubt was a feature of all primitive religions. In Judaism it receded into the back-ground as the moral element became more prominent, but in the cults of the Hellenistic age it retained a central and prominent place, being interpreted in accordance with primitive ideas, as possession or union with the divine being. This ecstatic experience was looked upon as the culmination of the mystical fellowship with the god, which was the goal even of some philosophers. The mystical element in the cults will be spoken of later, but it

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius, *Metamorph.* XI. c.19.

is related to the manner in which they all sought to play upon the feelings of the worshipper. The long fast which he had to endure, no doubt, made him the more susceptible.

Within the temple some sort of secret instruction was given to the initiate. That this was marked by any moral or intellectual depth is highly improbable. It is more likely that it amounted to the learning of a few magical formulae and responses, the interpretation of the myth which he was to witness in dramatic form, and the explanation of the symbolism, involved in the sacred objects. Apuleius<sup>1</sup> refers to certain books which the priest brought out of the secret place of the temple "written with unknown characters, partly with figures of beasts, declaring briefly every sentence, partly with letters whose tops and tails turned round in fashion of a wheel, joined together above like unto the tendrils of a vine, whereby they were wholly strange and impossible to be read of the profane people; thence he interpreted to me such things as were necessary to the use and preparation of mine order." Concerning this question Angus<sup>2</sup> says "That there existed any elaborate dogmatic system of esoteric doctrines is improbable. Synesius

<sup>1</sup>. Apuleius. Metamorph. XI. c.22.

<sup>2</sup>. S. Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.93.

asserts 'Aristotle maintains that it is not necessary for the initiated to learn anything, but to receive impressions and to be put in a certain frame of mind by becoming worthy candidates.' The things said consisted not so much in a disciplina arcani as in ritual directions regarding cult symbols, liturgical forms, esoteric formulae, the annunciation of the candidate's obligation to suffer in the passion of the god, the authorized version of the cult legion, the propria signa, the propria responsa. The appeal was to the eye, the imagination and the emotions rather than to the intellect, the main purpose being to induce the initiand through the substitution of personality (by hallucination, hypnotism, or suggestion) to experience his identification with the deity."

What actually took place at the initiation ceremony itself the worshipper was not allowed to divulge, but that he played a personal part in a drama portraying the death and resurrection of the Lord of the cult is almost certain. "Thou wouldest peradventure demand, thou studious reader, what was said and done there: verily I would tell thee if it were lawful for me to tell, thou wouldest know if it were convenient for thee to hear; but both my ears and my tongue should incur the like pain of rash curiosity.....listen therefore and

believe it to be true. Thou shalt understand that I approached the confines of death, and trod the threshold of Proserpine; I was carried through all the elements, and returned again: at midnight I saw the sun brightly shine; I saw the gods infernal and the gods supernal, before whom I presented myself and worshipped before their face."<sup>1</sup>

Plutarch in the treatise "Upon the soul" speaks of "wanderings and laborious circuits and journeyings through the dark, full of misgivings where there is no consummation; then before the very end come terrors of every kind, shivers and trembling and sweat and amazement. After this a wonderful light meets the wanderer; he is admitted into pure meadow lands, where are voices and dances, and the majesty of holy sounds and sacred visions. Here the newly initiated, all rites completed, is at large." All the references, indeed, speak of passing from darkness into light, of fear giving place to joy, of seeing spectacles, and hearing things not to be uttered.

While it is true, as excavations at Eleusis and at the sites of other chapels have shown, that no elaborate stage machinery could have been used in the presentation of this drama, yet that its effect upon the initiate was great is easily under-

stood. A bandage placed over his eyes, uncertain and half-afraid of the mysterious experience about to befall him, would alone have brought him into the mental condition when even crude dramatic representation would have seemed most frightful reality. Dramatic art does not depend for its effectiveness upon elaborate stage machinery. "Fitful flashes of light skilfully manipulated impressed his eyes and his mind. The sacred emotion with which he was seized lent to images which were really puerile a most formidable appearance; the vain allurements with which he was confronted appeared to him serious dangers over which his courage triumphed. The wine which he imbibed excited his senses and disturbed his reason to the utmost pitch; he murmured his mystic formulas and they evoked before his distracted imagination divine apparitions. In his ecstasy he believed himself transported beyond the limits of the world and having issued from his trance he repeated, as did the mystic of Apuleius: 'I have transcended the boundaries of death, I have trodden the threshold of Proserpine.....'"<sup>1</sup> "Every means was used to excite the feelings. Overpowering spectacles amidst the darkness of night, seductive music, delirious dances, the impartation of

1. Cumont - "The Mysteries of Mithra."



mysterious formulae - these made a unique appeal to men and women who had prepared for the solemn experience by long courses of rigid abstinence."<sup>1</sup>

Probably the feature of the mystery cults, which is of greatest interest and round which discussion most keenly ranges, was their observance of rites which bear a resemblance to Christian Baptism and the Eucharist. The evidence concerning them is scanty and from this evidence it is difficult to deduce their exact significance; yet early Christian writers were so impressed by their similarity to the Christian rites that they traced their origin to the imitative wiles of the devil. "The question will arise, By whom is to be interpreted the sense of the passages which make for heresies? By the devil, of course, to whom pertain those wiles which pervert the truth, and who by the mystic rites of his idols, vies even with the essential portions of the sacraments of God. He too baptizes some - that is his own believers and faithful followers; he promises the putting away of sins by a laver of his own; and if my memory serves me, Mithra there (in the kingdom of Satan) sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread;....."<sup>2</sup>.

1. H.A.A. Kennedy - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.21.

2. Tertullian - "De Prescript. Haeret" c.40.

That baptism played a prominent part in the rites of these cults is also witnessed to by Clement of Alexandria.

"It is not without reason that in the mysteries current among the Greeks lustrations hold the premier place."<sup>1</sup> Apuleius records how the priest "brought me when he found the time was at hand, to the next baths, accompanied with all the religious sort, and demanding pardon of the gods, washed me and purified my body according to the custom."<sup>2</sup> At Eleusis, the worshippers cleansed themselves in the sea. The Dionysiac candidate was also cleansed in water. The Mithraeums were supplied with water and the excavated chapels of other cults reveal tanks and depressions which may well have served as baptistries.<sup>3</sup>

That water was possessed of a religious cleansing power was a view that was common to most ancient religions. A Persian defiled by touching a dead body was sprinkled with water.

Similarly among the Greeks and Romans those taking part in a funeral were cleansed by the same vehicle. The question then arises whether in the mysteries baptism was more than a symbol of cleansing. That it was nothing more is contended by Machen,<sup>4</sup> who holds that the evidence for the sacramental

<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alex. Stromateis V. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Apuleius. Metamorph. XI. c.22.

<sup>3</sup> Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.82.

<sup>4</sup> Machen - "The origin of Paul's Religion."

significance is slight. He quotes as the most interesting piece of evidence - Pap. Par. 47 (2nd century B.C.) "For you are untruthful about all things and the gods who are with you likewise, because they have cast you into great matter and we are not able to die, and if you see that we are going to be saved, then let us be baptized." Βαπτίζωμεθα, as he points out, is interpreted in a purely figurative sense, meaning "flooded" or "overwhelmed with calamities" by Moulton and Milligan,<sup>1</sup> who describe the papyrus as "illiterate" and "by no means clear", and therefore its value as proving a parallel conception in the mysteries to the view expressed by St. Paul in Romans VI, where baptism is pictured as securing for the Christian fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection, is very slight: then if it refers to the mysteries it is altogether isolated. His last statement, however, is hardly accurate. The following prayer, though later in date, would seem to connect baptism with death and a birth to a new life. "If it hath pleased you (the gods) to grant me the birth to immortality, that I after the present distress which sorely afflicts me, may gaze upon the immortal First Cause with the immortal spirit and the immortal water,

<sup>1</sup>. Moulton and Milligan - "The Vocabulary of the Greek N.T. illustrated from the papyri."

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and  
 that I through the spirit may be born again, /that in me  
 purified by sacred rite and delivered from guilt the Holy  
 Spirit may live and move.....Since this mere man born from  
 a mortal womb is this day newly begotten by thee, since by the  
 counsel of God, marvellous in goodness, he, but one of many  
 thousands, has been called to immortality, he aspires, he  
 yearns to adore thee with all the faculties that he but a man  
 possesses.....Hail to thee, Lord of Water, Founder of Earth,  
 Ruler of the Spirit! Born again I expire, in that I am being  
 exalted and as I am exalted I die: born with the birth which  
 begets life I am delivered to death and go the way, as thou  
 hast instituted, as thou has ordained and constituted the  
 sacrament."<sup>1</sup> Then the Taurobolium of Mithraism and of the  
 cult of Cybele was a baptism or sprinkling with blood whereby  
 the initiate was born again to a new life that was eternal -  
 a rite which embodied an idea strangely similar to the Chris-  
 tian conception of purification by the blood of Christ or the  
 Lamb. Again Tertullian<sup>2</sup> is quite explicit in stating that  
 heathen baptism was believed to regenerate as well as to  
 cleanse. "There is really nothing that so blinds men's minds

<sup>1</sup>. "Eine Mithrasliturgie" - Albrecht Dieterich. See also "Early Christian  
 Conception of Christ" Pfleiderer p.121.  
<sup>2</sup>. Tertullian - De Baptismo 2 and 5.



as the simplicity of divine works seen in process and their grandeur promised in the result: for example in this connection also, since with so great simplicity, without any parade or novel equipment, without any expense even, a man is lowered into water and with intervals for a few words is dipped and rises up again not much cleaner,.....and yet an incredible result in eternity is deemed to be assured. I am mistaken if the appointed ritual or hidden mysteries of idol-worship do not, on the contrary, build up for themselves the belief and influence they have, from the splendour and cost of their elaborate preparations.....But you will tell me that peoples without the slightest understanding of spiritual things attribute power to their images of gods through the same efficacy in water. For in certain mysteries, e.g. of Isis and Mithras, it is by a bath (baptism. per lavacrum) that they are initiated.....It is true that at the celebrations in honour of Apollo and those held at Eleusis, worshippers are dipped, and they have the effrontery to declare that their object is rebirth and escape from punishment for their broken oaths. Likewise among the men of old, whoever had stained himself with homicide, sought out waters of cleansing power.....When he is recognised, here also we perceive the zeal of the devil in seeking to rival the things



of God, since he too practises a baptism among his followers." This direct testimony of Tertullian is one which it is difficult to gainsay. The evidence would seem to prove that baptism in the mysteries was regarded as more than a symbol of cleansing, that it was looked upon as a regenerative rite bestowing upon the initiate the quality of immortality.

The precise significance of the sacred meals, which were a feature of the cults, is also a matter of great doubt. By means of them the worshipper entered into fellowship with the god, but opinion differs as to whether the god was looked upon as being present at the feast, or whether by means of eating the food the worshipper entered into a mystical union with the divine being. In religions of antiquity union with the god was obtained by feasting upon him in the form of a victim. In the cult of Dionysius the flesh of a bull, representing the god, was devoured raw, that the worshippers might be identified with him and participate in his being. But that this crude idea survived into the Christian era is a matter concerning which opinions differ. Dieterich, Lietzmann and Heitmüller favour the survival of the idea, but that "the evidence for the persistence of such a crude semi-physical idea of com-



munion in the later stages of the mysteries is too scanty to permit us to see in the sacramental meals of these cults the means whereby the communicant sought union with the god by partaking of him or feeding upon him."<sup>1</sup> is maintained by Angus, Kennedy, Machen and others. Reference to the sacred meal of the Cults is made by Clement of Alexandria, Firmicus Maternus and others. Firmicus records as the formula by which an initiate might gain entrance to the "interioribus partibus" of the temple, "I have eaten out of the tympanum, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have become a *μυστικός* of Attis."<sup>2</sup> The other references are no more informative concerning the character of the meal. Nor does the bas-relief which pictures the sacred meal of Mithraism shed any light upon the subject. The well-known papyri<sup>3</sup> - "Chaeremon invites you to dine at the table of the Lord Serapis, tomorrow, 15th, at nine o'clock" and "Antoninus, Ptolemaeus' son, invites you to dine with him at the table of the Lord Serapis, in the Serapeum of Claudius, on the 16th at nine o'clock" - seem to point to the belief that the god was present as the host. This is the view of

1. Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.130.
2. Firmicus Maternus "De err. prof. relig." c.XVIII.
3. Cx. Pap. 1,110. 111,523. Milligan "Greek Papyri" p.97.

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Kennedy, who, while admitting the possibility of the rite imparting new life or immortality, suggests that this is the main element in the celebration.<sup>1</sup> But there is force in the argument put forward by Morgan<sup>2</sup> that this view fails to do justice to the mystical character of the Mystery Religions - one might say to the element of mysticism which permeated the life of the Hellenistic world. That the god was looked upon as host or guest at certain of these temple meals is borne out by other references,<sup>3</sup> but that the rite was believed to possess a deeper element might be inferred from the words of Firmicus Maternus<sup>4</sup> "Wretched man! thou dost confess an evil crime. Thou hast swallowed destructive poison, and art drinking the fatal cup under the impulse of your sinful frenzy. Death follows that food always, and penalty. What you confess to have drunk binds the vital vein in death, defiles the seat of the soul, and confounds with continued evils. It is food of another sort which bestows salvation and life; it is food of another sort which restores and renders a man favourable to the Most High God; it is food of another sort which refreshes the faint, calls back the erring, raises up the

1. St. Paul and the Mystery Religions p.256 ff.  
 2. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul" p.140.  
 3. Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.128.  
 4. Firmicus Maternus "De err. prof. relig." c.XVIII.



fallen, which bestows the marks of eternal deathlessness to the dying. Seek the bread and cup of Christ that the substance of man polluted by earthly weakness may be filled with immortal food." Cumont says of the sacred meals of Mithraism, "These love feasts are evidently the ritual commemoration of the banquet which Mithra celebrated with the Sun before his ascension. From this mystical banquet and especially from the imbibing of the sacred wine, supernatural effects were expected. The liquor gave not only vigour of body and material prosperity but wisdom of mind; it communicated to the neophyte the power to combat the malignant spirits and conferred on him as on his god a glorious immortality." The general significance of the temple feasts is probably summed up by Angus with as great a degree of certainty as is possible. His view is, that they signalized the reception of the neophyte as a member of the religious guild, that they were also in some way not merely the symbol but the outward means or sacrament of union with the patron god, that as degrees of spirituality and vision would be as varied then as among Christians today, probably the average man believed that in some realistic hyper-physical sense the sacrament was an occasion on which or by means of which he entered into a fellowship with the divine life, by

which he was reborn or endowed with immortality. "In a world where it was possible for an educated Christian man like the author of the Clementine Homilies (IX.9.) to assert that 'evil spirits gain power by means of the food consecrated to them, and are introduced by your own hands into your own bodies; there they hide themselves for a long time and unite with the soul', or where a respectable Church Father (Ignat. Eph. XX) could view the Eucharist as 'the medicine of immortality, an antidote against death, and a means of everlasting life in Jesus Christ', we must hesitate to ascribe a highly spiritual or symbolic efficacy to the mystery-sacraments. Further, pagans and Christians alike observed no strict boundary lines between the physical and hyper-physical, between the symbol and the resultant or concomitant experience."<sup>1</sup>

The Mystery Religions thus all embodied the idea of redemption. The old state religions had offered deliverance from danger, sickness, disaster in war. Primitive Christianity offered deliverance on the Day of Judgment, by calling upon men to return to the moral fellowship of a truth-loving God by renouncing sin and by seeking the help of Jesus, the Christ. But the Eastern cults, in the Hellenistic age at

<sup>1</sup> Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.132.

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least, offered deliverance from the evil of life itself.

They had adopted the Greek view of matter as something that is unreal, empty, almost evil in itself, a prison-house from which man must escape. Thus their redemption was not merely from the evils that accompany life, the power of the demons, the baleful influence of the stars, but from the evil that was life itself. The redemption they offered was regeneration, a rebirth to a higher kind of life such as is enjoyed by heavenly beings set free from the evil of material conditions. They offered eternal life as a present possession. An ancient Egyptian text reads, "As truly as Osiris lives shall he live; as truly as Osiris is not dead, shall he not die; as truly as Osiris is not annihilated, shall he not be annihilated."

Plato<sup>1</sup> speaks of "those who established our mysteries" as affirming that "whosoever comes to Hades uninitiated and profane will lie in the mire: while he that has been purified and initiated shall dwell with the gods." This eternal life was gained by the experience of initiation, when the initiate conceived of himself as having died and been born again into the higher form of life. Apuleius says, "the taking of such

<sup>1</sup>. Plato. (Phaedo 69 c.).

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orders was like to a voluntary death and a difficult recovery to health; and if anywhere there were any at the point of death and at the end and limit of their life, so that they were capable to receive the dread secrets of the goddess, it was in her power by divine providence to make them as it were new born and to reduce them to the path of health." Plutarch<sup>1</sup> in his treatise "Upon the Soul" also says that the soul at the actual approach of death undergoes such an experience as those who are initiated into the mysteries, that death and initiation closely correspond, word to word, and thing to thing. From the various references it can with fairness be deduced that in the rites of initiation the worshipper conceived of himself as being united with the god, undergoing in his own person in dramatic form the passion of the god and sharing in the immortal life to which he had attained after his death. In the Egyptian cult the initiate became Osiris. Lucius after the secret rites was greeted as a God, and Prudentius<sup>2</sup> records how the same adoration was granted to him who had undergone the experience of the Taurobolium. "Nunc inquinatum talibus contagiis, tabo recentis sordidum piaculi, omnes salutant atque

<sup>1</sup> Frickard - "Selected Essays of Plutarch" p.215.  
<sup>2</sup> Prudentius, Peristeph., X. 1048.

adorant eminus." A Greek papyrus<sup>1</sup> preserves the words, "I know thee, Hermes, and thou knowest me: I am thou and thou art I." In the Compagno tablet<sup>2</sup> the neophyte is addressed, "Happy and blessed one, thou shalt be god instead of mortal." Redemption was gained by a mystical union with the god, which was in some instances conceived as identity. The piety of the cults was mystical.

There is no consensus of opinion as to how far the ethical life of man was emphasized by the cults; authoritative names can be quoted to support either view. But that this element was not altogether neglected is clear from many references. The song of the initiates in Aristophanes<sup>3</sup> runs, "For we alone have a sun <sup>a</sup>and/holy light, we who are initiated and who live toward friends and strangers in dutiful and pious fashion." Plato's<sup>4</sup> reference - "For 'the thyrsus bearers are many' as they say in the mysteries, 'but the inspired ( *βακχοί* ) are few'" - proves also that the Orphics were not unconscious of the presence of hypocrites. Apuleius records how Lucius "learned by diligent enquiry her obeisance was hard, the chastity of the priests difficult to keep, and the whole life

<sup>1</sup>Kenyon - Greek Papyri in Brit. Museum, l.p.116.  
<sup>2</sup>Harrison - Proleg. p.586.  
<sup>3</sup>Aristophanes - Frogs 454 ff.  
<sup>4</sup>Plato - Phaedo 69 c.

of them, because it is set about with many chances, to be watched and guarded very carefully." Origen<sup>1</sup> discloses some formulae which were used to warn off unworthy participants; "whosoever has clean hands and an intelligible tongue", "whosoever is holy from every defilement and whose soul is conscious of no evil", "whosoever has lived a righteous life." Some of the cults even established confessionals, at which worshippers might seek relief from the consciousness of guilt.<sup>2</sup> But while the ethical aspect of religion was not altogether neglected there is no evidence that it ever gained a place of first importance. Rites which could not wholly divest themselves of the effects of their origin in nature worship, superstitious beliefs, and the practice of magical arts, created an atmosphere in which a truly ethical and spiritual life could only with difficulty be cultivated. No doubt pious minds could find in the mysteries something to appease their religious yearnings, but that the beauty of the moral life was ever persuasively advocated in such a manner as to appeal and impress itself on the mind and heart of the ordinary worshipper who sought in the rites of religion, as in the arts of magic, an

1. Origen, con Cels. III. 59.

2. Angus - "The Mystery Religions and Christianity" p.80.

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easy blessing, is very doubtful. The message of St. Matthew 5 and 1 Cor. XIII has always occupied a central place in Christianity. There is no evidence that anything even remotely approaching this high level of spiritual life was ever taught by the priests of Isis, Adonis, Attis, or Mithras.

The friendly relation which existed in most cases between the different cults is witnessed to by the fact that a man might and was even encouraged to become a member of more cults than one. Probably his ability to do so would be governed generally by his ability to pay, though there is considerable doubt as to the amount of expense incurred by initiation. The names of slaves are frequently mentioned on the monuments, yet Apuleius, who inherited a considerable fortune from his father, after being initiated into the mysteries of Isis was compelled to sell his robe that he might meet the expense of initiation into the rites of Osiris. Perhaps the fees levied, and the expenses incurred, varied with the material prosperity of the candidate. ".....the year was ended and the goddess warned me again in my sleep to receive a new order and consecration, I marvelled greatly what it should signify and what should happen considering that I was **most** fully an initiate and sacred .

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person already. But it fortuned while I partly reasoned with myself, and partly examined the perplexity of my conscience with the priests and bishops, there came a new and marvellous thought to my mind: that is to say, that I was only religious to the goddess Isis, but not yet sacred to the religion of the great Osiris, the sovereign father of all the gods; between whom although there was a religious concord or even unity, yet there was a great difference of order and ceremony, and so I thought that I should likewise believe myself to be a minister unto Osiris.....When I saw myself thus deputed and promised unto religion, my desire was stopped by reason of poverty;..... Thereby my low estate withdrew me a great while, so that I was in much distress betwixt the victim and the knife (as the old proverb hath it), and yet I was not seldom urged and pressed on by that same god. In the end, being oftentimes stirred forward and at last commanded, and not without great trouble of mind, I was constrained to sell my poor robe for a little money; howbeit I scraped up sufficient for all my affairs..... Not very long after I was again called and admonished by the marvellous commands of the gods, which I did very little expect, to receive a third order of religion. Then I was astonished, and I pondered doubtfully in my mind, because I



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could not tell what this new vision signified, or what the intent of the celestial gods was, or how anything could remain yet lacking, seeing that twice already I had entered holy orders.....After this sort the divine majesty persuaded me in my sleep what should be to my profit. Whereupon I forgot not, nor delayed the matter at all."<sup>1</sup>

This brief description of the Mystery Religions will conclude with the quotation of a prayer addressed by Lucius to Isis, which is proof that these cults were capable of producing, or of appealing to, a religious piety of a certain order. Whatever their faults and limitations, they served in their day a useful purpose. When the Mediterranean World had outgrown belief in ancestral faiths, they supplied centres of worship to which the natural religious yearnings of man might turn. They brought comfort to men in an age that was sad, a sense of freedom in a time of oppression, and a feeling of hope in a night when no other star was shining. They pointed to a good that was not material, and to a life that was not earthly nor ephemeral. They taught men to turn to the Great Unseen for help. "O Holy and Blessed One, the perpetual comfort of mankind, who by Thy bounty and grace nourishest all the world,

and bearest a great affection to the adversities of the miserable as a loving mother, Thou takest no rest night or day, neither art Thou idle at any time in giving benefits and succouring all men as well on land and sea: Thou art she that puttest away all storms and dangers from mens lives, whereby likewise Thou dost unweave the inextricable and tangled web of fate, and appeasest the great tempests of fortune, and keepest back the harmful course of the stars. The gods supernal do honour Thee; the gods infernal have Thee in reverence; Thou makest all the earth to turn; Thou givest light to the sun; Thou governest the world; Thou treadest death underfoot. By Thy mean the stars give answer, the seasons return, the gods rejoice, the elements serve: At Thy command the winds blow, the clouds nourish the earth, the seeds prosper and the fruits grow.....but my spirit is not able to give Thee sufficient praise, my patrimony is unable to satisfy Thy sacrifices; my voice hath no power to utter that which I think of Thy majesty, no, not if I had a thousand mouths or so many tongues and were able to continue for ever. But, a pious though poor worshipper, I shall do all within my power. Thy divine countenance and most holy deity I shall guard and keep for ever

hidden in the secret place of my heart."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius. Metamorph. XI. c.25.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS.

Within comparatively recent times the attention of scholars has been greatly centred on certain striking similarities which existed between Christianity and the Eastern Cults. These observed resemblances have given rise in some quarters to theories of borrowing on the part of the former, which would ascribe vital elements of historic Christianity to the teaching of the cults. The great change - it is alleged - which the religion, which gathered round the figure of the historic Jesus, underwent within a few years of its birth - a change so great, as to alter completely the character of the religion, - is to be traced to the fact that early Christian missionaries and converts superimposed upon the simple faith of Jesus as the appointed Messiah, ways of thinking, titles, and sacramental observances which they found in the Mysteries.

There is little doubt that some scholars have gone to the extreme in their desire to find a similarity of ideas between the Eastern Religions and Christianity. Dubious references have been interpreted as though there were no doubt but that they enshrined or pointed to the same conception as we find in Christianity. Then too much is often



assumed, as though a certain similarity of idea were proof of borrowing, and not of the fact that the human mind tends often to move naturally in a certain direction. There are certain experiences, for example, which spring from the psychological conditions of man's being and will always be a feature of religion under given conditions. "Speaking with tongues" is no proof of the influence of the Cults. It is a factor of religious experience which springs from psychological causes and has often risen spontaneously. Or the celebration of a commemorative meal - and the historic founding of the Christian Eucharist by Jesus is one of the best attested incidents in the Gospel story - inevitably tends in all religions to move along similar lines. When dealing with this problem it is a safe canon of criticism to accept as proof of borrowing the existence of an idea whose origin can be explained in no other way, and even then in many cases to reserve judgment because of our incomplete knowledge of contemporary Judaism.

Yet the resemblances are so striking as to merit consideration. There is no initial difficulty in determining the manner in which Pagan worship could exert an influence on Christianity, and this is admitted by all scholars. The

spread of Christianity was due to men who as time went on were drawn in increasing numbers from the Hellenistic world, rather than to Christian teachers who were Palestinian born. These Gentile Christians or converted Hellenistic Jews must, though even/unconsciously, have been influenced by the religious atmosphere of the towns in which they lived. Even though they did not accept pagan religious ideas as true, yet these ideas and the terms in current use would be present in their minds as suggestive influences. "There is no doubt that Paul frequently employs terms which have received a more or less technical meaning in connection with the Mystery Religions .....Side by side with these terms are found far-reaching conceptions to which there are at least thought-provoking analogies in Pagan religion.....It is sheer hypothesis to ascribe to Paul any direct acquaintance with **mystery ideas** through the medium of literature. It is altogether different when we think of liturgical formulae and the technical terms of ritual in common circulation. We may grant at once that many of these would be familiar to the Apostle."<sup>1</sup> Then when Christianity made converts of men who had been initiated into the rites of the cults, it was inevitable to a certain

1. H.A.A. Kennedy - "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions", pp.117-118.

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extent that these men should in the new religion, which they had embraced, look for the same things as they had been taught to find in the old. Granted that the baptisms and the sacred meals of the cults were regarded as bestowing immortality, they would naturally expect that the similar rites which they found in Christianity would accomplish the same end. "There is nothing far-fetched in the hypothesis that many of the Pagans who were attracted to his (Paul's) preaching, many even of those who were already God-fearers had belonged to mystic brotherhoods."<sup>1</sup>

It now remains, granting the possibility of an influence from the side of Pagan religion, to turn to the resemblances which exist, and to determine if possible their depth and how far they are due to borrowing on the part of Christianity. In the following pages it is proposed to turn to certain broad features which the religions have in common rather than to the technical terms found in each. The existence of these terms in Christianity and the Cults proves nothing beyond the fact that every age has a fashionable vocabulary of its own, even in religious thought. The same term may mean vastly different things in the minds of different men. The term evolution,

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frequently heard from Christian pulpits today, does not prove that the speaker has any but a popular knowledge of the science of biology, and might indeed be used by men in half-a-dozen different senses. The term "Son of God"<sup>1</sup> on the lips of Peter at Caesarea-Philippi (according to the account in St. Matthew's Gospel) did not mean to him the same thing as it meant to the Fourth Evangelist. If it were only the matter of borrowing a few terms, that was in dispute, then there would be no cause for serious consideration. But the resemblances are more striking than that, even though they should be found to go no deeper than the surface.

Cumont points to the following features which Mithraism and Christianity had in common :-

- (1) They both possessed a rite of Baptism.
- (2) They both expected from a Lord's Supper salvation of body and soul.
- (3) They both received by a species of confirmation power to combat evil spirits.
- (4) They both held Sunday sacred.
- (5) They both possessed a categorical system of ethics that was ascetic in tone.
- (6) They both had similar conceptions of the world and the destiny of man.
- (7) They both had a heaven and hell.
- (8) They both pictured a flood at the beginning of history, a final conflagration of the universe, and a resurrection of the dead.
- (9) Mithra was a mediator equivalent to the Logos.



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Of these resemblances, numbers 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are due to the fact that the religions appeared in the same era of the world's history and consequently shared to a great extent in the same world view. Christianity derived these characteristics from Judaism. No.4 is purely the result of coincidence. The letters of St. Paul attest the fact that at a very early date Christianity adopted the first day of the week as sacred in place of the Jewish Sabbath. The reason of the change, though not clear, is related in some way to the first resurrection appearance of Christ. Nos. 1, 2, and 9 point to resemblances that merit examination.

The features of Christianity, in which the influence of the Cults is commonly affirmed to be involved, may be classified under the following heads :-

- (1) Christology. Like the cults, Christianity centres round the worship of a Divine Mediatory Being, through whom his worshippers attain to eternal life, a Saviour God, sometimes called *Kopios*.
- (2) Soteriology. (a) Salvation involves a change in man's essential being, a rebirth to a higher form of life.  
 (b) Is related to the death and resurrection of the Lord.  
 (c) Is mediated by participating in sacraments.
- (3) Type of Religious Experience. The type of piety which Jesus taught was supremely moral in tone.

Fellowship with God lay in loving obedience to, and trust in, the will of God. From an early date Christianity reached after a mystical fellowship - a communion with God deeper than that afforded by reason or the moral sense; an inward communion, the merging of man's being in the Divine, or the personal indwelling of the Divine in man as in the Christ-mysticism of St. Paul and St. John. "I in you and you in Me."

### CHRISTOLOGY.

One of the chief problems of early Christian history is to explain how men, who had known and lived in intimacy with Jesus, who had walked and talked with him as fellow-man, could be found only a short time after his death regarding Him as a Divine Being and worshipping Him as such. Much might be said in explanation of this problem, but the immediate cause which gave the initial impulse to the process of thought that was to advance to the doctrine of the Trinity, is almost certainly to be found in the fact of the Resurrection. It was the post-crucifixion experiences of the disciples which made it unnecessary, impossible, for the disciples to think of Jesus only as they had known Him on earth. They were compelled to think of Him as other than man, as a spiritual being still alive and able to reveal Himself to men. The reality of the resurrection experiences compelled them to face



the problem of the personality of Christ and His significance for men.

In the first message of the Church they would preach Jesus as the Messiah. It was the only course that was open to them. They had no other form of thought by which they might express their message. And Jesus himself had laid claim to this office, though there is reason to believe that He felt the inadequacy of the concept of thought. In a manner it was forced upon Him because it was the only one which Jewish thought offered. The determining idea in His mind was the Kingdom of God - a new age shortly to dawn in which God would reign supreme - and in the ushering in of this kingdom He felt that He had a unique office to fulfil, that He was the instrument of God. Jesus teaching consisted of more than a few ethical truths. Probably the most difficult task of all in Christian history is the elucidation of the self-consciousness of Christ, yet the disciples were following more than a wise instinct when they placed His person in the forefront of their message; they were in a manner bringing to the forefront what had always been implicit in His message.

The manner in which they preached Jesus as the Messiah or Christ - whether as a man approved by God and raised from the dead to occupy the office of Messiah, or whether as a pre-existent heavenly Being like the Apocalyptic Messiah<sup>1</sup> - is not relevant to our subject. Jewish tradition concerning the Messiah was by no means uniform nor capable of being expressed as a consistent whole; it embodied ideas that belonged to different spheres of thought, and Christian speculation would be equally fluid or many-sided. The point of interest in this matter is that nowhere is there any evidence that in Jewish thought the Messiah was regarded as Divine. A heavenly Being of the nature of an angel, yet rigidly distinguished from the supreme God, was the most that Jewish Monotheism would allow. Yet in a few years Christians, like St. Paul, were looking to Christ as men look to God. He had become, not a heavenly Being, but a Divine Being. The problem is to determine how at so early a date this change was possible.

The answer of some scholars to this question is that as the resurrection appearances could suggest to Jewish minds no more than the Messiahship of Christ, the ascribing of Divinity

<sup>1</sup> Similitudes of Enoch 48. 3-6.

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to Him was first made by Hellenistic Christians under the influence of the Eastern Cults. The evidence in this connection turns partly on the use of titles, especially the title Lord (Κυριος.).

In Christian literature we find that the title "Son of God" was used of Christ from the earliest times. It is a title derived from the Old Testament, where it implies, not the possession of the qualities of Divinity, but any close relationship to God.

- (1) In Job it is used of the angels. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them" 1.6.
- (2) It is used of judges, as being of the tribunal which declares the will of God. "How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked. I have said ye are gods (elohim אלהים) and all of you sons of the Most High: But ye shall die like men."<sup>1</sup>
- (3) It is used of individuals, particularly the king. "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." 2.Sam. 7.14., referring to Solomon. "Jehovah said unto me, This day have I begotten thee" Psalm 2.7.
- (4) It is used of the nation. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Israel is my son, my first born.'" Ex. 4.22. "When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt." Hosea 2.1.

<sup>1</sup> For this use of Elohim cf. Ex. 22.<sup>28</sup>. "Thou shalt not revile elohim, nor curse a ruler of thy people."



Then in the Wisdom of Solomon the righteous man in adversity is pictured as the "Son of God."

In the Old Testament then sonship to God means <sup>special</sup> nearness to Him, special endowments and privileges conferred by Him. A "Son of God" is one uniquely loved, chosen and endowed. While the title is not directly given to the Messiah in the Old Testament, it is possible that it was in current use in this sense, since the Messiah was the special object of God's love and favour. ("Art thou the Christ?.....Art thou the Son of God?"<sup>1</sup>). If this is so, then the application of the title to Jesus is explained. Other reasons also suggest themselves. Though Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels does not make use explicitly of the title, yet He spoke of God as His Father in a peculiar way; and in the parable of the Vineyard, Mark 12, He tells of God sending to the Jewish nation a succession of His servants, the prophets, who were rejected and slain. "He had yet one a beloved son: he sent him last saying, They will reverence my son".

The title "Son of God" was thus applied to Jesus by the Jerusalem Church. In the minds of these early Jewish Christians it would suggest at first no more than a close personal

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relationship to God. It would be interpreted in a Hebraic manner. But when used by missionaries preaching to a Gentile audience, the title would be invested by the listeners not with a Hebraic but with a Hellenistic connotation. These men would interpret the name as signifying that He had literally been begotten of God, that His relationship to the Father was metaphysical, that He was Divine in the sense that He shared in God's being. The Gentile world was familiar with the idea of sons of God in a literal sense, of beings born of divine parentage, like Hercules, or of deities like Attis or Adonis, who, while not occupying the place of supreme god, were yet truly divine and to be afforded divine worship. The ascription of the title in that age meant that the person, as in the case of "Caesar Augustus, son of God,"<sup>1</sup> was regarded as belonging to the race not of men but of gods. Was it by men, whose mental outlook had thus been strongly influenced by Gentile habits of thought, that the first step in regarding Jesus as one with God was taken? And did Christianity thus early in its history vitally change its essential character under the influence of Hellenistic religion? Was this the real reason why the Son of God of Hebrew thought - as Professor Lake expresses it - became God, the Son?

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Evidence in support of this theory is sometimes sought in the use of the title "Kyrios" as applied to Christ. Whence did Christianity derive this name, known to have been used of the Saviour gods in some of the Cults? Was it cult usage which was responsible for the changed manner in which Christians in a few years came to regard the Christ? Did the Gentile connotation follow the adoption of the title by early missionaries and converts?

The problem of the origin of the title is one on which there is no agreement. Bousset<sup>1</sup> is followed by many in his argument that the name was not ascribed to Jesus on Palestinian ground but at an early date in such Gentile cities as Antioch or Tarsus. "The substitution of the title Kyrios or Lord for the Messiah as the designation for Christ is most satisfactorily explained as due to the transference of the gospel at an early stage of its history from a Jewish to a Hellenistic environment. Gentile converts recruited from the ranks of "the Lord Serapis" and other patron divinities of the mystery-religions naturally thought of Christ not in the terms of the traditional Messianic conception current among the Jews and reflected in their Apocalyptic literature, but in terms of the conception of deity ruling among the cults which they had

Bousset - Kyrios Christos.



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abandoned."<sup>1</sup>

The question of the borrowing of the title is involved in the critical exegesis of those passages in the Synoptic Gospels where it occurs. The general consensus of opinion is that it was not used of Jesus during his life-time in Palestine. The natural mode of address would be Rabbi. "There is nothing in the Gospels proving that "Lord" was used of Jesus by his disciples during his ministry. It is characteristic of the later strata of the Synoptic tradition."<sup>2</sup> But even if this be granted, it does not follow that the name was borrowed from the cults, Caesar-worship, or any other pagan source. That it was used of Jesus at an early date is evident.

(1) Maranatha. "Come, Lord." The survival of this Aramaic formula is proof of the early use of the title Lord. Jackson and Lake are of the opinion that Jesus was first called "Maran" in Aramaic-speaking circles outside Jerusalem, that this word was translated *Κυριος* and so passed into Greek circles. But there is no valid reason to deny the possible use of "Maran" in the Jerusalem church<sup>3</sup> - as is maintained by Machen.

(2) From Gal. 1.<sup>19</sup>. it might be inferred that James was known to the Jerusalem church as "the brother of the Lord."

(3) The Baptismal confession of early Christian converts was that "Jesus is Lord."

<sup>1</sup> Fairweather - Jesus and the Greeks p.288.  
<sup>2</sup> Jackson and Lake - Prolegomena p.409.  
<sup>3</sup> Machen - The Origin of Paul's Religion.

- (4) The title is used in the first chapters of the Book of Acts, where the earliest Christian traditions concerning Christ are preserved. And from Peter's words, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ" it might be inferred that it was in current use as a Messianic title.

The name could quite easily have originated in the Jerusalem church without involving the view of the person of Christ which its use would later suggest to Gentile minds. It might at first have been used as no more than a title of respect. This indeed was its most common use in the Gentile world; the papyri prove that men used "*Κυριε* " then as a form of address, almost as frequently as we use "Sir" today. Or it may, as stated, have been in current use as a Messianic title.

The question of real importance, however, is not the source from which the title originated, but whether its use in pagan circles was responsible for the revolutionary change of manner in which Christians regarded Christ. Before passing to this, it might be remarked that only a few references survive in which *Kyrios* is used as a divine title. Paul's reference in 1 Cor. 8.<sup>5</sup>. "as there be gods many and lords many" is witness to such a usage, (and is interpreted

by Ramsay and Deissmann,<sup>1</sup> though denied by Morgan,<sup>2</sup> to be a silent protest against the growing practice of Caesar-worship). Then the title is found a few times in the papyri (Fayum and Oxyrynchus), of the Egyptian God Serapis.<sup>3</sup> "Chaeremon requests your company at dinner at the table of the Lord Serapis in the Serapeum tomorrow, the 15th, at 9 o'clock." P. Ox. 1.110. The most common title for the god of the Mystery Religions was not *Kopios*, but *Deos*.

If the early Christians looked upon Jesus as the Messiah, in a few years - for Paul's Epistles reflect a view of Christ's person which could not have been introduced by him but must already have gained a wide acceptance - their attitude towards him underwent a great change. In the Pauline Epistles, while He is still the Judge and Saviour at the Last Day, He is more to Christians than the Messiah could ever have been to Jews. He belongs to the divine plane as One to whom worship is due. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."<sup>4</sup> Prayer is offered to Him, though in general it is offered to God, the Father, through Christ. He occupies a position, in fact, and accomplishes a work, very similar to that of the gods of the Mysteries. "In general all the mystery religions assumed the

Deissmann - Light from the Ancient East, p.359.

Morgan - The Religion and Theology of Paul, p.49.

See Milligan & Moulton Vocabulary of Greek New Testament, Part IV. Phil. 2.10.

existence of a Lord who had passed through various experiences on earth, and finally been glorified and exalted. He had left behind the secret of obtaining the same reward, in the form partly of knowledge, partly of magical ceremonies. His followers knew this secret and admitted into it those whom the Lord was willing to accept. The initiated obtained protection in this world, and a blessed immortality after death. The Lord was not usually identified with the Supreme God: for instance, in Mithraism the Sun, not Mithras, was originally the Supreme God, though in the last stages of the cult the difference between the two was apparently blurred. The Christianity revealed in 1 Cor. clearly conforms to this type. It has its Lord, Jesus, who is far more than human, but is not identified with the Supreme God "The Father"; (1 Cor. 8.6.) he has suffered on earth but been glorified and exalted, and Christians who accept him in faith, and are initiated into the church by a sacrament of Baptism, obtain a share in his glory and will enjoy a blessed immortality."<sup>1</sup> These words are more or less true so far as they go, though a great deal might be said of the difference between the Lord of Christianity and the Lord of the pagan Cults. But the real question at issue is whether the advance beyond the concepts of thought, that Judaism

supplied and that were a hindrance in missionary work, was due to the mistaken ideas of Gentile or Hellenistic-Jewish converts concerning Christ's person and work, or was due to an impulse that was in Christianity from the beginning. One may frankly admit that the Hellenistic world played a part in influencing the form under which Christians pictured their Lord, but that the initial impulse in this process of transformation came from without is quite inadmissible. From the very earliest days the church had felt the inadequacy of the Messianic concept to explain Christ. In some manner He brought God near to them, was experienced after the crucifixion as a risen living Spirit, the bestower of a new strength and spiritual life. His significance could not be embraced either by national or apocalyptic ideas of the Messiah. Gentile modes of thought did not lead them to discover, or create, a new significance in Jesus, but these were embraced because they were felt to be more satisfactory vehicles of expressing the verdict of their own experience. Had it been the influence of the pagan cults that was the cause of the new light in which the church regarded Christ, one would expect that when this had been accomplished the process of interpretation would likewise have ended. But even the

Kopros idea in a few years was superceded by a greater. The divinifying process went on until Christian experience found a satisfactory expression of the Godhood of Christ in the Logos idea of philosophy.

"That the Pauline categories are for the most part derived from a source outside the Old Testament is a fact that need not disquiet us. The conception of Christ as Lord is not less but much more adequate as an interpretation of the historical reality than the primitive conception of Him as the Messiah of Apocalyptic. The advance from Jewish to Hellenistic Christianity justifies itself at the bar of history."<sup>1</sup>

### SOTERIOLOGY.

(A) Though there are a few scholars, who maintain the opposite view, there can be comparatively little doubt but that the Christian view of salvation from St. Paul onwards shows the influence of Hellenistic thought. The early Christian view of salvation was related to deliverance on the Day of Judgment; it was a blessing reserved, and enjoyed in the present only in an anticipatory manner. The Greek view of salvation was related to the imprisonment of man's



soul in a body and a world that were by nature evil; salvation was the setting free of the higher element in man from the body or flesh, that from its material composition was the root cause of the evils of life. In a short time, although Christian theologians never gave up the idea of a coming Judgment, this Greek attitude towards salvation found a place in Christian thought. The centre of emphasis shifted from the future to the present and salvation became a present condition in which the convert enjoyed freedom from an element in his being that was by nature evil. Sin was no longer, as in Jewish thought and in the teaching of Christ, a matter of the wrong relation of man's heart to God, but in some manner it was involved in the constitution of man's being. The Platonic dualism of matter and spirit is reflected in the Pauline dualism of flesh and spirit. The flesh for St. Paul is not something that is non-moral, but something that is by its very nature evil and the root cause of human sin. It cannot be redeemed. Man must be delivered from its power. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."<sup>1</sup> It is the moral opposite of the spirit. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."<sup>2</sup> Then the essential change

<sup>1</sup>. Rom. 8. 8.  
<sup>2</sup>. Gal. 5. 17.



which man's nature must undergo in the process of salvation is even more strongly emphasized in the Fourth Gospel. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that here we are in the domain of Greek rather than of Hebrew thought. The endeavour of a few scholars<sup>2</sup> to find the starting-point of St. Paul's view of the flesh in the Old Testament has hardly met with success. In the Old Testament "flesh" is frequently used as a synonym for man. "In God have I put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."<sup>3</sup> It emphasizes human frailty and mortality as against the power and eternity of God. But nowhere in Jewish thought do we find sin related to it as effect to cause. Jewish thought always assumes that sin is due to a perversion of will. The Pauline view of the flesh and of redemption undoubtedly shows the influence of Greek thought. He does not give any evidence in his Epistles that he accepted entirely the Greek view of the evil of matter, of a cosmic dualism, because his interest was practical rather than theoretical. His object was not to establish a logical system of thought but, accepting a certain view of human nature, to relate to it the facts of Christian experience in a manner that would be helpful to

St. John 3.3.

Kachen. Kennedy. St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p.155.

Psalms 56.4.



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his converts. At other times he connects sin with the fall of Adam, and at others with the agency of Satan and the demons. When, however, he connects it with man's fleshly nature, he is witness to the entrance of Greek thought into Christian thinking.

Yet this new view of salvation which Christianity adopted was fundamentally one with that which Jesus taught inasmuch as it was always related in the closest manner possible with ethical ideas. In practical religious life the will of man occupied the predominating position; the fruits of the spirit were seen in the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth. In one respect it was a great advance on the early Apocalyptic view of salvation as something future, in that it did fuller justice to Jesus view of salvation as a right relation of the heart towards God in the present. It brought to the forefront what was always implicit in Christianity, though in a manner obscured by the Apocalyptic framework of thought. In another respect it was of doubtful advantage in that it opened the door to a tendency to interpret salvation in terms of metaphysics, a tendency which has at times endangered the ethical qualities of the religion.

The step, however, was one which had to be taken. The

new religion had to adapt itself to the world it sought to evangelize. In doing so it did not merely adopt the Hellenistic view of salvation, but it christianized that view, so that the essential element in its own early teaching was wholly conserved. That the Mystery Religions played any part in this movement of thought is a view of things which hardly merits consideration. It is the influence of the general thought of the age which is reflected in the change.

(B) Salvation is related to the death and resurrection of the Lord. In the Mystery Religions the initiate attained to the new life by identification or union with the Saviour God in his death and resurrection. In the Pauline Epistles the Christian attained the same end by the same means - by union with Christ in His death and resurrection.<sup>1</sup> The analogy is striking and raises the question as to where St. Paul derived this concept of thought for which no parallel can be found in Jewish literature.

In the earliest days of Christianity the interest of converts was centred on the Parousia of Christ, expected to take place within a short time. The tremendous difference, which His sojourn on earth had made, was hardly appreciated in Christian preaching. The same is true of His Cross. It

was something which ran contrary to the traditional Messianic ideas, and would have proved Christ's claim to Messiahship false had it not been followed by the Resurrection. The Resurrection revived shattered hopes and justified the claim. But the problem of the Cross remained. Christians maintaining that Jesus was the true Messiah had to explain His death. This they did by an idea that was familiar to Judaism - that the innocent sufferings of the righteous possess an atoning virtue (Isaiah 53). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."<sup>1</sup> "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree; Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."<sup>2</sup> This atoning virtue of the passion of Christ was the only interpretation of the Cross which Jewish thought could offer: while the resurrection was regarded as the Divine seal upon His Messianic claim and perhaps the beginning of the actual taking up of the office. The death and the resurrection were not related to personal salvation. By accepting Christ as Messiah, and by repentance for their sins, men would be saved

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15.3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 5.30 f.

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on the day of Christ's return. "Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come....."<sup>1</sup> "Unto you first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the early Christians' explanation of the Cross, though not essential to their scheme of salvation, was the starting-point of the more highly developed significance attached to the death and resurrection of Christ, which we find in the Pauline Epistles. Yet the difference between the primitive and the later view is too great to be explained merely on the ground of development. The Apostle's own moral insight and spiritual discernment led him, dissatisfied with the adequacy of Jewish thought to express the experiences of his own and others' souls, to seek a more adequate method of explaining the significance of the crucified risen Christ for men. He had experienced the power of Christ in his own soul, he had seen the same miracle of transformation wrought in the lives of many of those to whom he preached the Gospel, and it must have been borne upon him that salvation was more than repentance and

Acts 3.19.

Acts 3.26.

deliverance from God's wrath on the Day of Judgment, that it was an immediate entrance into a new and higher form of life. Seeking to explain this, he says that united with Christ men participate with Him in His death and resurrection to a new life. This is a new idea in Christian thinking, though familiar to the Greek world inasmuch as it occupied a prominent place in all the cults. It was either an original contribution of the Apostle's, or else it was suggested to his mind by these pagan religions. Of the two alternatives the latter is more probable - though this view is repudiated by many.

"That in construing Christ's redemptive work the Apostle should have been in any way influenced by the crude and in part repulsive myths of a dying and rising saviour-god is unthinkable."<sup>1</sup>

The analogy however is very close and there is nothing that ought to give offence in the theory that Paul availed himself of a religious idea, which he found in the pagan world, to express the experiences of his soul. He did not use this idea because it belonged to the mysteries but because it was a more suitable vehicle for expressing the truths of his religion. To admit the analogy is not to equate. In reality, Pagan and Pauline teaching were poles apart; and Christianity was not

undergoing a change in its essential nature so as to become a mystery religion. The resemblance lies merely on the surface; the differences are fundamental.

In the first place, the drama of the death and resurrection of the Christian Lord was history, that of the Pagan Lords was the personalizing of the phenomena of nature. The one religion was founded on facts which many of the missionaries had themselves experienced, the others were founded on grotesque myths which could never fully hide their primitive origin nor enable them to rid themselves of certain repulsive characteristics. "It is a caricature to compare the story of the murder of Osiris or the self-destruction of Attis with that of the self-sacrificing death of Jesus. Nor is any real comparison possible between the New Testament view of the resurrection of Jesus and the restoration to life of these mythical divine persons. In the one case the disciples of Jesus were raised from despair to a victorious joy a few days after the crucifixion which had blighted all their hopes, by an experience of their risen Lord which, however much it may elude attempts at explanation, can never be resolved into a subjective fancy of Peter's, gradually kindling the hearts of his companions.....The return to life of Osiris and Attis is en-

bodied in grotesque myths."<sup>1</sup>

Then in the second place mystical union with Christ was in Paul's view related to faith. It was ethically conditioned and expressed itself in a new ethical life. The divine union of the cults, whereby the initiate participated in the resurrection of the god, was merely the result of magical rites, which were ethically indifferent. "There is no true analogy between the New Testament idea of a fellowship in the sufferings of Christ and that ritual sympathy with the goddesses who mourned the loss of Osiris and Attis, or with the woes of these deified beings themselves. In the former, self-sacrificing devotion which shrinks from no hardship is the core of the experience. Those who are constrained by the love of Christ dedicate their lives to his obedience. But this is not ritual. It means a new moral attitude to the world and to God.....The latter is the result of sensuous impressions more or less artificially produced. It is stimulated by the blare of exciting music, by frenzied dances, and by orgies of savage self-mutilation. It depends on an elaborate machinery of pompous processions, ascetic prescriptions, a ceremonial celebrated at dead of night."<sup>2</sup>

E.H.A.A. Kennedy - St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p.213 f.

E.H.A.A. Kennedy - St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p.214.



Then again it is well to remark that this conception of dying and rising in mystical union with Christ did not become an essential part of early Christian thinking but is peculiar to the Apostle. And even with him it is only one of the ways in which he regarded the Cross. "The truth is that the central mystery idea of dying and rising with the Redeemer is peculiar to Paul, and that it constitutes only an aspect of his thought. For the most part he works with ideas derived from the Old Testament and contemporary Judaism, or from the beliefs of the primitive church. Most of all we have to reckon with his endeavour to find adequate expression for his own Christian experience."<sup>1</sup>

It follows then that any parallel between Christianity and the cults, drawn from this common idea, points merely to a superficial resemblance that in no way affects the essential nature of the new religion. Pagan religious thought afforded St. Paul a means whereby he might express factors of human experience which he had seen to result from the preaching of the Gospel.

(C) Salvation is mediated by participating in Sacraments:-

(1) Baptism; (2) Lord's Supper.

<sup>1</sup> Scott - The First Age of Christianity, p.198.



(1) The problems involved in the origin and significance of the rite of Christian Baptism are of the most perplexing nature and admit of no certain answer. Religious purification by means of water was an idea familiar to Judaism. Mostly it was practised for the purpose of cleansing from ceremonial defilement, but in the prophets, with their spiritual conception of the soul's relation to God, there was attached to it more of a moral significance. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes" (Isaiah 1.16.). "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek. 36.25.). In later days it was part of the ceremony whereby proselytes were admitted into the Jewish Church. In the New Testament we first hear of it in connection with the work of John the Baptist, as a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Josephus, however, ascribes to the baptism of this prophet quite a different significance. "....for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for the washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not for the remission of sins but for



the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness."<sup>1</sup> But in view of the fact, that Jesus himself underwent this baptism, and that the enemies of the early church might easily have used this incident as a weapon to attack the Christian view of the sinlessness of Christ, it is fair to argue that the New Testament description of John's work is correct. Christians would never have invented this story.

In the very earliest days of the Church according to the account in the first few chapters of the Book of Acts<sup>2</sup> we find this rite being practised; though there are scholars, who find in these references the work of a redactor, and argue that the primitive Christian view opposed baptism with the Spirit to the pre-Messianic baptism with water practised by John, the Forerunner. "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."<sup>3</sup> "And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God), I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dread dreams: And on my servants and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit."<sup>4</sup> There

1. Josephus - "Antiquities of the Jews", cap.5.2.

2. Acts 2.38.

3. Acts 1.5.

4. Acts 2.17 f.

seems, however, to be no valid reason against believing that from the earliest days the Apostles, with the example of their Lord's baptism to guide them, adopted the custom which John had forced into prominence and interpreted it in the same manner, as a symbol of repentance and remission of sins. Whether Jesus himself enjoined the custom on His disciples is a question which cannot be answered with certainty. His practice was rather to condemn anything which might obscure the immediate relation of the soul to God; he decried the externalism of Judaism. And the evidence of the words attributed to Him in St. Matt. 28.<sup>19</sup> is invalidated by the use of the Trinitarian formula and by the fact that it was not until a comparatively late date that baptism was so administered. "The earthly Jesus did not establish the baptismal rite at all; it was an institution of his community." That is the judgment of Bousset;<sup>1</sup> and many scholars, who are in general more conservative and balanced in their views, are inclined on this point to agree with him. At any rate the rite was practised by His disciples from the earliest days as a baptism of repentance and forgiveness after the manner of John, or as a rite of initiation whereby Christians confessed their faith in Jesus as Messiah, on the analogy of the baptism

<sup>1</sup>. Bousset - "Jesus", p.108.



of Jewish proselytes, or perhaps with both these factors involved. To Jews the rite could hardly have been possessed of any deeper significance, as bestowing the Spirit or renewing a man's nature. This statement is supported by the evidence of the Book of Acts. Of the Cornelius incident we read, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Though there is no reference to baptism in Peter's account of this incident in Acts XI, the previous chapter can be taken as a witness to the practice of baptism as a rite of initiation. To the same effect is the account of the work of Philip in Samaria. He baptized those who believed, but it was only when Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and laid their hands on them that they received the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> Acts XIX, which assumes

<sup>1</sup>. Acts X. 44 ff.

<sup>2</sup>. Acts VIII. 12 ff.

that the gift of the Spirit is consequent on baptism, no doubt reflects the later belief of the Church. When St. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus who had not received the Holy Ghost, he immediately asked what baptism they had received, and on the administration of the rite by himself in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost came on them. This last incident reflects the manner in which the earliest view of baptism has changed in some quarters at least; the gift of the Spirit, hitherto independent, is now bound up with the administration of the rite. That this change was due in the first place to any influence from the side of Gentile thought or custom - as is often affirmed - is highly improbable. It was the practical experience of missionary life which led Christians to associate these two - Baptism and Spirit. The moment of Baptism was psychologically the most intense in the experience of the convert. The feelings involved in the turning away from the old life, the embracing of Christianity with the fulfilment of the promises held out to him, the taking of a final decision, were all condensed for the convert in the hour of his public confession of Jesus name as he was immersed in the water; and at this hour he was most likely to exhibit those psychological features, interpreted as possession by the Spirit.

When we turn to the Pauline view of Baptism, we find a subject on which verdicts greatly differ. "Can it possibly be accounted anything more than a fitting accessory to faith, as giving to it open manifestation and attesting the wish and will of its subjects to be numbered with Christian believers? These questions we are confident must be answered in the negative."<sup>1</sup> "It is very probable that the world of Christianity to which the Epistles were sent held strongly sacramental views of Baptism. It is easy to understand that such a presentment of Christian Baptism offered no obstacle but rather a great attraction to Gentile converts: it was precisely parallel to the teaching and practice to be found in the Hellenistic Mysteries in general. In them in exactly the same way the initiate was washed with water (sometimes also with blood); in exactly the same way use was made of the magic power of a name or some other formula; and in exactly the same way the result was regarded as salvation, or new birth, and was explained as due to the union of the initiate with the god. Moreover it is equally easy to understand the danger,....., of an unethical conception of sacramental grace and the constant efforts of the church to deal with this evil."<sup>2</sup> These

1. H.C. Sheldon - "The Mystery Religions and the New Testament", p.108.  
 2. K. Lake - "The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul", p.389.

two extracts represent the two extremes of judgment.

Before proceeding to consider this question it might be well to examine the place which the use of the name of Christ occupied in the rite. It is sometimes contended that a magical power was deemed in the early church to be attached to its use. "The same is true also of Baptism into the name of Jesus, only in this case the magical power of the spoken name reinforced by the sacramental purifying and invigorating power of the water, which by the invocation of the sacred name is charged, like an electric accumulator with supernatural energy....."<sup>1</sup> "The water however was insufficient in itself. It was necessary to use it in the power of the "name". The underlying conception is one common to almost every early religion. Certain beings are supposed to have power over the forces of nature and over the spiritual world.....Not only these beings themselves could use this power, but also all those who knew how to make use of their name, with which their authority was bound up. This is the origin of all magical formulae of exorcism, and it seems to me impossible to deny that the formula of Baptism belongs to the same category."<sup>2</sup>

So far from being impossible to deny the magical power alleged

1. O. Pfleiderer - "Early Christian Conception of Christ", p.117.  
2. K. Lake - "The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul", p.386.



to be involved in the use of the name in Baptism, it is impossible to adduce any evidence in support of the view expressed in these quotations. There is no doubt that in the ancient world the name often played an important part in magical rites, but it does not follow from this that it possessed a magical significance in the Christian rite of Baptism.

Anyone in possession of the true name of a spiritual being was supposed in these days also to be possessed of the powers ordinarily resident in that being on the ground that the name was not a mere label, but an essential part, the true essence, of personality. The origin of the belief has been explained in the following way :- Sound is an emanation of life. The sound emitted by a being is therefore a function of his life, and the various sounds peculiar to each are a manifestation of his "ego." If a man by his own efforts can reproduce the sound emitted by any other being, he in turn becomes possessor of that other's "ego" and can use it to his own ends. So the name of a person came to be conceived as his soul, his true being, his life as far as it has any personality, and when a man has gained the secret of another's name, he holds that other within his grasp for good or ill.



~~SECRET~~

"The affinity between the pronunciation of the name and the personality is as certain as a chemical reaction, with the same fatally necessary results, even although it is without the wish or contrary to the wish of the person who pronounces it. The attracting takes place of itself with all its inevitable consequences."<sup>1</sup> It was natural, then, that names should play an important part in exorcism, sorcery and all kinds of magical arts; and evidence of such a usage could be produced in abundance. Of more interest is the explanation given by Iamblichus<sup>2</sup> of the power attributed to names - that there is a divine substance in names and that he who possesses the secret of these is himself changed in nature, elevated to become "pure", immutable" and divine, and so united with the gods. "But the intellectual and divine symbolical character of divine similitude must be admitted to have a subsistence in names.....But in those names which we can scientifically analyze, we possess a knowledge of the whole divine essence, power and order, comprehended in the name. And further still we preserve in the soul collectively the mystic and arcane image of the gods, and through this we elevate the soul to the gods, and when elevated conjoin it as much as possible

1. Hastings - Dictionary of Bible "Names".

2. Iamblichus - "De Mysteriis". Taylor. p.291 ff.



with them."

That the use of the "name" in Baptism was founded on such a belief cannot be admitted. Somewhat of the same order is Deissmann's theory. He quotes a few examples from the New Testament of the use of the "name" as an equivalent for the person. - (Acts 1.<sup>15</sup>. Rev.3.<sup>4</sup>. XI.<sup>13</sup>.). Then he goes on to argue that it is in this sense that the baptismal formula, "ἐἰς τὸ ὄνομα", must be interpreted. "Just as, in the Inscription ( CIG. 11. No.2693), to buy into the name of God means to buy so that the article bought belongs to God, so also the idea underlying, e.g., the expressions to baptise into the name of the Lord,....., is that baptism constitutes the belonging to God or to the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> The palpable weakness in his thesis is that he shows no reason why the phrase should not be interpreted in its general and more common meaning, rather than in the specialised sense of which it is found to be possessed in a few instances. When Paul advises Christians, whatsoever they do, "to do all in the name of Jesus", he is using ἐἰς τὸ ὄνομα in a general defining sense which may well have been its use in Baptism. Then Paul often speaks of baptism ἐἰς ἡριστον without any mention of the name;

<sup>1</sup>. Deissmann - "Bible Studies", p.146.

and this fact would tend to disprove the theory that the use of the name was the aspect of the rite which was of moment.

The most probable explanation of this description of baptism as εἰς, ἐν or ἐπὶ τὸ ὄνομα of Jesus is that the phrase defined or described the rite, expressing what it involved, the confession of Jesus name as Messiah or Lord. The convert, as he was baptized, would make his confession of Jesus as Lord, and the dispenser of the rite would also as he administered his office, use the name to define what his act accomplished. "The Book of Acts speaks of Saul as having been baptized 'calling upon the name'; and it is probably the same invocation the Apostle has in view when he declares that whosoever shall call upon the name shall be saved (Acts 22.<sup>16</sup>., Rom. 10.<sup>13</sup>). And in the Epistle of James believers are warned against the rich who "blaspheme the honourable name called over you" ( τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ) (2.<sup>7</sup>). It is natural to suppose that the calling of the name here referred to is that of the dispenser of baptism."<sup>1</sup>

If this explanation of the Pauline use of the phrase "in the name of" is correct, then Baptism is still as in the early days a rite of initiation or admission into the circle

W. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul", p.203.

of those who believed that Jesus was Messiah or Lord. "For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body."<sup>1</sup> It was furthermore still possessed of a moral significance, related to a cleansing from sin. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God."<sup>2</sup> But these two aspects of the rite do not exhaust its significance for the Apostle.

His position in regard to the connection between Baptism and the Spirit is not clear. In only two passages, quoted above, does he relate them. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." "But ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God." In view of what he frequently says elsewhere about the imparting of the Spirit, it might be rash to affirm dogmatically that he limits it to the rite of Baptism, ("Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith?")<sup>3</sup>, yet that he is approximating, - perhaps has embraced, - the view which we found reflected in Acts XIX, is probable.

Then in those passages, already referred to, where he speaks of Baptism as conferring union with Christ in His death,

1. Cor. 12.13.

2. 1. Cor. 6.11.

-III-

and resurrection into a newness of life, St. Paul introduces a scheme of thought wholly new to Christianity. It is related to his larger doctrine of a mystical union with Christ. This union he explicitly states to be effected by Baptism. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."<sup>1</sup> From this Lake and other conclude, "Baptism is for St. Paul and his readers, universally and unquestioningly accepted as a mystery or sacrament which works ex opere operato."<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the Apostle looked upon the rite as something more than a symbol, but to describe it as a sacrament which works ex opere operato is to shut one's eyes to the emphasis which Paul always placed upon Faith, and to the disparaging manner in which he sometimes spoke of the rite. "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; .....For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel."<sup>3</sup> The passage in 1 Cor. (15.<sup>29</sup>.) relating to Baptism for the dead cannot be taken with certainty as proving anything, inasmuch as the Apostle's attitude to the practice is not clear. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" One might have expected a condemnation of the custom, but as

<sup>1</sup>. Gal. 3.27.

<sup>2</sup>. K. Lake - "The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul".

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 1.14. ff.

Paul was labouring to prove a different point, it may be that he is quoting to the Corinthians their own practice as proof of the inconsistency of their position, without at the same time admitting its legitimacy. Then, again, it is evident from the fact that the Apostle admitted the possibility of his own ultimate rejection that he did not view salvation as conditioned merely by a sacrament working automatically. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."<sup>1</sup> The ethical element in religion always remained for St. Paul the predominant element, conditioning all others. Whatever more was involved in his conception of dying and rising with Christ in baptism, it is obvious that it embraced the idea of oneness with Christ in his relation toward sin. But it is probably an error in the other extreme to say that this exhausts its meaning. "Even if.....the initiates in the mystic cults regarded themselves as having died with the Divine persons whose restoration to life they celebrated, it is perfectly obvious that the death of which Paul speaks is something wholly different. It is exclusively a death to sin, and its correlative is a life to holiness in the most ethical sense conceivable."<sup>2</sup> One could

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. IX. 27.

<sup>2</sup> E.A.A. Kennedy - "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions", p.228.



accept this statement without reserve were it not for the inclusion of the word, "exclusively".

One has to remember, when seeking to arrive at St. Paul's views concerning Baptism, that his conception of sin was not merely the old Jewish conception of the relation of man's heart and will towards God. Sin, for him, was involved in some manner with man's fleshly nature. The entrance into a newness of life was not therefore exclusively a matter of ethical relationship, but involved also the necessity of being set free from the earthly conditions of life. His views of Baptism reflect both these positions - the one Jewish, the other Hellenistic. Probably he never attempted to arrive at a consistent theory regarding the rite. He looked upon Baptism as effecting the change in man's essential nature, which his Hellenistic mental bias demanded. But he looked upon it supremely as a death to sin and a rising to a new life in the ethical sense which was native to Judaism and to Christianity. The fact that St. Paul is moving in two different spheres of thought is probably the explanation of the difficulty in arriving at his theory of the rite. Ethical and metaphysical concepts cannot be reconciled in the one system of thought.

It seems necessary, therefore, to admit that the early

Christian views of Baptism have undergone a radical change under the influence of Hellenistic thought. In the Fourth Gospel the influence admitted, or first revealed by Paul, has arrived at its logical conclusion in the implications of the statement that "except a man be born of water and<sup>of</sup> the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> The rite of Baptism has become a "sine qua non" of Salvation. The ethical attitude towards God may remain of supreme importance, but Baptism itself is also a necessity. When we find a Christian thinker like Tertullian writing, "Every underlying substance must catch the quality of that which is suspended over it, particularly when the former is corporeal and the latter is spiritual, as the spiritual by the fineness of its substance can easily penetrate the corporeal, and also settle in it. So the nature of the waters having been made holy from that which is holy, has itself also conceived the power to sanctify .....Therefore all waters by virtue of the old privilege belonging to their origin, obtain the mystery of sanctification after God has been invoked. For immediately the Spirit comes from heaven over them, and is above the waters sanctifying them from itself, and being thus sanctified they imbibe the power of sanctifying", we realise the dangers that were latent





in this influence from the side of Hellenism and how easily it might have so transformed the nature of Christianity as to render the charge true that it became a mystery-religion. But the task of expressing the truths of the new religion in the categories of world-thought was in the hands of men who, like St. Paul, were fully alive to what constituted the essence of the religion, and who were resolved that all other factors of religious thought must be governed and conditioned by this.

The statement, often made, that it was the mystery-cults, which were responsible for the changed manner in which the sacrament was regarded in the later church, is one which we cannot accept. It was the baptismal experiences of converts which compelled early missionaries to focus their attention on the rite, and to enlarge their view of what resulted from, and was involved in, its administration. No doubt many of the Gentile converts in cities such as Corinth, would interpret the Christian rites on the analogy of the rites of pagan religion, but it is inconceivable that men, like St. Paul or the Fourth Evangelist, should have proceeded on these lines. Missionaries were led by the practical experiences of missionary life to find a deeper significance in baptism than that

which had been in the mind of those who first administered it in the streets of Jerusalem. They were led to associate it with the gift of the Spirit. It was the supreme experience and moment in the life of the convert, when he turned from the old into new paths of belief, endeavour, confidence, hope and power. It was the hour in which salvation came to him. Therefore when the Jewish view of salvation was widened to embrace the Hellenistic view, it followed that the sacrament would also be regarded in a somewhat different light. The first step in the altering of the primitive view was due to the results observed in the administration of the rite. The second was due to the necessity of expressing the truths of Christianity in the categories of Greek thought. The influence of Plato and not of the Oriental cults, was the factor involved in the wider interpretation that soon came to be attached to the sacraments of the church.

(2) The origin of the Lord's Supper is one of the best attested incidents in New Testament history. On the night on which He was betrayed, Jesus broke bread and poured out wine, and in some manner related this solemn action to His death upon the Cross. On this there is general agreement. Did He at the same time enjoin upon His disciples the repet-

ition of this symbolic action? And what were the significances with which Christ meant to invest this sacred meal? These are questions which are not so easy to answer and concerning which opinions vastly differ.

The answer to the first question must always resolve itself into a matter of opinion. Our two earliest and independent sources differ. Over against the words of institution in 1 Cor. - "This do in remembrance of me" - we have to set the silence of St. Mark and the expectation of a speedy return of Christ. And over against our knowledge of the manner in which Christ protested against the danger inherent in things material, outward or formal coming between the soul and God, we have to set the fact that from the earliest days in Jerusalem the disciples practised this rite.

The significance of His action in the mind of Christ must necessarily be related to His own thoughts concerning His death. There were two aspects in which He viewed His Cross. The authenticity of the saying - "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"<sup>1</sup> - is beyond all reasonable doubt. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the

<sup>1</sup>. Mark X. 45.

wine are witness also to the fact that Jesus regarded His death as a sacrifice. The prophetic hope of Isaiah 53 no doubt suggested itself to Him as one way of regarding His own unmerited sufferings - that through His death the wrath of God might be turned away from those who had sinned. This however is not to be interpreted as though Jesus placed any limit to the power of the Father freely to forgive.

In the second place He related His death to the Kingdom, the establishment of which He believed to be His mission. Whether He had wrought out any theory of relationship between the two, we cannot of course tell, though it would seem from the prayer in Gethsemane that in His own mind no vital connection existed between them. Probably He accepted the Cross in faith. Believing that the ordering of events was in the hands of His Father, He concluded that if the Cross were God's will for Him, then only in that way would the Kingdom be realised.

That these two aspects of His death were present in His mind on that First - or Last - Supper, is a reasonable conclusion, and is borne out by the words that He spoke.<sup>1</sup> "This is my body which is broken for you,"<sup>2</sup> is related to the first aspect of sacrifice. "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no

<sup>1</sup>. The treatment of Morgan on the variant sources commends itself to the writer. "The Religion and Theology of Paul", pp.216 ff.

<sup>2</sup>. 1 Cor. XI.24.

more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God,"<sup>1</sup> is related to, or is a pledge of, His belief that through His death the Kingdom would be ushered in. That Jesus sought to invest his action with a deeper significance, is a view of things for which no evidence can be adduced. The crushing effect which His death would have upon the faith and hope of His disciples, was no doubt the predominant factor which inspired His symbolic action.

Whether or not Jesus commanded the disciples to observe the rite, the Book of Acts makes it plain that "they continued daily in the breaking of bread from house to house"<sup>2</sup> from the earliest times. If the practice arose spontaneously, then the recalling of His pledge would be a corroboration of their hope of His speedy return. (It was probably this hope of an immediate Parousia, which prompted them to throw their goods into a common pool, and to "continue daily with one accord in the Temple" in expectation of the fulfilment of the prophecy in Malachi. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.").<sup>3</sup>

1. Mark XIV. 25.

2. Acts 2. 46.

3. Malachi 3. 1.

There is no doubt that the Pauline Epistles reveal, that in certain Gentile churches there were Christians, who interpreted this rite of the Lord's Supper on the analogy of the rites of pagan religion. And it is the beliefs of these Christians, which justifies Professor Lake, when he writes such words as these, "It is impossible to pretend to ignore the fact that much of the controversy between Catholic and Protestant theologians has found its centre in the doctrine of the Eucharist, and the latter have appealed to primitive Christianity to support their views. From their point of view the appeal fails: the Catholic doctrine is much more nearly primitive than the Protestant. But the Catholic advocate in winning his case has proved still more: the type of doctrine, which he defends, is not only primitive but pre-Christian. Or to put the matter in the terms of another controversy, Christianity has not borrowed from the Mystery Religions, because it was always, at least in Europe, a Mystery Religion itself."<sup>1</sup>. The procedure, which he follows, in arriving at this conclusion, is one which violates every rule of good judgment. It would be as rational to base a general statement regarding the nature of Christianity today upon the idiosyncrasies of a peculiar sect, or upon the

<sup>1</sup>. K. Lake - "The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul", p.215.

hybrid, hazy and half-formed notions of a hastily-baptized convert in the foreign mission field. It is only from the opinions of St. Paul and the accredited teachers of the church, that we are justified in drawing conclusions as to the nature of Christianity in the first century. Accepting this canon, Lake disproves his own case. If St. Paul in 1 Cor. X. is warning Christians who "thought themselves safe because they had been initiated into the Christian mysteries" of the possibility of rejection, then it follows that he himself did not regard either rite as a sacrament effective ex opere operato.

The Apostle's references to the Sacrament are in 1 Cor. X and XI. From the solemn manner in which he introduces the words of institution it might be inferred that he regarded it chiefly as a feast of remembrance, calling to mind the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross; but that this does not exhaust its significance for him is evident from his other references. It is related in some manner with fellowship with Christ, and especially with Christ as crucified.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most critical passages is where Paul refers to the manna and water of the wilderness as spiritual food and drink.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that "the Lord's table", of which he goes on to speak, is in his mind, and it is safe to infer that he

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. X. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. X. ff.

regarded it too as spiritual food and drink. Christ is the food of the soul, so the rock of which they drank was Christ. "...our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.)". To infer from this that St. Paul conceives the spiritual Christ as mediated by the physical food would be rash. All that would be safe to infer is that he is investing the sacrament with a significance which it did not originally possess, probably that he is allowing in the minds of his converts and in the background of his own mind a relationship between union with Christ and the Eucharist, which he had not developed in thought.

This view is supported by the direct reference to the Sacrament which follows. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion ( $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omega\nu\iota\alpha$ ) of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?.....But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be



partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." The whole interpretation of this passage is dependent upon the meaning to be attached to *κοινωνία*. It is sometimes argued that the fellowship with Christ, or with the devils, that St. Paul here is referring to, is that which exists between the divine host and his guests, or worshippers, gathered at his table. "The communion with the demons against which he warns is described as drinking the cup of demons, partaking of the table of demons. These phrases, when viewed in the light of examples cited from papyri.....suggests that Paul regards the demons as hosts at the sacrificial meals, and communion with them is pictured by the relation of the guests to their hosts."<sup>1</sup> But we have seen that the fellowship between the mystery god and the partakers of the sacred meal was probably deeper than that embraced in mere table-companionship. We have also to remember how the ancient world believed that through the medium of food demons could enter into a man. "There were believers in Corinth who thought it no sin to frequent both tables. Such conduct is intelligible only if we suppose that they regarded the religious good offered as in both cases substantially the same, immortality, namely through

<sup>1</sup> H.A.A. Kennedy - "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions", p.272.

union with the god."<sup>1</sup> The fellowship enjoyed at the tables of the Mystery Cults was more than a table-companionship, and when we remember the strong mystical element in Paul's conception of union with Christ, it is hardly likely that the relation existing between host and guest exhausted his conception of the fellowship with Christ at the Lord's table. Kennedy is undoubtedly justified in saying that "1 Cor. X. 14 ff. affords no evidence for the notion that Paul believes in the magical communication of the glorified body of Christ to the worshipper through the medium of the bread and wine."<sup>2</sup> Paul did not seek union with the glorified body of Christ but with Christ Himself, as a living glorified personality, who by His death had been delivered from the earthly conditions of life and by His resurrection had entered into a higher form of life. It was only in union with Christ that Paul was able to live that higher life while in the flesh. It was with this conception of life, ultimately based on the implications of Greek philosophy, in his mind that he viewed the table of Christ. At the table the death of Christ was made real to him by the symbolism of the broken bread and wine. Salvation was possible only through union with the Christ who in His death

<sup>1</sup> W. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul", p.214.

<sup>2</sup> H.A.A. Kennedy - "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions", p.274.

had broken the power of the flesh. What could be more natural than that the Apostle, his interest centred on the death of Christ and his whole faith revolving round the conception of union with Christ, should believe that in some manner the worshipper entered into a real (or mystical) fellowship with Christ and especially with Christ as crucified?

It is on some such lines as these the writer thinks that we must look for the source of the development of the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist, for the genesis of the idea of the Sacrament as involving fellowship with Christ. Morgan's<sup>1</sup> judgment is that in 1 Cor. X. the Apostle is working less with his own categories than with those of his readers. Yet the mere fact that he does work with them shows that there was involved in his own thinking a line of thought not altogether out of sympathy with them. This of course does not mean that the Apostle derived his own ideas from the Cults or that he was in any way influenced by them, as is so often affirmed. That to this symbolic repetition of the death of Christ he could spontaneously relate the idea of union with the crucified Christ, is surely not beyond the bounds of possibility.

Our position, then, with regard to the Eucharist is similar to that with regard to Baptism. Christianity in

W. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul", p.226.

seeking to express itself in terms of world-thought did not surrender its essential position nor its emphasis on the ethical relationship of the soul to God, but under the influence of Greek philosophy was impelled to find in the Eucharist a new significance, which St. John expresses in the words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you.....He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."<sup>1</sup>

#### MYSTICAL TYPE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

Mysticism is one of those terms which are difficult to define. It might be described as that type of religious experience which seeks a communion with God deeper than that afforded by the intellect, the senses, or the moral life, which believes that God may be apprehended or embraced by the soul directly without the functioning of the normal powers of personal life. The soul of man is ultimately of the nature of God's being, and by withdrawing into the depths of his own soul and by ridding himself of the soul-encumbrances which earthly life involves, the mystic obtains a oneness with God, a sharing in the divine life, in which the painful sense of individuality and separation is lost. The mystical experience

is the merging of the individual soul in the world-soul, the destruction of the sense of separateness which accompanies personal existence. "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He, and He I; so that this He and this I become and are one I" (Eckhart).

The almost unanimous verdict of scholars is that there is no mystical element in the religion of the Old Testament. "The Jewish mind and character, in spite of its deeply religious bent, was alien to mysticism"<sup>1</sup>. "How are we to account for this mystical strain in the religion of Paul? That it formed no part of his Hebrew or Jewish heritage may be taken as certain."<sup>2</sup> Jewish religious faith, with its emphasis on the holiness or separateness of God, had placed so great a barrier of distance between God and the world that any idea of sharing in the life of God would have been incomprehensible to them. The communication of messages, or the execution of His will, was carried out through the agency of angels. Even when it worked with the category of the Spirit of God, operative in the world or in the soul of men, the Spirit was never regarded as effecting a fellowship with God transcending personal relations; and in the ecstasy of the early prophets was regarded

<sup>1</sup>. W.R. Inge - "Christian Mysticism", p.39.

<sup>2</sup>. W. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul," p.123.

rather as an energy which for the time being had taken possession of the prophet as its vehicle. The feature of ecstasy (which plays a prominent part in the mystical experience) was not welcomed in the sober religious life of the Hebrews, and this accounts for the avoidance by the greater prophets before the exile of the category of the spirit in relation to the communication of their own message. Their message was expressed in the terms, "The Lord God hath spoken." But to receive a communication of Divine truth either from God or through the Spirit is not any evidence of a mystical element in Jewish religion. The fellowship of God as the Hebrews conceived it was that which was obtained by obedience to God's will. "Obviously it (the mystical vein in St. Paul's religion) was derived neither from the Old Testament nor from Jewish Apocalyptic, which do not represent the ecstasy of the prophets as the climacteric of piety, or view the action of the spirit on the heart of man as being of a mystical character. It is equally clear that it cannot be traced to the teaching of Jesus, whose only norm of piety is that of faith in, obedience to, and moral affinity with God."<sup>1</sup>

In the teaching of Jesus any trace of the mystical type of piety is even more conspicuously absent. He taught, indeed,

W. Fairweather - "Jesus and the Greeks", p.348.

immediate intercourse or contact between the soul and God, dispensing with the agency of angels or intermediate spirits, but the fellowship, He held before His disciples, was not of the kind that transcends personal relations but is fully realized in the relation of a Father to His children. "Except ye become as little children". Communion with God was with Jesus an ethical thing, realized not in the hidden depths of man's being but in his heart, his moral nature, and the conscious strivings of his daily life. By prayer, love, obedience, and trust in God men enjoyed the fellowship of God. It was pre-eminently a fellowship of love and righteousness.

This aspect of the teaching of Christ is fully conserved in the teaching of Paul and of later Christianity. The bridging of the gulf of estrangement, which resulted from sin and disobedience to God, always remained in the forefront of the message of the church. But the communion established by the receiving of the Gospel in faith was closer than that which can be described in the terms of Father and child. Ethical ideas cannot encompass its meaning. It is a fellowship of ultimate being, not merely of mind or heart or will, like the inflow of a hyperphysical essence into the soul of man; only for St. Paul and his fellow-Christians this indwelling presence



was not a divine essence but the living Christ.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God....."<sup>1</sup> The unity here expressed is undoubtedly closer than that of ethical harmony. It is a mystical union, the indwelling of Christ in the depths of the Apostle's being. He also expresses this union by speaking of the believer as being "in Christ", - a phrase, which in the Epistles is possessed of more than one meaning, yet sometimes points to mystical ideas. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."<sup>2</sup> It is "in Christ" that we die to the old life, and walk in newness of life. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>3</sup> Then at other times Paul speaks of the Spirit as the indwelling presence - a thought which has for him very much the same meaning as that of the indwelling Christ.

This mystical element, which we find in St. Paul, became

Gal. 2.20.

2 Cor. 5.17.

Rom. 6.3 f.



an abiding factor in Christian thought. How are we to account for its entrance into Christianity? Was it an original creation of the Apostle's, or did it find its way in from the outside Gentile world? Though there are a few scholars who maintain the former view the balance of the evidence is greatly against them. Sometimes Paul's mysticism is traced back to his experience on the Damascus road. "Weinel aptly remarks that what he calls Paul's spirit - and Christ-mysticism can only be explained from his experience on the Damascus road."<sup>1</sup> Yet the other Apostles had their vision of the risen Lord and did not interpret their experience in a mystical manner. The story of the Ascension in the first chapter of the Book of Acts precludes the maintaining of this theory. Then mysticism was an element in the life of Christians who had never come under the influence of Paul. He assumed that it existed in the life of the Roman church. "Know ye not....?"<sup>2</sup> The view that this new element entered Christianity through the experience of St. Paul on the Damascus road cannot justify itself. "I have already mentioned that it is very probable that Paul was a mystic before Damascus.....There is only one line but it is a very jewel which shows us the pre-Christian

mystic Paul in close connection with Greek mysticism: that confession in the speech on Mar's Hill. 'In Him we live and move and have our being.'<sup>1</sup>

Mysticism entered the Christian church not through one man but through many; but as it was St. Paul who moulded the form which it was to assume in Christianity, it is of some interest to enquire whence this influence came. It is sometimes alleged that it came from the side of the Mystery Religions. There is no doubt that the mystical experience occupied a prominent place in these, assuming different forms according to the degree of spiritual perception in each initiate. Sometimes the mystic was identified with the god. "Me thought in a dream I had become Attis."<sup>2</sup> "I am thou and thou art I."<sup>3</sup> Sometimes his nature was regarded as having been made divine. Lucius after initiation was hailed thus; and the Compagno tablet runs, "Happy and blessed one, thou shalt be god instead of mortal." All the efforts they made and all the devices to which they resorted for the purpose of exciting the emotions were based on the belief that in ecstasy a mystical union was effected with the god.

Deissmann - "The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul", p.192.

W. Bousset - "Kyrios Christos", p.150.

Kenyon Greek Papyri 116 f.

To ascribe the mystical element in Paul's religion to the influence of these Cults is, however, nothing more nor less than a mere assumption, for which no proof can be given. It was a prominent feature in the general spiritual life of the Mediterranean world. It was fostered by Stoicism with its teaching on the human Logos, of the same nature as the universal or divine Logos. Philo was a mystic, finding union with God in an ecstatic experience; yet the influence which affected him came directly from Greek philosophy and not from the Cults. It is to the general religious atmosphere of the world, rather than to any one source in particular, that we must trace the influence which acted on the Apostle. Probably from his earliest days his mind was unconsciously responding to, or being affected by, the impact of his Gentile environment.

It was well for the Church that the entrance of mysticism and religious experiences of a like character into Christianity was under the guidance of one like St. Paul who had so sane a grasp of the essentials of the Faith. In adopting this feature of Gentile religious life into Christianity, he transformed it, he made it Christian. He placed "spiritual gifts" and the various phenomena of the emotional type of religion all secondary to the love that never faileth. And though he

himself could lay claim to a rare ecstatic experience,<sup>1</sup> in which he was caught up into the third heaven and heard unspeakable words, the one thing, on which he placed his emphasis as necessary for salvation, was faith. Union with Christ, salvation, was thus with the Apostle primarily an ethical thing; fellowship with the Divine was above all moral - morally conditioned and expressing itself in a new moral life. Union with God was never with St. Paul the absorption of man's being in the colourless abstraction of ultimate being. The Divine was always viewed by the Apostle in the light of Christ. Then in the second place, in union with Christ the Apostle never conceived himself to have been made divine. He nowhere says, like the mystics of the Cults, "I am Christ and Christ is I." In the "Pistis Sophia," that comes down from a Gnostic school in Egypt, Jesus is represented as saying, "I am they and they are me." Paul never identified himself with Christ. Beyond death, there is reserved for believers a spiritual body - an assurance in itself that their personal and individual life will not be lost.

Whatever be the individual judgment of men today regarding the value of the mystical experience, there is no doubt that it has become an abiding factor in religious life and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 12.1 ff.

thought. In a manner it emphasizes that aspect in Jesus teaching, that fellowship with God lies not in the obeying of the commands of an external authority, but is an inward thing, the union of mind, heart and will: good behaviour is not enough, but the relation of the heart towards God is the factor of importance. Again, it gives expression to the kinship of man's immortal nature with God's, that the Power behind the cosmos is incarnate in each human soul, that Love is One and Eternal. Again, it gives expression to the strange sense of peace, of the nearness of God, of a spiritual presence, that sometimes comes to the human soul.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that, while certain resemblances undoubtedly exist between Christianity and the Mysteries, the evidence of any direct borrowing is small. Moreover these resemblances go no deeper than the surface. In their implications and associations, ideas which bear a certain similarity in the respective religions are poles apart. Whatever Christianity borrowed from any alien source, it transformed; it infused into it the Spirit of Christ so as radically to alter its nature. It is only by grasping the outward resemblances and shutting one's eyes to the fundamental differences between them, that anyone can speak as though Christianity and the Mysteries can be placed upon the one plane of spiritual worth. "It is really more important to notice that Christianity differs from and contrasts with other religions, and it is just those differences that mark it off from them which are its most precious possession."<sup>1</sup>

In the first place these Eastern religions worshipped a Lord who was but a personified nature-power; the Christian Lord was a historic person. It is to this, their source of origin, that we may trace the failure of the cults, in spite of their willingness to borrow from Greek philosophy and to adapt themselves to new conditions, to become a force of

abiding worth in the life of the Mediterranean world. Whatever spiritual truth they had discovered was a development from the worship of the returning life-force of Spring. Such primitive worship tends to express itself in ideas, symbols, and practices, which are not elevating. The Cults never succeeded in altogether freeing themselves from these offensive elements, which were part of the heritage of the past, nor could philosophy, though it might read them as allegories or symbols of deeper truth, hide their innate coarseness. Their ritual was sometimes savage and bloody; their symbolism was crude; there was much in them that was utterly incapable of development or of fostering the true spiritual life of man. The Mysteries perished - says Cumont of Mithraism - because they were encumbered with the onerous heritage of a superannuated past, and because its liturgy and theology had retained too much of its Asiatic colouring to be accepted by the Latin spirit without repugnance. "In spite of the radiant mists of amiability which he (Plutarch) diffused over these Egyptian gods, till the old myths seem capable of every conceivable explanation, and everything a symbol of everything else, and all is beautiful and holy, the foolish and indecent old stories remain a definite and integral part of the religion, the

animals are still objects of worship and the image of Osiris stands in its original naked obscenity."<sup>1</sup>

Against this nature-origin of the Cults we must place the purity of the soil from which Christianity grew - Judaism - and the historicity of the person of its Lord. It is sometimes denied that Christianity had an advantage in the fact that Jesus was a historic person, while the Lords of the Cults were not. "The theory that Catholic Christianity succeeded because Jesus was a historic person cannot be sustained."<sup>2</sup> There is this much of truth in Lake's statement. Christianity succeeded, not because Jesus was a historic person, but because the historic person was Jesus. Yet that the Lord, in whom Christians believed, had walked the earth, died, and risen from the grave before the eyes of the men who had given their lives to the preaching of His Name, was a factor of importance in the rapid acceptance of the Christian Faith, cannot be doubted. Christians held out before men a Lord who had not lived in some distant epoch of past history but only yesterday when Pontius Pilate ruled in Jerusalem. Here was a Saviour, human, living, glowing, who in his earthly life had healed and loved, died for, and returned to those who were bearing witness, a gracious personality to whom their hearts went out and into whose hands

T.R. Glover - "The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire", p.111.  
K. Lake - "Landmarks of Early Christianity", p.77.



they need not fear to entrust their destiny. There was none who could bear such testimony of the Lords of the Cults. They lived in the primeval mists of time's beginning. In the minds of many of the inhabitants of the Roman world there must have been strong doubts whether they ever lived at all. Lake's argument, that the initiates of other cults believed that their Lords were historic persons, may have been true in some cases, but when a Christian missionary challenged comparison with the historic foundations of his Faith, the result must often have been the winning of a convert. The history of the earthly life of Christ bore all the marks of authenticity, alongside which the cult-myths appeared but silly stories. "We do not utter idle tales in declaring that God was born in form of a man. I challenge you, our detractors, to contrast your legends with our narratives.....Your legends are but idle tales."<sup>1</sup> Christians were conscious of the fact that in having a historic Person at the centre of their faith they occupied a superior position to that of their rivals. "The concentration of Christian doctrine around the character, life and teaching of a concrete and historical personality gave to it a convincing reality which all its rivals lacked."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus - "Ad Graecos" 21.

<sup>2</sup> W.R. Halliday - "The Pagan Background of Early Christianity", p.310.

Again, the Cults and Christianity differed in the manner of the appeal which they made to men. The former played upon the emotions of the worshippers, sought to excite feeling to its highest pitch, and by their alliance with magic and astrology appealed to the motives of cupidity and fear. No doubt a few of the initiates rose towards a higher level of spiritual achievement, but the general spiritual tone of the cults was low. The essential content of their message was salvation by mediatory rites. Christianity on the other hand sought to exercise a sobering influence on the emotional side of man's being. Its appeal was to the moral response of the heart. It sought to arouse conscience rather than feeling. Salvation was primarily conditioned by Faith in Christ, the surrendering of the life and heart to Him. Its message had above all an ethical content. And it condemned trafficking in magical arts.

Then in the extreme individualism, which the Cults fostered, they were at variance with Christianity. Salvation, which was the privilege of the few, brought the initiate into a closer relation with God, but not with his fellow-men. Jesus had expressed a thought, already voiced by others, the fatherhood of God in a new way, for the first time making clear and

impressing what was implied and involved in God's fatherhood. Christianity while seeking to save the individual, to reconcile him to God, at the same time impressed upon him his duty towards his fellow-men. The parable of the Good Samaritan survived in the Christian tradition. "Brothers in Christ" had a duty towards one another and towards the world for which Christ died. The Kingdom of God was a thought which could have found no echo in the shrines of Serapis or Adonis. Christianity had social implications as well as an individual blessing.

One could go on almost indefinitely multiplying the examples of the fundamental difference between the two types of religion that set out to win the Graeco-Roman world. But the conclusion at which we arrive, as to whether Christianity so altered its form in contact with the Gentile world as to become a Mystery religion, will largely be governed by our judgment on this point - the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Were the visions of the Risen Christ based on objective reality, or do they belong to the same plane as the restoration of Osiris to life, projections of a wistful human hope? Those who maintain the latter are left with a greater problem, to explain how Christianity ever came into contact with the Gentile world, the problem of the springing into existence of the Church of Christ.

CONCLUSION.

From an examination of certain of the forms in which New Testament thought is cast, it cannot for a moment be doubted that foreign influences were a potent factor in determining the direction in which Christian thinking was to develop. Throughout the pages of the New Testament we constantly meet with ideas and forms of expression for which no parallels can be found in Jewish thought, yet which bear a suggestive resemblance to elements in the religious and intellectual life of the Gentile world. Relative to some of these, the conclusion is inevitable that by Christianity, early in its career of evangelizing the world, they were borrowed. The contribution made by Greek speculative thought has long been recognized, that of Eastern Cults in providing Christianity with the *Kopios* conception is being more widely accepted, as is also that of the general religious atmosphere of the age in introducing Christianity to the mystical type of religious experience. In this process of development some aspects of the original message, which we today consider of primary importance, were to a certain extent obscured by the new form which the religion assumed; yet in almost every case the change, apart from its missionary necessity, was justified in that it made clear an element of truth that had been

inherent in the religion from the beginning, but for which Jewish thought could provide no vehicle of expression. It is by emphasizing the importance and place which these alien elements occupied in the developed religion, that the theory which views Christianity as a syncretism of the general religious thought of the first century seeks to justify itself. No doubt the entrance of these alien elements was not without its dangers and was responsible for individual misinterpretations of the essential content of the Faith. It has been responsible too for the arising within Christianity at times of dangerous tendencies which could never have arisen had the Faith remained in its Jewish form. But even the Jewish form in which it first was preached was not without its dangers, as the early chapters of Acts reveal and as is illustrated in the panicky preaching of millennialists today. The change, though not without its dangers, was justified in this - it universalized the Christian message.

Christianity cannot be described as a syncretism. There are various considerations which render this view impossible.

In the first place it is indissolubly linked with the religion of the Old Testament. Its conception of God was and remained in its fundamentals that of Jesus. His God was the

God of His fathers, of righteousness, mercy, love and truth; yet He was different from the God of the Jews in that the attributes, which they had ascribed to him, were interpreted and applied in a new and original manner. The God of Christianity was the God of the Old Testament as seen through Jesus eyes. To say that this was the conception of God that was current in the Mediterranean World, or that would have been handed down to posterity had the cult of Adonis won the place which Christianity gained, is absurd. And in many other essential aspects Christianity remained more Jewish than Hellenistic. In spite of the fact that St. Paul is sometimes said to be the second founder of Christianity, creating a new religion after the model of pagan cults, Morgan is able to say of him, "Paul's outlook is at bottom that of Jewish Apocalyptic."<sup>1</sup> To the same effect is the judgment of Ramsay. "The influence of Greek thought on Paul, though real, is all surely external. Hellenism never touches the life and essence of Paulinism which is fundamentally and absolutely Hebrew; but it does strongly affect the expression of Paul's teaching."<sup>2</sup>

In the second place the things which were borrowed from the Pagan World were not merely adopted but transformed, so as to

W. Morgan - "The Religion and Theology of Paul", p.6.

W.M. Ramsay - "The Teachings of Paul in terms of the Present Day", p.161.

acquire an altogether new meaning and content. The Logos doctrine of Stoicism is altogether different from the Logos doctrine of Christianity. The one is related to a colourless metaphysical principle, the other a living personality. The practical ethics of Stoicism bore a close resemblance to those of Christianity, but the motive by which they were inspired - in the one case love towards man and God, in the other the passionless self-regarding dictate of reason to live in harmony with the nature of the universe - constituted a tremendous difference. The *Kyrios* concept of the Mysteries was vitally altered when it was related to the historical Jesus. The mysticism of St. Paul is a Christ-mysticism, ethically conditioned and revealed. Christianity in borrowing transformed; it had within itself the creative impulse which makes old things new. "In this divinely human drama of redemption the Christian faith attained to a form of expression, which the closer its formal connection with heathen myths was only the more fitted for the conquest of heathenism. But who can fail to see that in this process the ancient forms are made the receptacle of a content essentially new, and accordingly acquire a much deeper religious import and a much purer moral significance than they ever had before."<sup>1</sup>

0. Pfleiderer - "Early Christian Conception of Christ", p.161.



Then if Christianity did not grow as an organism but by way of accretion, it is legitimate to ask why it failed to conserve all those features of pagan life and thought which we find in the various Gnostic systems. Why did the men who are said to have set out to establish a universal religion by weaving round the name of Jesus a religion that combined the floating ideas of Paganism, neglect these powerful influences in Gentile life? There is only one answer. Christians were never unconscious of the inner spirit of their religion, with which all alien elements that sought entrance must be in harmony. When these were incapable of expressing, furthering, or sustaining Christian truth and life, the door was closed against them. Christianity was conscious of its own distinctive spirit and message. "Ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

In the last place, always the dominating factor in the Christianity of any age has been the historic figure of Jesus. He Himself - His personality, His teaching, His work - is the essence of Christianity. And these three cannot be separated. Each one conditions, supplements, illumines, and explains the others. The originality of His teaching has been questioned because parallels to his individual sayings can be found else-



where; but it is only when viewed in relation to His personality and work, the supreme certainty of His consciousness of the love of God and the manner in which He lived/<sup>that</sup>consciousness in daily life, that the significance of His teaching and its originality is apprehended. So too with His personality. And His work. The Cross only takes on a meaning, when we remember that it was the Cross on which Jesus died. The Cross and Christ cannot be separated. The Resurrection only takes on a meaning because it was Jesus who rose. The Personality which has won the homage of the soul of the civilized world shines through the message and the work. It is the fact of the unity of these three that Professor Lake forgets when he denies the success of Christianity to the influence of the personality of Jesus. There is a measure of truth in these words in which he expresses his reasons. "The personality of Jesus was quite eclipsed by the supernatural value attached to him. Not the men who had known Jesus, but those who had not, converted the Roman Empire, and their Gospel was that of the Cross, Resurrection, and Parousia, not the sermon on the Mount, or an ethical interpretation of the Parables, or a moral "imitatio Christi." "<sup>1</sup>. It is true that in the Pauline Epistles, which Lake probably had in mind, little reference is

1. Lake - "Landmarks of Early Christianity", p.79.

made to the earthly life of Jesus, but to conclude from this that Christian missionaries were altogether silent on the subject is an assumption which the existence of the Synoptic Gospels forbids. Then the Epistles were written to men who had already been instructed in the Faith. The Background of the facts of Christ's life is pre-supposed. The Cross could not have called forth that warm personal devotion to Christ which the Apostle expects of His converts, had they not known something of the life and personality of Jesus. In his own mind he afforded the Cross a place of first importance, but it was the Cross on which Jesus died, and in which the life and teaching of Jesus were made plain. Then in speaking of the Risen Christ he afforded Him just those attributes which the earthly Jesus possessed - mercy, truth, self-sacrifice, the love that seeks and saves the lost. Perhaps Christianity may have lost at times something of the inspiration that comes from an appreciation of the earthly life, something of the haunting appeal of the human figure of its Lord; yet always behind and shining through the different Christological and soteriological speculations of the Church has been the personality of the historic Figure. It was the desire to translate into the language of articulate speech the significance of that Figure

for the soul of the world that prompted Christianity to avail itself of the world's thought. "Jesus lived and by his dynamic word and creative personality was, and remains the determining factor of the thoughts and destinies of countless men and women. As the throb of the engine is felt throughout the whole length and breadth of the ship, so the heart-beat of Jesus is felt within the whole of Christendom."<sup>1</sup>

The contribution that St. Paul and his fellow-missionaries brought to the life of the Graeco-Roman world and of the world today was a new spiritual power flowing from Jesus, who had lived, died, and risen.

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