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# THE PLEROMA

An Essay on the  
Origin of Christianity

By  
DR. PAUL CARUS  
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"Res ipsa, quæ nunc religio Christiana nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque Christus veniret in carnem, unde vera religio, quæ iam erat, cœpit appellari Christiana."—*St. Augustine.*



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## PREFACE.

**T**HIS little book is a mere sketch. With concise brevity it treats a great theme—the origin of Christianity — which deserves the attention of the thoughtful. The author concentrates his presentation of the case upon the main features, treating them and them only, with a considerable attention to detail; but he hopes by this limitation to the most salient points to bring clearness into a subject which has never been fully understood on account of the many bewildering side issues that surround and often obscure the main problem.

The solution here offered contains some new points of view which the author has gradually gained through his study of detached portions of this large subject, yet in all his several inquiries the results have led to the same conclusion which is here summarized.

Christianity is not the result of accident, but of necessity. There are definite causes and definite effects. Its doctrines, its ceremonies, its ethics are the product of given conditions and the result could not be different.

Yet we might say more. If local conditions had been different, some important details in the constitution of Christianity would also be different, but the essential features would after all have remained the same.

As there are remarkable parallels between Christianity and other religions, even where no historical connections can be traced, so we may be assured that even on other planets where rational beings have developed, a religion of universal love will be preached and will hold up the ideal of a divine Saviour, be he called Christ, or Buddha, or the Prophet, or the manifestation of God; and he, representing the eternal in the transient, will be to many millions a source of comfort in the tribulations of life and in the face of death. There are, as in all world-religions, certain features in Christianity which are rooted in the universal laws of cosmic existence.

The author's method is purely scientific. He does not enter into controversies as to whether or not the course of history should have been different. He has investigated the origin of Christianity as a botanist would study the growth of a tree. He does not say that the tree should be different, and still less that it should be cut down. He only knows that the tree still stands today and that many enjoy the hospitality of its shade and live upon its fruit.

CHRISTIANITY PREDETERMINED  
BY THE  
NEEDS OF THE AGE.





## CHAPTER I.

### THE GENTILE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY.

WE READ in the Epistle to the Galatians (iv., 4) that "When the fulness of the time<sup>1</sup> was come, God sent forth his Son"; and in the Epistle to the Ephesians (i. 10) we are told that "In the dispensation of the fulness of times<sup>2</sup> he might gather together in one all things<sup>3</sup> in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Such is the impression which the early Christians had of the origin of Christianity, and they were not mistaken in the main point that Christianity was a fulfilment, or, as it was called in Greek, a "pleroma," although we would add that this pleroma was neither mystical nor mysterious as they were inclined to think; it was not supernatural in a dualistic sense, but the result of natural conditions.

We propose to discuss the origin of Christianity and will point out, in a condensed and brief exposition, the main factors which combined to produce it. Christianity ushers in a new period, and its conception of life is so absolutely different from the past, that with the date of Christ's birth mankind began a new chronology. Its origin was attributed by many to a personal inter-

<sup>1</sup> πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου.

<sup>2</sup> πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν.

Literally "all things had come to a head."

ference of God with the affairs of the world, and we wish to explain how the new faith grew naturally from the preceding ages whose converging lines were gathered into a head in the figure of Christ and all that was thereby represented.

Christianity might have borne a different name and Christ might have been worshiped under another title, and yet the world-religion which originated when the converging lines of the several religious developments in the East as well as in the West were combined into a higher unity, would not and could not have become greatly different from what it actually turned out to be. Its character was in the main predetermined according to the natural law of spiritual conditions, and in this sense we say that Christianity was indeed the fulfilment of the times, the pleroma of the ages.

\* \* \*

Christianity is commonly regarded as the daughter of Judaism, and this view is taught not only in Sunday schools, but also in profane history. It is deemed an established fact that Christianity, the religion prevailing all over Europe and among the races that have sprung from the European continent, is the lineal descendant of the religion of Moses, especially of its later form, Judaism, and it is treated as a foregone conclusion that this little nation of Israel was by divine dispensation chosen to prepare the way for the appearance of Christianity. But this view is by no means correct, or, to say the least, it needs so many qualifica-

tions that its restatement would amount to a radical reversal of the theory. The traditional view seems plausible only because we have become accustomed to it, and yet we shall be compelled to grant that it is not in agreement with the facts of history. A consideration of the actual development of religious thought forces upon us conclusions which are very different.

Without denying the enormous influence which Judaism exercised on Christianity from its very start, we make bold to say that Judaism did not bear or bring forth Christianity, but that Christianity is, so to speak, a grandchild of ancient paganism, and the motherhood of Judaism is by adoption, merely. At the time of the birth of Christianity, the new faith, while still in the process of formation, was groping for some religion under whose guidance and authority it might proceed on its historical career, and Judaism appeared best fitted for the purpose. A world-religion of the character of Christianity would have originated in the same or quite a similar way, with the same or quite similar doctrines, with the same tendencies and the same ethics, the same or quite similar rituals, etc., etc., even if Judaism had not existed or had not been chosen as its mother. The spirit of Christianity was pagan from the start, not Jewish; yea, un-Jewishly pagan, it was Gentile, and it continued to retain a very strongly pronounced hostility towards everything Jewish.

The current view of the origin of Christianity would have us look upon Jesus as its founder, and that is true

in a certain sense, but not so unconditionally true as is generally assumed. Christianity is a religion which originated during the middle of the first century of the Christian era through the missionary activity of the Apostle Paul. He founded the Gentile Church upon the ruins of the ancient pagan religions, and he took his building materials, not from the storehouse of the faith of his fathers, but from the wreckage of the destroyed temples of the Gentiles.

The old creeds were no longer believed in and a new religion was developing in the minds of the people. The single myths had become discredited and the gods had ceased to be regarded as actual presences; but the world-conception which had shaped the pagan myths remained unimpaired; yea more, it had become matured by philosophy, and it could still reproduce a new formulation of them in such a shape as would be acceptable to the new generation.

We know that in the Augustan age, shortly before and after, there were several religions and religious philosophies. Almost every one of them was kin to the spirit of Christianity and contributed its share, large or small, to the constitution of the new faith that was forming itself in the Roman empire.

There was a great variety of gnostic sects, Mandæans, Ophites, Therapeutes, Manichæans, etc., at this time. The main centers were Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt. The gnostic doctrines are not Christian heresies, as Church historians would have it, but, on the



contrary, Christianity is a branch of the gnostic movement. Gnosticism antedates Christianity, but when Christianity finally got the ascendancy, it claimed a monopoly of the beliefs held in common with the gnostic sects, and repudiated all differences as aberrations from Christian truth.

The Gnostics, however, were not the only ones in the field. There were the Sethites, worshipers of the Egyptian Seth who was identified by the Jews with the Biblical Seth, the son of Adam. Further, there were the believers in Hermes Trismegistos, a Hellenized form of the Egyptian Ptah, the incarnation of the divine Word. A purified paganism was taught by stoics such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, representatives of which are Hypatia and Emperor Julian the Apostate. Kin to this idealized paganism was the school of neo-Platonism as represented by Philo, Plotinus and Porphyry. Moreover, there were not a few who revered Apollonius of Tyana as the herald of the new universal religion that was dawning on mankind.

In the second century of the Christian era, still another faith grew rapidly into prominence and promised to become the established religion of the Roman Empire. This was Mithraism, the Romanized form of the ancient faith of Persia; but at the moment when it seemed to have attained an unrivaled sway over the Roman army and its leaders, Christianity, the religion of the lowly, of the broad masses, of the common people, came to the front, and having found a powerful

leader in Constantine, wrongly surnamed the Great, it dislodged all its rivals and permanently established itself as the sole universal religion in the Roman world.

We will not investigate here the claims of these rival religions; we are satisfied to state the fact that Christianity remained victor and survived alone in the struggle for existence, because it fulfilled best the demands of the age. Whatever may be said in favor of one or another of the conquered creeds, Christianity satisfied the needs of the people better than either Mithraism or gnosticism, or a reformed paganism of any kind.

There is one point worth mentioning, however, which is this: the better we become acquainted with these several rival faiths, the more we are compelled to grant, that whatever the outcome of their competition might have been if Christianity had not carried off the palm, the religion that in such a case would have finally become recognized as the universal religion, would in all essential doctrines, in its institutions and ceremonies, have been the same as the religion of the Christian Church. No doubt it would have differed in important details, but the underlying world-conception, the philosophy of its creed, the theology of its dogmas, and above all its moral standards together with its ethical principles, would have been almost identical. These essentials were not made by one man; certainly not by Jesus, who does not even so much as hint at any of them. They are the hoary ideas and convictions which had prevailed among nations since times imme-

morial, remodeled in the shape in which they appealed to the then living generation. The old traditions of past ages, cherished in the subconscious realms of the folk-soul, constitute the foundations of Christianity, and they are pagan, not Jewish.

\* \* \*

By "pagans" we mean here the Gentiles, i. e., the nations outside of Judaism, and we ask the reader not to attach either a derogatory or eulogistic meaning to the word. In other connections we have used the word "pagans" in the sense of unprogressive people to whom the superstitions of former ages are still clinging, who, to the neglect of the spirit and significance of religious myths, dogmas, rituals, etc., cling to the letter of their symbolical expression, and through a lack of understanding seek salvation in such externalities as dogmatism and ceremonialism. In this sense we look upon men such as Socrates and Plato not as pagans, while we may very well speak of "Christian pagans" to characterize those who have not understood the meaning of Christian dogmas, but accept the letter of dogmas unthinkingly. There are not a few Christians who are ready to agree with us that Christianity is not yet fully Christianized. In the present usage "pagan" is a synonym of Gentile and means non-Jewish. We have come to the conclusion that the spirit of paganism, which is that of natural mankind, is the same as that of Christianity. The sole difference is that in Chris-

tianity many pagan traditions are fused together and constitute, on the background of Judaism, a summary of the most essential, the noblest and finest traditions of pre-Christian paganism, thus representing the matured grain garnered at the time of harvest.

In modern times the word pagan has acquired the secondary meaning of a faith that is non-European, for today when we speak of pagan we think first of Asiatics, Africans, Australians and South Sea Islanders. The reader must banish this secondary and modern sense of the word and bear in mind that at the time of the beginning of the Christian era only a few of the colored races had been heard of.

There is a tendency at the present time to extol the Asiatic at the expense of the European, and praise the savage for the sake of denouncing civilized man. Thus it has come to pass that paganism in this sense, viz., the view of the modern pagan, which means anything exotic or outlandish, is shown up for the purpose of reviling our own inheritance. These tendencies are foreign to the present discourse and I hope that none of my readers will impute any such intent to me. The paganism to which reference is made in this book, is our intellectual ancestry. The predecessors of Christian thought are men such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and in addition, the sages of Egypt as well as Babylon, Zarathushtra with incident echoes from the far East.

Further we ought to bear in mind that Christianity, in spreading over Northern Europe, incorporated not

a little of the Teutonic world conception,\* and some of us would be astonished to find the kinship of the Saxon belief in Thor with the early mediæval faith in Christ, as it is for instance, represented in *The Heliand*. Heilana

The Oriental of today is a good man who ought not to be underrated. We owe him consideration and sometimes respect. We must not be too proud to learn from him. But there is no reason to belittle our own civilization as materialistic, or to look up to the turbaned fakir as the representative of spirituality. Such extravagances will not be endorsed by the author of this book, who, when speaking of pagans, here means the pre-Christian gentiles, whose thoughts have become the constituent factors of Western civilization.

The nations of Europe, and of America, too, are the children of pagan antiquity, and we claim that they owe to it, not only their general culture, but also the essential tenets of their religion.

\* \* \*

It is often claimed that ancient paganism is monistic while Christianity is dualistic; but this is an error. Paganism appears monistic only to those modern sympathizers who assume its naturalistic naïveté to be an indication of the pagan's love of nature and of a repudiation of supernaturalism; but the ancient Greeks believed in supernaturalism as much as did the early

\*Compare "Religion of Our Ancestors" in *The Open Court*, Volume XI, Page 177.

Christians, and neo-Platonism is as dualistic as any Christian philosophy. There is only this difference, that pagan dualism is not as yet so emphatic, nor is it so ascetic as Christian dualism.

Judaism is less dualistic than either Greek paganism or Christianity; and it is certain that Christianity does not owe its dualism to the Jews, but adopted it because it was the spirit of the age. A monistic conception of religion would have had no chance of success whatever. Dualism in a well-defined form was in the air, so to speak, since Plato, and prevailed absolutely in neo-Platonism, but in the beginning of the Christian era it spread everywhere. Read Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius or other pagan philosophers, and you cannot help being impressed not only with the dualism, but even with the Christian character of their thoughts.

Students of the history of religion find enough evidence of the pagan origin of Christian ceremonies, sacraments, rites and symbols. Baptism and a eucharist seem to have been practiced by several religions, and Epictetus quotes the litany of pagan soothsayers to have been *Kyrie Eleison*, which has been adopted by the Christian Church and is sung even to-day by both Catholics and Protestants.

Monks existed in India and in Egypt, and the pagan priests of these same countries shaved their heads or wore the tonsure. The rosary is unquestionably of pagan origin, while none of these institutions are Jewish.



Among the religious tendencies worked out in the minds of the Greek people since the days of Plato, there was one which was most powerful—the idea of monotheism, and here we have the only point of contact. The Jews had become the representatives of monotheism. In acknowledging the God of the Jews as the only true God, the new faith adopted Judaism as its mother, but Judaism refused to recognize Christianity as its child, and we think rightly so. The strangest thing about it is that the aversion is mutual. The Jews looked with disdain upon the Gentiles, and the Gentiles held the Jews in contempt. In Esdras<sup>2</sup> the statement is made repeatedly that God created the world for the sake of the Jews,<sup>4</sup> and there are passages in the Talmud referring to the Christians which express the same view in a most severe form, while the innumerable persecutions which the Jews had to suffer from the hands of the Christians are facts of history.

It is true that Judaism exercised an enormous influence upon Christianity, for from the start its development took place with constant reference to the Old Testament, but the attitude of the Christian Church was always opposed to everything that was typically Jewish. The Church selected from the Hebrew Scriptures what appealed to her and interpreted their meaning in a way to suit her own purpose.

The Christians worship Jesus as the Christ, i. e., as the saviour and as the son of the only true God. The

<sup>2</sup> Esdras, vi. 55; vii. 11.

fact that Judaism was the religion of Jesus rendered the connection between Judaism and Christianity indissoluble. The God of Jesus has become the God of Christianity, and so his religion has been regarded as the root from which Christianity has sprung; but we shall see that this is an error.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE OLD PAGANISM.

**L**ET US first see what are the main features and the mode of growth of ancient paganism.

In every little state of Greece, in every province of Egypt, in every district of Asia, and so far as we can see, also in Italy,—yea even among the Teutons and barbarians of the North, we can trace stories of a God who walked on earth unknown. The stories of Thor, who visits the humble as well as the mighty, the rich and the poor, and watches them in their daily life, leaving behind him punishments for the wicked and blessings for the good, are paralleled in the tales of "Thousand and One Nights," where Harun al Rashid, the Sultan or omnipotent ruler, mixes with the people *incognito* so as to utilize his experiences for the dispensation of justice when these same individuals appeal to him as a judge in court. Similar stories are known in India and among the pagans of almost every land.

The same ideas also underlie the legends of mythological religion. In Egypt, Osiris, the god of the Nile and fertility, of agriculture and civilization, lives as a mortal man among his people and bestows his blessings on mankind. He is the inventor of religion, of science and the arts, and of moral instruction, but his enemies conspire against him, they slay him malignantly, and

he has to pass down into the land of death. The powers of evil seem to conquer the powers of good, but Osiris does not stay in the underworld. He is the first one to break the bonds of death and to reappear in the domain of life. His slayers are punished and his kingdom is restored in Hor the Avenger, his son and his divine reincarnation.

The three divinities, Osiris, Isis, and Horus, constitute the trinity worshiped in most temples of Egypt; and we know that the Egyptian puts his hope of immortality in his faith in Osiris. The transfigured dead follow Osiris in his passage through the land of death by identifying themselves with their leader, and this identification finds expression in the custom of assigning the name Osiris to each man at his death and combining it with his own name. Like Osiris they die and with Osiris they rise again to renewed life. The scrolls of religious writings which the Egyptians placed in the coffins of their dead, contain magic incantations for the preservation of the soul. Scholars have combined the several chapters into a book which is commonly called "The Book of the Dead"; but according to the Egyptian conception it ought to bear the title *Reu mu pert mem hru*, which means "Chapters of Coming Forth by Day," implying the soul's resurrection from death, which is accomplished in a similar way as the rise of Osiris, symbolized by the morning sun.

It is touching to see in hymns and prayers the simple faith of the Egyptians so much like our own, and in

spite of their numerous and gross superstitions, we learn more and more to appreciate their fervor and piety. We will call attention especially to the worship of Isis, called "Mother of God," "our Lady," "the Holy Lady," etc., terms which are literally repeated afterwards in Christianity with reference to the Virgin Mary.

We know that the religion of Babylon, of Syria, of Phœnicia and of Greece were very similar. We know that Marduk was a saviour god; we know that he died and conquered death; that he came to life again and entered his temple in festive procession; that his marriage feast with Ishtar was celebrated; and we know that the cyclical repetition of the festivals of Marduk's life constituted the Babylonian calendar, and the same is true of other countries. In both ancient Babylon and Phœnicia a kind of Good Friday as well as an Easter day were celebrated, and it is noteworthy that the resurrection of the god took place three days after his death. A similar allusion is made in the Katha Upanishad of distant India. It relates how the soul has to remain three days in "the house of death," and so we may conclude that this notion of the number three and a fraction is common to the ancient world and dates back to hoary antiquity. We may be assured that the number three and a fraction is nothing more nor less than the oldest approximation of a calculation of the circle, representing any period or cycle. It is the number  $\pi$ ,

the importance of which has been recognized even in prehistoric ages.<sup>5</sup>

In order not to lose ourselves in details, we shall refer the reader to the mention of Tammuz in the Old Testament as being wept for by the women in the temple, which indicates that even the Israelites celebrated a kind of Good Friday, a day of lamentation on which the death of the god was commemorated before the day of his resurrection which changed the gloom of the ceremony into a joyous holiday. Tammuz is the god of vegetation who dies in winter and is restored to new life in the spring.

Similar customs prevailed in Syria, where the dying god was worshiped under the name of Adonis, in whose honor little gardens of the quickly sprouting pepper-grass or cress were planted in small boxes and carried in processions.

In Tyre an analogous feast was celebrated in the name of Melkarth, which means "King, i. e., Patron of the City." Melkarth is the Phœnician Samson, and we can not doubt that in Israel, or rather in the tribe of Dan, Samson represented the same idea and his death and resurrection were commemorated in religious festivals.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>See the author's article in *The Monist*, "The Number  $\pi$  in Christian Prophecy," XVI, 415.

<sup>6</sup>For details see the author's *The Story of Samson* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1907). Note especially how it must have happened that the story of Samson's resurrection was omitted from the Biblical report and the story left in the shape in which we now have it, a torso.

The various reports of the different countries in Asia Minor indicate that the same ceremonies prevailed everywhere, even also in the North, for we must remember that the word Easter is a Teutonic word and that the festival of the goddess Ostara (compare *Ostern*, the German "Easter") has been identified with the Christian-Jewish passover on account of the many resemblances which rendered the two synonymous.

Most conspicuous is the similarity between Mithras and Christ. Although nothing is known of the death and resurrection of Mithras, there are otherwise many striking parallels, for, like Christ, Mithras is the mediator between God (Ahura Mazda) and mankind, the vicegerent of God on earth; he is the judge on the day of resurrection; he is born of a virgin and is called "Righteousness Incarnate." He is the saviour of mankind and he leads the good in their battle against the hosts of Ahriman, the evil one. It is certainly not an accident that the Mithraists celebrated a sacrament which Justin Martyr calls "the same" as the Christian Lord's Supper.

The Mithraist eucharist is apparently a pre-Christian institution, and the same or a very similar ceremony existed in the ancient Mazdaism of Zoroaster, and we are told in the sacred books of Mazdaism that the holy drink, *haoma*, and the consecrated cake, *myazda*, were taken for the purpose of nourishing the resurrection body. It seems not unlikely that the Christian "Lord's

Supper" has originated under Persian influence and that the word "mass" (Latin *missa*) is the same as the Persian *myazda*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *mazza*, the sacred unleavened bread.<sup>7</sup>

We will add one further comment upon a doctrine which has become very dear to Christians and is generally regarded as typical of the Christian faith, but which is nevertheless common to all Gentile religions, being glaringly absent in Judaism only. We refer to the doctrine of the trinity. Although the idea was obliterated in Greece and Rome during the classical period, it nevertheless existed. We know, for instance, that in ancient Rome a temple on the Capitoline Hill was devoted to the trinity of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, a triad worshiped everywhere in Etruria under the names of Tinia, Thalna and Menrva.<sup>8</sup> Other well-known trinities were taught, as in Egypt, Osiris, Isis and Horus; in Babylon, Anu, Bel and Ea; in India, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; and in Buddhism in the doctrine of the Triratna, the three gems, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Similarities between Christianity and paganism are more frequent than is commonly supposed. Prof. Lawrence H. Mills, the great authority in Zend literature,

<sup>7</sup>See the writer's article "The Food of Life and the Sacrament," Part II, *The Monist*, X, 343. *Myazda* originally signifies only the meat of the consecrated cow placed on the wafer (*draona*) but the name may easily have been extended to the whole offering.

<sup>8</sup>Compare *Encyclop. Brit.*, Vol. XX, p. 824, s. v. "Rome," where the fate of this temple is related.



has written an article entitled "Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia," but other religions as well contain ideas which have always been regarded as typically Christian. We will here mention only one more of these because it is not limited to one religion but repeats itself almost everywhere. It is the doctrine of God as the Word or the Logos which can be found in China and India, in Persia, in Greece where it is developed by neo-Platonism, and in ancient Egypt. Plutarch calls Osiris the Word<sup>9</sup> and mentions the existence of the books of Hermes which became the sacred scriptures of the worshipers of Hermes Trismegistos, also called Poimander, which presumably means "the shepherd of men," and which was a mythological figure very much like the Christ ideal of the Christians.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>*De Isi et Osiri*, Chap. LXI.

<sup>10</sup>See also the author's "Anubis, Seth and Christ" in *The Open Court*, XV, 65.

## CHAPTER III.

### PAGANISM REDIVIVUS.

**A**UGUSTINE'S saying that Christianity is not a new-fangled thing but that it existed from the beginning of mankind, is not to be taken in a general sense but must be understood literally. It reads in its original as follows :

“Res ipsa, quæ nunc religio Christiana nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque Christus veniret in carnem, unde vera religio, quæ iam erat, cœpit appellari Christiana.”

We translate literally :

“The very thing which now is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, nor was it absent in the beginning of the human race before Christ came into the flesh, since when the true religion which already existed began to be called Christian.”

We must ask the question, What constitutes Christianity in the opinion of a man like St. Augustine?

St. Augustine would presumably find no fault with the following answer :

Christianity means the belief in Christ as the son of God, the god-man, the sinless man, the saviour, the mediator between God and men, the divine teacher, the king, the hero, the ideal man, the martyr of the great cause of salvation, he who struggles for mankind,



yet succumbs to the intrigues of the enemies of justice. Christ dies on the cross and descends into hell, to the place of death and the powers of evil, but hell can not hold him. He breaks the gates of hell and thereby opens the way to life for his brother men. He is therefore regarded as the leader, the firstling,<sup>11</sup> and he who clings to Christ in faith will follow him through death to life and will partake of his glorification and bliss. Christ is now enthroned at the right hand of God whence he will return to earth as a judge of mankind at the end of the world.

What of all this is contained in Judaism? Judaism knows nothing of any of these doctrines; on the contrary it repudiates them. The idea that God should have a son would have been an unspeakable blasphemy to a Jewish rabbi of the time of Christ.

(The Jews expected a Messiah, not a saviour.) Christians have identified the two terms, but they are as heterogeneous as, e. g., a henchman is different from a physician. The Messiah was expected to restore the kingdom of David and take revenge upon the Gentiles that had oppressed the Jews. An echo of these hopes still rings through the Revelation of St. John the Divine (Revelations xii), which we shall quote further on.

It is said that the Jews did not understand the spir-

<sup>11</sup>The Christian term ἀπαρχή i. e., "firstling," translated "first fruits" in I Cor. xv. 20, sounds like an echo of a more ancient pagan expression.

itual meaning of their prophecies. Is it not but a poor makeshift to explain to them that the kingdom of Judah does not mean either their country or their nationality, but the Church, not even the Jewish Church but the Gentile Church? Bear in mind that the congregation of Jewish Christians did not last long and that the Gentile Church was as hostile to the Jews as ever Assyrian, Babylonian, Syrian or Roman conquerors had been. We might as well say that the prophecies for the restoration of Poland were fulfilled when the bulk of Poland was incorporated into Russia, and when the Czar added to his many other titles that of *Rex Poloniae*.

+ The idea of a saviour is purely pagan; it was so little Jewish that even the very word was unknown to the Jews. There is no Hebrew word to correspond to the Greek term *soter*,<sup>12</sup> the Latin *salvator*, the Zend *sao-shyant*, the German *Heiland*, the French *sauveur*, and the English *saviour*.<sup>13</sup>

In the time of Christ the inhabitants of the Roman Empire looked for a saviour who would bring back to them the blessings of the Golden Age, and when order was restored after the civil wars, Augustus was hailed

<sup>12</sup>σωτήρ.

<sup>13</sup>Compare the author's article "Christ and Christians," an inquiry into the original meaning of the terms in *The Open Court* xvii, pp. 110 ff. especially p. 115.

The Hebrew words *Yehoshua* (deliverer), *goel* (avenger), *rophi* (healer or physician), and *messiah* (the anointed one), are not exact equivalents and are never used in the sense of the Greek *soter* saviour.

in official inscriptions as this saviour. The very word *augustus* is not a name but a title. It is translated into Greek *sebastos*, which means "the lofty one," "the auspicious one," "the venerable one." It not merely possesses a political but also and mainly a religious significance and may be compared to the Buddhist term Tathagata, the Blessed One. A remarkable instance of the hope for the appearance of a saviour and the return of the Golden Age which then generally prevailed, is Virgil's fourth eclogue, written in the year 40 B. C., which has frequently been regarded by Christians as a prophecy of the advent of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

There is scarcely any Christian doctrine which can be reconciled with Judaism, either in letter or spirit. The trinity is certainly incompatible with the rigor of Jewish monotheism, and the Christian sacrament called the Lord's Supper is a horror and an abomination to any one reared in the spirit of the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> The eating of flesh and the drinking of blood, even if the act is purely symbolical (as Calvin and Zwingli interpret it to be), would have been a disgusting idea to a Jew to whom a dead body was unclean and who was forbidden to drink blood. And the Church as well as the German reformer, Martin Luther, teaches that the bread and wine of the sacrament *are* the real flesh and blood of Christ; they have been changed by a

<sup>14</sup>See "The Christ Ideal and the Golden Age" in *The Open Court* for June 1908, p. 328.

<sup>15</sup>See "Food of Life," etc., *Monist*, X, p. 376.

mystical act of transubstantiation. How is it possible that the institution of these ceremonies can have been derived from the Jews?

We know that St. Paul celebrated the Lord's Supper, and there is good reason to believe that he instituted it, and we may grant that St. Paul was a Jew. But he was born in Tarsus. He must have imbibed in his childhood and youth many pagan notions. How un-Jewish he was in his convictions appears from the fact that he regarded the Mosaic law as of mere temporary value. To be sure he believed it to be ordained by God, but having been fulfilled once he deemed it no longer binding. Think of the lack of logic in his argument that a law if but once thoroughly obeyed, may thenceforth be set aside! But his explanation suited his Gentile converts and it has been accepted without the slightest scruple by generation after generation—not among the Jews but among the Gentiles.

Parallels to the Christian conception of the eucharist can be pointed out in the sacraments of many pagan religions, but scarcely in the institutions of the synagogue. The very spirit and the mode of its celebration are absolutely un-Jewish.

PRE-CHRISTIAN GNOSTICISM  
THE BLOOM PRECEDING  
THE FRUITAGE OF CHRISTIANITY.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

WE CALL Christianity the grandchild of paganism because there is an intermediate link between Christianity and the ancient polytheistic paganism of Græco-Roman mythology. Ancient paganism represents a stage in the religious development of mankind which has become typical for all religions characterized by being limited to well-defined boundaries. These boundaries were very narrow in the beginning. There were state religions in Athens, in Sparta, in Ephesus, in Syracuse, in Rome, in the several cities of Egypt, in Tyre and Sidon, in the great centers of population in Babylonia, Assyria, Phœnicia, etc., and the mass of people in each district came little in contact with their neighbors. But as trade and commerce expanded, people of different cities became acquainted with each other and with their several religious views. The different legends were retold in foreign countries and persisted there, so far as it was possible, side by side with the native religion. We know that much confusion originated in this way; e. g., the genealogies of the gods were different in different cities, and so were the marriage relations between gods and goddesses. Thus in Greece when the different local traditions were combined and systematized, the conflicting traditions were

adjusted as well as could be done in the haphazard way in which the religious development took place. It is in this shape that Greek mythology has been preserved in the well-known poem of Hesiod, and students of classic lore are sometimes puzzled by the many contradictions.

It frequently happened that the same god or goddess was called by different names in different localities. In one country one feature was developed, and in another, others; and the legends told of them were so modified that when they were retold and compared, the several devotees no longer recognized that these figures had once been the same. So we know that Astarte, Aphrodite or Venus develops one feature of the great female divinity, while Hera, Athene and Artemis develop others. The Babylonian Ishtar combined all of them and yet the Greek worshiper saw no resemblance between Artemis and Athene. The same is true of such heroines as Danae, Andromeda, Io, and others. This state of affairs naturally tended to obscure the issues.

A similar state of confusion existed in Egypt, where we are unable to present a perfectly consistent mythology of the popular gods. The official priests in ancient On, or as the Greeks called it, Heliopolis, made an attempt to settle all disputes and to systematize Egyptian religion, but their creed does not solve all difficulties, nor does it help us to bring order into the chaos of previous times.

It is obvious that the religious development of man-



kind could not halt at this stage of a unification of the mythologies of the several nations. When the differences of nationality and language ceased to constitute dividing lines, the problem of adjustment presented itself in a renewed form, and this happened in the history of the antique world through the conquest of Asia by Alexander the Great.

On the ruins of the Persian Empire a number of Greek kingdoms were established. The old barriers that had separated the East and the West had been removed, and a new period originated in which Eastern lore became known in the West, and Western views superseded and modified the traditions of the hoary Eastern civilization. This Hellenistic period affected religion more than is commonly known, and the period from Alexander's overthrow of the Persian Empire to the time of Christ was the preparatory stage for the formation of a new religion that was destined to be the religion of the Roman Empire.

The exchange of thought that took place between the East and the West discredited the belief in the traditional gods. The old priesthood lost its hold on the people, and complaints of infidelity were heard everywhere; but the cause was not (as it was then thought) a decay, but rather an expanse of the religious spirit.

Even before the conquest of Alexander the Great we notice a strong influence of Eastern religion upon ancient Hellas which found expression not only in philosophy (e. g., Pythagoreanism) but also in re-

ligious institutions, mainly in the mysteries such as were celebrated at Eleusis and in other cities. They fascinated the Greek mind, for they taught more plainly than the ancient myths the eternal repetition of the life of nature, deriving therefrom an evidence for the immortality of the soul, the promise of which was held out to the initiates in dramatic performances and suggested through allegories. We know that ears of wheat, phallic symbols, and other emblems of regeneration played an important part in the mysteries. There were ablutions or baptisms, the lighting of torches, the blindfolding of the initiated and the removal of the veil, exhibiting a vision of deep significance; there were trials and tribulations finding their climax in a descent into the underworld, and finally a great rejoicing at the conquest of life over death.

The mysteries were celebrated in honor of Orpheus and Eurydice, or of Demeter and Persephone, or of Eros and Psyche, or of Dionysos, the liberator, entering in triumphal procession riding on an ass, and all of them proclaimed the doctrine of immortality.

In their later stages of development, the mysteries incorporated more and more a great moral earnestness, for we find purity of life and freedom from guilt demanded as the most indispensable condition for participation in the bliss that was to be gained through initiation.

The beginning of the Horatian ode *Integer vitae scelerisque purus*, which means "blameless in life and

free from guilt," is probably an echo of the religious sentiment which pervades the mysteries of ancient Greece.

To what extent the spirit of the mysteries entered into the fabric of Christianity appears from the fact that St. Paul uses their most significant terms, such as "mystery, initiate (*teletos* or *teleiotheis*), perfection or consecration, divine presence (*parousia*). The historic connection must have been very close, for we find representations of Eros and Psyche together with the Good Shepherd, and the oldest pictures of Christ in the Catacombs of Rome show him as Orpheus with lyre in hand.

We must remember that in the ancient mysteries the god (Tammuz, Adonis, Osiris, Dionysos, etc.) was the first to acquire salvation through his passion and death, and the partakers of the mysteries were initiated by witnessing the dramatic representation of his fate. We find references to this in the Epistles, as for instance (Heb. ii. 10): "For it behooved him to be initiated (*teleiosai*)<sup>1</sup> through suffering." The leader in the ceremony (*archegos*)<sup>2</sup> is here translated in the Authorized Version as "captain." In another passage Christ is said to have taken the highest degree of initiation, *teleiotheis egeneto*<sup>3</sup> (Heb. v. 9). As purity of life was made the indispensable condition of the mysteries, so in Chris-

<sup>1</sup>τελειῶσαι.

<sup>2</sup>ἀρχηγὸς.

<sup>3</sup>τελειωθείς ἀγένετο.

tianity. "Charity is the bond of our consecration" (*tes teleiotos,*<sup>4</sup> translated, "of our perfectness").<sup>5</sup> (Col. iii. 14).

All this infiltration of Oriental customs and religions into Western countries took place before the expedition of Alexander the Great. It would have continued even if Alexander had not crossed the Hellespont, but here, as in many other cases, a catastrophe hastened the historical process that was slowly preparing itself in the minds of the people.

The process of the formation of modern England is similar, and in this respect we may compare Alexander's expedition to the invasion of William the Conqueror into England. Norman words and Norman civilization had invaded the Saxon kingdom long before the Norman conquest, and might have produced by a slow and peaceful process some kind of modern English, such as we have it now. But the Norman conquest was a catastrophe in which the factors at work gained a free play by an overthrow of the retarding conservatism and thus hastened the process that was actually going on. The old Saxon England could not have remained isolated and would have modified its institutions as well as its language under the influence of continental Europe. With or without the Norman conquest, its destiny was in all main features fore-ordained and the same law of history holds good in

<sup>4</sup>τῆς τελειότητος.

<sup>5</sup>Compare also Heb. xii. 2; I Cor. ii. 6ff.

other cases, especially in the formation of the religion of Europe which we call Christianity.

When the barriers of the different countries broke down in the time of Alexander the Great, a religious movement spread during the Hellenistic period over the Mediterranean countries which received no definite name, but, in its religio-philosophical form, may best be characterized as pre-Christian gnosticism. While gnosticism is generally treated as a phase in the development of Christianity, we insist that it existed before Christianity. Its beginnings lie in the first century before Christ and it reached its maturity before Paul wrote his Epistles.

Biblical scholars have repeatedly called attention to the fact that the Epistles of St. Paul abound in the most important terms of gnostic philosophy. We will mention here only such gnostic notions as the doctrine of three bodies, the corporeal body, the psychical body and the spiritual body; the ideas of the pleroma, the fulfilment or the fulness of the time, of æons; and there are some others all of which are presupposed as known to the congregations whom the Apostle addresses. He uses these terms freely as known quantities, and nowhere deems it necessary to explain their meaning. This proves that his Epistles represent the conclusion of a prior movement, the development of gnosticism, as much as the beginning of a new one, the formation of the Church which is a definite individualization of the preceding gnosticism.

It was a natural consequence that the gnostic sects which preserved some of the original and tentative, or we may say cruder types of the movement, were repudiated as heretical, and Church historians, ignorant of the fact that they represent an older phase than Christianity, regarded them as degenerate rebels. We may well assume that some of the later gnostics were Christian heretics, i. e., they were unorthodox members of the Church, but assuredly not all, and we have reason to believe that not a few of the later gnostics such as the Manichæans had developed on independent lines religious notions that were not derived from, but were parallel to, Christianity.

One thing is sure, that the appearance of Christianity cleared the situation at once. So far the movement had developed among Jews and Gentiles around various centers with general tendencies, all verging in the same direction. The world was in a state of fermentation and the idea that the saviour had come acted like a reagent which caused the turbid ingredients to settle. To use another allegory we may say that pre-Christian gnosticism was like a liquid ready for crystallization, as for instance a cup of water chilled much below the freezing point. The walls of the vessel being smooth, the water does not crystallize, but as soon as a straw is dipped into the water a point of attachment is given around which the ice forms and the water of the whole cup freezes with great rapidity. When St. Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a definite issue

was raised which could not be ignored, and forced all gnostics to take issue with it. The hazy and vague conception of a Christ appeared here actualized in Jesus as a tangible personality which had either to be rejected or accepted.

All minds of a religious nature were full of expectancy and in the circles of Jewish gnostics the expected saviour had already been identified with the Messiah and was called Christ. The term occurs frequently in the Solomonic psalms which were sung as hymns in the synagogue of Alexandria in the first century B. C. So we see that a vague notion as to the nature of the Christ existed long before Paul had come to the conclusion that Jesus was he. In the New Testament, mention is made of an Alexandrian Jew, by name Apollos, a gnostic teacher who was well versed in expounding the scriptures and knew all about "the Lord," but he had not yet heard of Jesus. A few lines in the Acts of the Apostles (xviii, 24-25) throw a flood of light on the situation. They read thus :

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

Apollos was converted to the belief of St. Paul, as is stated in verse 26: "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had



heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The conversion of Apollos consisted simply in this, that henceforth when he expounded "the way of the Lord" he identified the Lord with Jesus, as we read in verse 28: "For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

\* \* \*

Of Gnostic sects we will mention the Zabians, the Ophites, and the Simonians, all of which are pre-Christian, although we know them mainly in later forms of their development, or from the polemical literature of Christian authors.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE Gnostic MOVEMENT.

#### MANDÆANS AND ZABIANS.

AN OLD form of gnosticism which had its home in Babylon and is still in existence, is the religion of the Mandæans who worship as their saviour a personification of the gnosis under the name Manda d'Hajjê, the Enlightenment of Life. Remnants of this sect still exist in the swamp districts of Mesopotamia and in Persian Khusistan. They claim to be Zubba, i. e., Zabiāns,<sup>6</sup> or "Baptizers," whereby they mean to establish an historical connection with the disciples of John the Baptist. Though this claim has been suspected of being invented to gain the respect and toleration of the Mohammedan authorities, it seems not improbable that the Zabian or Baptizer sect in Palestine in the first century before the Christian era must be regarded as a kindred movement among the poorer classes of the Jews, for the Zabian creed bears many resemblances to the gnosticism of the educated people of Asia Minor and Alexandria.

The great prophet of the Zabiāns in Palestine was John, surnamed "the Baptizer," or as we now say, "the Baptist." He was one of their leaders, perhaps

their chief leader, in the times of Christ, but we need not for that reason assume that he was the founder of the sect, for the Zabians counted many adherents outside of Palestine, in Samaria as well as Asia Minor, at the time when the apostles began to preach the Gospel of Jesus. They were called disciples<sup>7</sup> and were frequently referred to in the Acts of the Apostles. They celebrated the first day of the week which is dedicated to the sun, and is the same day which the Mithraists celebrated as the day of Mithras, the Lord, the Invincible One, the Sun.

In another passage, the disciples are mentioned as coming together to break bread in common, which, without doing any violence to the words, is to be interpreted as a kind of *Agape* or love-meal, one of the forms in which the Eucharist was celebrated.

From these scattered statements, we may assume that "the disciples of St. John the Baptist" is a New Testament name given to a sect, which existed at the time of Christ and probably long before John the Baptist, and had spread not only over Palestine but also over Asia Minor, and that its original home was not among the Jews but among the Babylonians.

The religion of these disciples was one of the forerunners of Christianity and it contained features which were preserved as Christian institutions, the main one of them being the sacrament of baptism.

<sup>7</sup>μαθηταί.

When we read the passages referring to John the Baptist in the Gospel, we are involuntarily under the impression that they were written to gain converts among the Zabians. No doubt that many Zabians were gained for Christianity, but large numbers kept aloof and fortified themselves against further inroads of Christian proselytism by an intense hatred which shows itself in the sacred books of the Mandæans.

In their complicated system, Manda d'Hajjê is again and again incarnated for the sake of salvation, his visible image on earth is called Hibil, and he appeared last in John the Baptist, called Yahya. This Yahya baptized Yishu M'shiha (i. e., Jesus), a false Messiah. To remedy the mistake, Anush 'Uthra, a younger brother of Hibil, came down to earth, and while Yahya was slain by the Jews, the false prophet was crucified. Then Anush 'Uthra punished the Jews by the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation.

The Mandæan religion is an extremely complicated system which in its present form bristles with polemics against Christianity and Mohammedanism, but there can be no doubt that the nucleus of this queer faith in its main tenets is derived from ancient Babylonian sources, and many of its points of resemblance to Christianity must be explained as parallel formations.

If the religious tenor of a religion is best known from the hymns which the devotees sing, we must look upon Mandæism as a Babylonian faith which had broadened by the acquisition of the knowledge of the

age as it was imported into Mesopotamia from the east, i. e., Iran and India; the extreme west, Hellas and also Asia Minor; and from the southwest, Egypt, Palestine and Syria. The foundation remained the same, the world-conception of ancient Babylon, as modified by Persian monotheism, now commonly called Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism. The prayers of the Mandæans retain the ring of the ancient Babylonian hymns.

For all we know it is not impossible that the Mandæan religion originated under Indian influence and the word *manda*, which corresponds to the Greek term *gnosis*, i. e., cognition, knowledge, or enlightenment, may be a translation of the Buddhist *bodhi*.

#### OPHITES OR NAASÆANS.

One of the strangest gnostic sects are the snake-worshipers, called Naasæans,<sup>8</sup> or in Greek Ophites, whose pre-Christian existence can scarcely be doubted and here, even the old Neander, when referring to the probability that their founder Euphrates<sup>9</sup> lived before the birth of Christ, says:

“We would thus be led to assume a pre-Christian gnosis which afterwards partly received Christian elements, partly opposed them with hostility.”

Like the Zabians, the Ophites are of pagan origin

<sup>8</sup>From the Greek *ὄφις* or the Hebrew *נָחָשׁ*. The term *nakhash* is the snake of the occultists. It is also the name of the constellation called the great serpent, or the dragon, and the Piel of the verb *nakhash* means “to practice sorcery, or to consult an oracle; to have forebodings, or receive omens.”

<sup>9</sup>*Origen, c. Cel., vi. 28.*

and incorporated traces of ancient Babylonian, Persian, Egyptian, and perhaps also of Indian notions. The snake is originally the symbol of goodness and of wholesome life, the good demon,<sup>10</sup> as we find him represented on the Abraxas gems. The snake was sacred to Hygeia, the goddess of health, and also to Æsculapius, the god of healing. We can not doubt that the brazen serpent which was erected by Moses for the healing of the people had a similar meaning, and *seraphim* in the original Hebrew means serpent-spirits.

In Christianity the snake of Paradise is identified with the principle of evil, represented in Parseeism by the dragon; and so the Christians were greatly offended at the idea of revering the snake as the symbol of divine wisdom. On the other hand the Ophites as also the Zabians regarded the Jewish God, whom they called Ialdabaoth, as the prince of this world, the creator of material existence and of evil, and they pointed out that the snake promised to Adam the boon of the gnosis, i. e., of the knowledge of good and evil, which the jealous Ialdabaoth tried to withhold from man. The Ophites distinguish between a psychical Christ and a spiritual Christ.<sup>11</sup> The former was present in Jesus at his birth, it is the lower form of mind, but the spiritual Christ descended upon Jesus in the shape of a dove at the moment of baptism, and abandoned him when the passion began. This, they claim, explains also that

<sup>10</sup> ἀγαθοδαίμων.

<sup>11</sup> ψυχικός and πνευματικός.

Christ could no longer perform miracles and, therefore, became a helpless victim of his enemies.

The Ophites criticize the God of the Jews, whom they regard as the demiurge, for his many vices which indicate the low character of his divinity, especially his pride, jealousy, envy, wrath and love of vengeance. The highest God, the God of love and mercy, he whose messenger is the snake, and whose representative is the spiritual Christ, is absolute benevolence, and he communicates himself lovingly to all things, even to the inanimate things of nature. The Ophites say, as we learn from Epiphanius (*contra Hæreses*, xxvi, c. 9) :

“When we use the things of nature as food, we draw into us the soul that is scattered in them and lift it up again to its original source.”

In quoting this passage Neander comments on the Ophites, that “thus eating and drinking became to them an act of worship.”

Further we read in one of their gospels that the Deity thus addressed those who consecrate themselves to him: “Thou art I and I am thou. Where thou art I am, and I am in all things. Thou canst gather me up wherever thou mayest desire, but when thou gatherest me up, thou gatherest up thyself.”<sup>12</sup>

The Ophite doctrines may also contain traces of Indian influence. Bodily existence is regarded as evil *per se*; and the gnosis or enlightenment, like the Buddhist *bodhi*, is the means as well as the end of salva-

<sup>12</sup>See Neander, Germ. ed., p. 246.

tion. We know their doctrines only as preserved by their Christian critics and must assume that the Ophites themselves were perhaps only superficially acquainted with the Hebrew scriptures; and their identifications of the God of the Jews with the evil deity and of the snake with the principle of wisdom would appear in a different, probably in a better light if we could fall back upon statements of their belief as formulated by themselves

#### THE RELIGION OF MANI.

How powerful the non-Christian gnosticism must have been appears from the fact that Manichæism, a doctrine that in spite of its resemblance to Christianity originated from non-Christian sources, could spread so rapidly over the Roman empire in the third century A. D., and remain a most powerful rival of Christianity down to the time of Pope Leo the Great.

Mani, the founder of this sect, was born (according to Kessler<sup>13</sup>) in the year 215-216 A. D., as the son of Futak,<sup>14</sup> a Persian nobleman of Ecbatana. He was most carefully educated and raised in the faith of the Zabis, but being of an intensely religious nature, he devoted himself to religious exercises and speculation and became a reformer. His efforts resulted in a revival that gradually developed into a new religion on the basis of the traditions from which Mani had started, and this religion, called Manichæism, is dis-

<sup>13</sup>*Genesis des Manichæischen Religionsystems.*

<sup>14</sup>The Greeks call him Πατέριος.



tinguished not only by devotion and earnestness but also by the most rigorous asceticism which is but the moral application of a dualistic world-conception. What interests us here in the Manichæan movement, is the great similarity it bears to the dualistic and ascetic tendencies of Christianity which continued to influence the Church down to the time of the Reformation. Though Manichæism belongs to the Christian era, it is not a Christian sect; it has acquired its similarities to Christianity from other sources; it is a development of impulses which started in ancient Babylon and its relation to Christianity is more an attitude of hostility based mainly upon rivalry and intensified by competition.

Harnack<sup>15</sup> says, "Manichæism did not originate on Christian ground. . . . It is Kessler's merit to have shown that the ancient Babylonian religion, the original source of all the gnosis of Western Asia, was the basis of the Manichæan system."

If Manichæism had not come in contact with Christianity it would in all main points have been the same religion, and so we are justified in looking upon the Manichæan movement as a strand of religious tendencies which represents a parallel formation to Christianity and which will therefore help us to understand the general drift of the age.

<sup>15</sup>See *Enc. Brit.*, s. v. "Manichæism," Vol. XV, p. 485.



## CHAPTER VI.

### KINDRED SECTS IN PALESTINE AND EGYPT.

#### THE SIMONIANS.

SAMARIA seems to have been a hot-bed of religious commotion, for we know that several prophets arose there at the time of Christ who claimed to be Messiahs of Israel and incarnations of God. They are Simon Magus, Dositheus, Cleobolus, and Menander, the first having been the most successful among them,<sup>16</sup> for the sect which he founded spread beyond the boundaries of Samaria and was still flourishing in the second century.

Simon Magus was a gnostic who, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, came in contact with the disciples of Jesus, especially Philip and Peter. The very existence of Simon Magus in the forties of the first century, his claims and doctrines, prove that gnosticism antedates Christianity, for even before St. Paul's conversion, it was a powerful movement while the Christian Church was still in its infancy.

We read in Acts viii, 9-10:

“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave

<sup>16</sup>Eusebius. S. E. N., 22.

heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God."

"The great power of God," is a gnostic expression and the original reads literally, "This one is the Power of God, the so-called Great One,"<sup>17</sup> which indicates that we have to deal here with a technical term.

We know of the Simonians who worshiped Simon Magus as God incarnate, through Justin Martyr,<sup>18</sup> Clement, Irenæus, Hyppolytus and Origen, also through Celsus as preserved by Origen.

Their doctrine must have been very similar to the Christian faith and it is a strange fact that they taught a trinity long before the Christian Church adopted or even began to discuss this conception of God. The founder of the Simonians continued to live in Christian legend as a kind of Antichrist, and the supernatural power with which the faith of his adherents had endowed him, was changed to a charge of sorcery and black magic.

#### THERAPEUTES, ESSENES, NAZARENES, AND EBIONITES.

There are other unquestionably pre-Christian religious movements which are inspired by the spirit of gnosticism. In his *De vita contemplativa*, Philo

<sup>17</sup>Οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ Δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ καλουμένη Μεγάλη.

<sup>18</sup>Justin Martyr wrote a book on Simon Magus entitled *Synagma*, which, unfortunately, is lost, but he refers to him frequently in his other writings, and the main contents of the *Synagma* have been preserved by Irenæus.

tells us of the Therapeutes in Egypt who led a life of holiness, religious contemplation and divine worship, anticipating so much that is commonly regarded as Christian, that the date and the authority of the book and even the genuineness of his reports have been questioned by Eusebius who discusses the problem at length in his *Ecclesiastical History* (II, ch. 17), and by others who accept his arguments. But it is difficult to discover a motive for such an intentional falsification of history, and after all the opinion of Eusebius rests upon a very weak foundation, namely the assumption that Christian ideas, and with them the aspiration for leading a life of holiness in the fashion of monks, can not have antedated the Christian era. Yet this is exactly the point which has to be conceded. Even if the evidence of the existence of a pre-Christian gnosis which originated in Mesopotamia and spread to Asia Minor and Egypt and thence over the whole Roman Empire counted for nothing, we have still the Scriptural evidence that Christianity has developed from the Zabanian movement, that Jesus was baptized by the leader of the Zabanians in Palestine, and that Christ was a Nazarene. In fact the Jerusalemite Christians continued to be called Nazarenes even after the death of Christ.

When St. Paul visits Jerusalem and creates a disturbance he is accused before Felix, the governor, in these words: "For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the

Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”

It is absolutely excluded that Nazarenes can mean men born in Nazareth; the word must be the name of a sect of which Jesus was a member, a sect which, after the destruction of Jerusalem, had its headquarters at Pella and which is mentioned by Epiphanius (*Pau.* xxx, 7) and Jerome (*Epistle* 72, addressed to Augustine).

The Essene communities constitute another unequivocally pre-Christian sect with tendencies similar to the Nazarenes. The two sects are so much alike that there is some reason to believe that they are identical, but it will be difficult to bring proof for this contention.

The Essenes are mentioned by Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* ii, 8 and *Antiq.* xviii. 1, 5), by Philo (in his *Quod omnis probus liber*), by Eusebius (*Pr. Ev.* viii, II) who quotes from a lost book of Philo's, and by Pliny (in his *Hist. Nat.* v. 17). They date back to the second century B. C., and Josephus himself joined their community for a while.

The meaning of the name is unknown and need not concern us now. Our main purpose is to point out their kinship to the gnostic movement which is indicated by their religious seriousness, the similarity of their views to Persian and Babylonian doctrines, and the ascetic tendency of their moral teachings.

The Ebionites, i. e., the sect of "the poor," may have been a name for the Nazarenes, for it is probable that Jesus referred to them whenever he spoke of "the poor." We know that the Nazarenes were communists who required those who joined their ranks to deliver all their property to the authorized leaders of the sect. In the Acts we are told the grewsome story of Ananias and Sapphira who, having kept back part of the money they had received for the sale of their property, fell dead before the feet of St. Peter. If the Ebionites are indeed the Nazarenes we might interpret the proposition of Jesus to the young rich man, "Sell all thou hast and distribute unto the poor," as an invitation to join the congregation of the Nazarenes.

Wherever we turn, we find that tendencies and movements animated by the spirit of gnosticism existed at the beginning of the Christian era, and that even the New Testament presupposes their existence in Palestine, for Christianity itself is stated to have developed from the local gnostic sects.

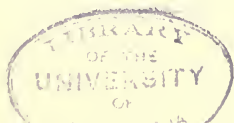
\* \* \*

Gnosticism therefore is older than Christianity. It is a religio-philosophical movement which originated through a fusion of the Eastern and Western civilizations during the first century before the Christian era. Eastern doctrines were studied in Greece in the light of Western conceptions having as a background the religious traditions of the Western nations, espe-

cially the Greek, together with the impressions which the dramatic performances of the initiations into the mysteries had left upon the people. Thus gnosticism, the product of a fusion of all pagan religions of classical antiquity, is the real mother of Christianity.

Our proposition may seem strange to those into whose minds the idea that Judaism is the mother of Christianity has been inculcated since the days of childhood, but the facts of history speak for themselves.

HOW THE GENTILE SAVIOUR  
CHANGED INTO THE CHRIST.







## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PROCESS OF IDEALIZATION.

HOW much Christianity has been prepared in Babylon appears from our more matured knowledge of the cuneiform inscriptions. The subject is discussed by Schrader in *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*,<sup>1</sup> p. 377 ff., where the points of identification between Marduk, Yahveh and Christ are thus enumerated:

1. Christ's pre-existence as a divine being and as creator of the world.

2. Christ's miraculous birth. Prototypes of this doctrine are not yet known of Marduk, but rather of Babylonian heroes such as King Sargon I, King Gilgames<sup>2</sup> and Assurbanipal.

3. Christ as the saviour, as the inaugurator of a new age, of a time of prosperity. Under this heading we must also mention the fact that in the inscription on an ancient cylinder Cyrus is called "Saviour-King" just as Isaiah calls him "the Messiah of Yahveh" (Is. xlv. 1). What Isaiah says of Cyrus<sup>3</sup> is referred directly to Jesus by John the Baptist.<sup>4</sup>

4. Christ as the pleroma, or fulfilment of the

<sup>1</sup>3d. edition. Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903.

<sup>2</sup>As related by Aelian, *Anim. Hist.*, XII, 21.

<sup>3</sup>Verse 2; cf. xl, 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 23.

times, which is closely connected with the Babylonian notion of cycles, involving the idea that in the proper season of a periodic round of ages a certain consummation is attained.

5. Christ as sent by the Father. In the same way, God Marduk looks upon the world with compassion whenever it is in a state of disorder and tribulation, and sends a saviour to rescue mankind from evil.

6. The passion of Christ. It is noteworthy that in Babylon the king assumes the part of the penitent for his people and takes the guilt and punishment upon himself. [The same idea prevails in China and is referred to in Lao Tse's Tao Teh King, chap. 78.]

7. The death of Christ. The death of Marduk is not directly known, but can be derived from the name he bears as "Lord of the lamentation," and the fact that in the cult of Marduk, his tomb is mentioned. Other deities who must be named in this connection are Shamash, Nergal, Tammuz, Sin and Ishtar.

8. Christ's descent to hell. Here the same names must be mentioned as above.

9. Christ's resurrection. That the time of Christ's sojourn in hell is said to be three days is probably based upon the old Babylonian conception. Three days in spring, the moon is said to be invisible, which fact may be compared with the story of Jonah who

stays in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

10. The ascension of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

11. The exaltation of Christ.

12. The *parousia* of Christ and his second advent.

Jesus prophesies that great tribulations shall precede his second advent and here also we find some close parallels in Babylonian inscriptions. The time of tribulation stands in contrast to the time of prosperity which is assured through the appearance of the saviour. The renewal of the world is preceded by a breakdown of the old order. Men will become wicked and horrible crimes will be perpetrated. We read in one text (K. 786I.—Cun. Texts, xiii, 50), "A brother will kill with weapons his brother, a friend his friend." In another text (K. B. vi, 1, p. 275 f.) we read of eclipses of sun and moon and the quarrels between inmates of the same house and between neighbors. A third passage (K. 454—Cun. Texts xiii, 49) reads thus: "Such a prince [who would not obey the commandments of the gods] will experience misery; his heart will not rejoice; during his rule, battles and combats will not cease. Under such a government, brother will devour brother; people will sell their children for money; the countries will fall into confusion; the husband will leave his wife and the wife her husband; a mother will bolt the door against her daughter."

<sup>5</sup>This point and the following two are not satisfactorily treated and so we mention them without entering into details.

ter; the treasury of Babylon will be carried to Syria and Assyria; the king of Babylon will have to surrender the possessions of his palace and his treasury to the princes of Assyria.”

13. Christ as a judge.

14. The marriage of Christ; or rather the symbolical marriage of the Lamb in Revelations and the allusions to Christ as the bridegroom have their prototype in the marriage of Marduk celebrated on the Babylonian New Year's day.<sup>6</sup>

\* \* \*

The pagan saviour idea has been gradually transformed into the conception of Christ. We can trace the process in different places and everywhere it follows the same law. In primitive times the saviour is simply a strong man; unarmed and naked, he wrestles with the lion, but he is also brutal and gross. Such is Samson of the tribe of Dan, and such is Heracles in the ancient myth.

As civilization advances, the hero acquires the gentler and nobler features which are now more highly respected than superiority of brawn. Moral stamina becomes an indispensable condition for respect and so it is unhesitatingly attributed to the national ideal. In this phase, Heracles is represented as choosing between the pleasures of vice and the practice of virtue and he

<sup>6</sup>See the author's *Bride of Christ* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1908).

prefers the latter, setting a noble example to all Greek youths.

The Heracles of the classical period still has his faults, yet the philosophers claim that the real Heracles had none, and that the stories of his frolicking and rude exploits are inventions of myth mongers and should be regarded as perversions of the truth. He was a saviour and he labored for the best in mankind without any thought for himself. So the idealizing process goes on and reaches a climax at the beginning of the Christian era, when Seneca speaks of him with the same reverence as a Christian would speak of Christ. He says:

“Heracles never gained victories for himself. He wandered through the circle of the earth, not as a conqueror, but as a protector. What, indeed, should the enemy of the wicked, the defender of the good, the peace-bringer, conquer for himself either on land or sea!”

This conception was not peculiar to Seneca but was at that time common to all pagan sages. Epictetus speaks of his sonship to Zeus and says: “He knew that no man is an orphan, but that there is a father always and constantly for all of them. He had not only heard the words that Zeus was the father of men, but he regarded him as *his* father and called him such; and looking up to him he did what Zeus did. Therefore he could live happily everywhere.”

The final conception of Heracles as the ideal hero, the god-man, the son of Zeus, is presented in Schiller's great hymn "The Ideal and Life" in the two concluding stanzas. And we may be sure that the German poet, perhaps the best modern representative of the religious spirit of classical antiquity, is not conscious of the similarity of the Greek hero to Christ. Their resemblance, at any rate in this poem, is unintentional. Schiller says<sup>7</sup>:

"Heracles in deep humiliation,  
 Faithful to his destination,  
 Served the coward in life's footsore path.  
 Labors huge wrought he; Zeus' noble scion;  
 He the hydra slew and hugged the lion,  
 And to free his friends faced Pluto's wrath;  
 Crossed the Styx in Charon's doleful bark;  
 Willingly he suffered Hera's hate,  
 Bore her burdens, grievous care and cark  
 And in all he showed him great,

"'Til his course was run, 'til he in fire  
 Stripped the earthly on the pyre,  
 'Til a god he breathed Empyrean airs,  
 Blithe he now in new got power of flight  
 Upward soars from joyful height to height,  
 And as an ill dream, sink earth's dull cares;  
 Glory of Olympus him enfoldeth;  
 'Mongst the gods transfigured standeth he,  
 From the nectar cup which Hebe holdeth  
 Drinks he immortality."

<sup>7</sup>For our version we have utilized a translation by the Rev. W. N. Guthrie, published in *The Sewanee Review*, April, 1908, p. 205.

Schiller touches on the same topic of Heracles as the divine saviour in one of the *Xenions* where Zeus addresses his hero son in these words<sup>8</sup>:

“Thou hast divinity, son, not acquired  
By drinking my nectar;  
But thy divinity 'tis  
Conquered the nectar for thee.”

This idea does not quite agree with the accepted view according to which Heracles, being the son of Zeus, was born immortal. In the same way Jesus is born as Christ, but Schiller's idea of Heracles corresponds to the doctrine held by a fraction of the early Christians, which makes Jesus acquire Christhood by his saintly life.

The belief was quite common, especially among docetic Christians that Jesus became Christ at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan, and this was the original meaning of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. The Cambridge Codex of the New Testament (6th century) still preserves the old reading which is a quotation of Psalm ii, 7, and declares most positively that in this very moment Jesus becomes the Christ and is to be considered the son of God. The passage (Luke iii, 22) reads in the Cambridge Codex: “And the Holy Ghost descended into him in a bodily form as a dove; and there was a voice out of the heaven: Thou art my son; this day I have begotten thee.”

<sup>8</sup>*Goethe and Schiller's Xenions*, p. 34.



When, with the growth in a literal belief in dogmas, this version was felt to be in conflict with the dogma of the virgin birth, the words, "this day I have begotten thee," were changed to, "in thee I am well pleased," but in the epistle to the Hebrews (i. 5) the passage is still quoted in its original form.

The ideas of the acquisition of Christhood by Jesus and the birth of God the son from eternity, need not contradict each other, as we learn from Buddhism, where the Bodhi (i. e., "enlightenment") is an eternal condition of the world-order, and Gautama acquires it by his virtues and his wisdom. The Bodhi is personified as the Eternal Buddha, corresponding to the Christ who says of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am." In a later version, this Buddha of Eternal Bliss lives in the Tusita heaven and decides to descend into the womb of Maya, for the purpose of salvation, just as, through Mary, Christ is born as the child Jesus. Buddha is not born as Buddha, but as Bodhisattva, viz., a being that is destined to develop into a Buddha. He possesses the potentiality of acquiring the bodhi and he then actually acquires enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

The same story of the incarnation of the Saviour God, of a supernatural fatherhood, of great merits, etc., is told of Krishna, of Horus, of Samson, of Zeus, of Dionysos, and of every other hero and god-man. These stories are repeated everywhere and the figure



of the saviour is more and more idealized and spiritualized as civilization progresses.

The same process of idealizing and spiritualizing the figure of a saviour went on in all pagan countries in the Orient as well as in the Occident. As we trace the several steps in the Heracles myth, so we are confronted with the same result in the Orient. In India the process was indeed faster, or may be it was begun earlier. In the ancient Brahman religion we meet with the deified Krishna, the rollicking hero, the lover of sport and dance, the saviour from oppression and the bringer of joy; but his type is supplanted in the fifth century B. C. by a new and a higher ideal, suggested by the respect for wisdom, for enlightenment, for *bodhi* or gnosis. The people now looked forward for the incarnation of profound comprehension and perfect virtue. They expected a sage; and the development of the thought reaches a climax in the Buddha-conception which justly commands the admiration of Occidental students of Orientalism. The life of Gautama Siddhartha was shaped under the influence of these conditions, and Professor Fausbøl, the great Danish Pali scholar, used to say, "The more I know of Buddha, the more I love him." We need not ask in this connection whether Buddha is historical or no—just as little as we need care whether the details of the life of Jesus are historical. It is the ideal which exerted its influence in the history of mankind

as a formative presence in the hearts of the people, and we know that this living ideal has been a most potent factor in history; the transient figure of the man in whom it was either supposedly or truly actualized is of secondary importance. Nor do we care here to trace historical connections; we are confronted with a law in the history of religious thought. So for instance the Buddha ideal (or if you prefer, the historical personality of the Buddha) has been worked out on pagan ground in perfect independence of other ideals, such as the Christ ideal of the Christians and the spiritualized figure of a Heracles among the Græco-Romans.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PERSIANS AND THE JEWS.

**W**E KNOW little of the later period of the Babylonians, but we have a rich literature of the religion of Zarathushtra which originated in ancient Iran and was embraced by the Medes and Persians, the Aryans who resided among the Semites and for some time dominated the Orient with great ability.

The religion of these Aryan people is a most remarkable faith which was destined to play a great part in the world. It anticipated the dualism of neo-Platonism by two or three centuries, and entered the Græco-Roman world in the shape of Mithraism.

We deem dualism to be a necessary phase in the development of religion and think that it contains a truth which finds its solution but not its abolition in a subsequent monism. There is a duality in the world which cannot be denied, although it can be resolved into a higher unity and thus be explained as two sides of one and the same process. Existence originates through the contrast of duality, and thus only can it manifest itself in multiplicity. This truth remains true even when we have succeeded in reducing it to a monistic conception.

Christianity was prepared in those parts of the world where it was destined to prevail—among the

Gentiles and especially the Aryan nations. All our studies in the history of the several pagan religions and the results of comparative religion point the same way and our scholars have frequently been puzzled by the facts. As a remarkable instance I will quote Prof. Lawrence H. Mills, the great Zend scholar of Oxford, a theologian of high standing belonging to the Church of England. He says in the introductory comments to his most recent essay entitled "Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia":

"What is here intended is to call attention to the better-known, though long since reported fact, that it pleased the Divine Power to reveal some of the fundamental articles of our Catholic creed first to the Zoroastrians, though these ideas later arose spontaneously and independently among the Jews."

Professor Mills insists on the independent origin of the same ideas among the Jews of the Exile who, as we may well assume, came into close contact with Persians and gained their confidence to such an extent that Cyrus, the Persian king, on his accession to the sovereign power of the Babylonian empire, re-established the exiled Jews in their old home at Jerusalem. I will neither deny nor insist on an independent development of the same ideas; there are enough instances of parallel formations in history to render it possible in the case of the Jews. Professor Mills continues:

"I wish to show that the Persian system must

have exercised a very powerful, though supervening and secondary influence upon the growth of these doctrines among the Exilic and post-Exilic Pharisaic Jews, as well as upon the Christians of the New Testament, and so eventually upon ourselves.”

Now the truth is, that the saviour-idea developed more rapidly to a higher plane among the Gentiles than among the Jews. We noted (page 22) that the Hebrew language did not even possess the word saviour. While the Persian Mithras is very much like the Christian Christ, a superpersonal presence of preeminently moral significance, the Jewish Messiah remained for a long time on the lower level of primitive paganism, a national hero who was a ruthless conqueror and gory avenger of his people. How crude still is the Messiah of the Book of Henoch! But even here Gentile influence can be traced. And it is noticeable that the Jews of the Dispersion developed a nobler ideal of the Messiah than the Jews of Judea.

It cannot be denied that when they translated the word Messiah into Christ, the very substance of the idea imperceptibly changed and incorporated many features of the idealized saviour-conception of the Gentiles. Such was the Christ of the first century B. C. among the Jews of Alexandria.

\* \* \*

Even orthodox Christian scholars who still adhere to a literal belief, not only in the dogmas but also

in the historicity and uniqueness of a special revelation, have to recognize, as soon as they know the facts, the similarity of the pagan saviours to the Christ of the Christians. Here is a remarkable instance of a recognition of this state of things by a theologian, and it is interesting to note the explanation offered for the coincidences between Christianity and paganism. Commenting on Dr. Hugo Radau's brochure, *Bel the Christ of Ancient Times*, Rev. Alan S. Hawkesworth, the author of *De Incarnatione verbi Dei*, says:<sup>9</sup>

"The general conclusion is by no means a startling one, that the men of ancient Babylon felt the very human need for comfort and hope amid the ever-present grim facts of suffering and death; and thus created for themselves in their own image, as they must needs have done, a redeemer who should conquer death and hell and bring to weary souls redemption and immortality.

"This, we say, is both as it should be and as it must be in all ages and among all races. The Egyptians had Osiris, their suffering redeemer. Greece and Rome had the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries and Mithras. The Aztecs, the Incas, and the primitive American Indians all had quite similar faiths. And were we to hereafter discover a hitherto unknown hyperborean race, we may be confident that whatever philosophy and religion they may have created, will be along these age-old lines. For the roots of this ideal lie, inerad-

<sup>9</sup>For Mr. Hawkesworth's review see the *Monist*, XIX, p. 309.

icably, in the fundamental needs and aspirations of man.

“And it is a familiar commonplace of Catholic theology, that it was this universal desire for and expectation of the Man-God Redeemer, that imperatively demanded and necessitated its fulfilment in the Incarnation of Him, who was ‘the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ and the ‘Desire of all nations.’ So that here as in lesser cases, prophecy, whether heathen or ‘revealed,’ was merely insight into what by dire necessity had to be. And Christianity, therefore, is not, as Puritanism heretically conceived, an artificial ‘scheme of salvation’ foisted upon an unwilling and utterly alien world, but is, on the contrary, the *Catholic faith*, which summarizes, completes, and makes secure all the various partial broken insights and wavering desires for good, in the heathen religions and philosophies; which heathen faiths are indeed, by their very nature, nothing more than the instinctive gropings of men after truth and God, if ‘haply they might find Him.’ They had faults and defects unquestionably, many and obvious. But these, in nearly every case, were simply the defects of imperfect insight springing from the unavoidable limitations imposed by racial capabilities and environment. In short, they were ‘right in their assertions, but wrong in their negations.’ So that Christianity comes, as the Catholic faith, not to destroy, but to *fulfil*,—and to fulfil not merely Juda-



ism, but all the other ethnic beliefs; and only supersedes, because it so fulfils.

“Hence, not only Bel, but all the gods of the elder world were in a very real sense the ‘Christ’s’ of their several times. And, in each and every case, much of their mythology and doctrines can be paralleled by something in Christianity, indeed, must be paralleled, if that is to be the final truth.

“But to turn this the wrong way about, as some may seek to do, and claim that Christianity is therefore nothing better than a revamped Babylonianism, or Buddhism, or Parseeism, as the case may be, is surely to woefully misread the story! It is quite as if some one claimed that the events in American history were by no means new, but were word for word, and act for act, not merely similar in some respects to, but identical replicas of the words and events in Babylonia 8,000 years ago!”

Mr. Hawkesworth is a scholarly High Church Episcopalian; who in a private letter characterizes himself as “Broad, Evangelical, High Churchman. Broad, but *not* Latitudinarian; Evangelical, but not Platitudinarian; and High, yet not Attitudinarian.” It is instructive as well as interesting to know the opinion of a man of this type, with special reference to many curious similarities that obtain between ancient paganism and Christianity. He says in his letter:

“I may say, too, that my statements, in my review of Dr. Radau’s book, concerning the heathen gods and



religions, were not my individual opinions merely. If they were, they would have but little value on such a subject. But they are rather the commonplaces of all orthodox theologians. And when I say 'orthodox,' I, of course, do *not* mean what is frequently understood by the term in America; namely, an ill assorted 'hodge-podge' of Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Revivalist 'doctrine.'

"Not only St. Augustine, but St. Athanasius, and *all* the Church 'Fathers,' and later 'Doctors'—like St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. John Damascene—taught the doctrine I mention.

"The Hegelian pulse of 'sub-lation,' in his logic, by which each category develops its latent contradictions, collapses; and is then restated in a revised, truer, and more ample form; thus 'fulfilling,' and by so fulfilling, thereby abrogating the previous categories, is precisely the way that Christianity fulfils and abrogates all the partial ethnic faiths.

"Thus, 'becoming' possesses all the truth in, and reconciles the contradiction in 'Pure Being,' and its equally valid opposite, 'Pure Nothing.' But, in its two-fold form of 'coming to be' and 'ceasing to be,' it unfolds contradictions of its own, which are, in turn, subsumed and sublated in '*Daseyn*'—. But, you know the march of that wonderful dialectic.

"And furthermore; even as each of the more perfect categories yet needs the previous incomplete and faulty categories as a prerequisite underpinning (so to speak),

so also does the Christian Catholic Faith imperatively need, because it is Catholic, the preceding Jewish and Heathen Faiths. St. Clemens Alexandrinus and the other Fathers say that, not merely the Jewish, but all the Heathen Faiths were 'schoolmasters' (*παιδαγωγοί*) to bring men to Christ.

"Preaching the Christian faith to a people who never had had any religious ideas, would surely be like talking 'Calculus' to savages ignorant of elementary arithmetic! Christianity presupposes the inbred belief in sin, atonement, and redemption. It is inbred, because all religions have it, more or less; and all have it, because of the fundamental facts of life.

"After all, a 'heathen'—or 'countryman,' *paganus*—is simply the natural man, and the Christian is, or ought to be, the natural man of the '*n*th power,'—the ideal man. Even as the Christian priest is all that the Christian layman is, and more; and the bishop all that the priest is; and so on.

"I would like to put the argument in a quasi-mathematical form, like this:

"Many Christian doctrines = Many Babylonian doctrines, say.

"Now this equation, as it stands, might have the orthodox interpretation that Christianity is perfected 'Babylonianism.' Or it might bear the interpretation that Christianity is merely a rehashed Babylonianism. But the same equation holds even more truly for *all*

the other religions, none of which has, in general, things in common with each other. For

Christianity = Parseeism,  
 “ = Egyptian secret doctrines,  
 “ = Confucianism,  
 “ = Buddhism,  
 “ = Judaism,

and so on.

“So we might say that Christianity is the  $\Sigma$  or Summation of the Infinite Series.

“Finally, it is not the dead showcase of beetles and butterflies (so to speak), like the Eclectic systems of the neo-Platonist, and modern Eclectics; but is a vital and living organism. All the partial truths in the various faiths being integral and coherent parts in a vital whole, it cannot be the rehash of any one, for it reproduces *all*. And it cannot be simply the eclectic rehash of *all*, for it holds their doctrines in living, coherent unity.”

I quote the letter of Mr. Hawkesworth *in extenso* because it sums up the orthodox Christian view in the tersest way I have ever seen, and it proves that consciousness of the continuity between Christianity and its pagan predecessors is still alive among many well-informed theologians. The statement is the more noteworthy as it reached me after the completion of my own essay. I insert it simply as a witness, and it is not astonishing that this testimony comes from an Episcopalian, for the Episcopalians have always distinguished

themselves by their love of preserving historical connection.

It is true that the pagan saviours are prototypes of Christ and the pagan religions are prophecies of Christianity. This is as natural as the experience that the bloom of a tree finds its fulfilment in the matured fruit.

We do not mean to philosophize here, but we insist on the necessity of the historical law which is strictly regulated by the broader law of cause and effect, and which renders it necessary that every new phase in the development of mankind should be prepared by its precedents. The continuity of the process is nowhere broken, and when a new era begins which seems to change the entire appearance of mankind, it will be found to have been gradually prepared below the surface of events.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CHRIST OF THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

A MOST important witness of the transitional phase through which the Christ ideal passed before it became the Christ of St. Paul, is found in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, chapters xii and xix, 6-21. Gunkel has pointed out<sup>10</sup> that the author of this description of the appearance of Christ, though he calls him Jesus, knows nothing of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, nor of the Sermon on the Mount, nor of his crucifixion, nor of his resurrection. The Jesus of St. John is not a man, but a god. The report of his life is not a human story but mythology; it is not enacted on earth but in the universe, mainly in the heavens; his antagonist is the great dragon who, with his tail, draws down the third part of the stars. The mother of Jesus is not Mary, the wife of Joseph the carpenter, but a superhuman personality clothed with the sun and having the moon at her feet, and wearing upon her head a crown of twelve stars, emblems of the twelve constellations of the zodiac. The dragon is dangerous even for the Celestials, and the newly born Saviour has to be hidden from him and protected against his wrath. But he is overcome by the Lamb, or as the Greek text

<sup>10</sup>*Schöpfung und Chaos.*

reads, by the young ram,<sup>11</sup> the sacrifice in which the saviour-god offers himself in the form of the animal sacred to him. We quote this remarkable chapter in full (Rev. xii) :

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the

<sup>11</sup>ἀρνιον

whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitors of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The woman lives in the desert 1,260 days, which is three years and a half, counting the year as a round number of 360 days. The same number three and a half is later on expressed in the mystic formula  $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2}$ . In both cases it is the number of the cycle, or as we now would say, a primitive approximation of the number  $\pi$ .\*

The subject of the saviour-god who dies in the shape of a ram is continued in chapter xix, verse 6, where he victoriously reappears from the underworld to celebrate his marriage and is greeted by a great multitude of worshipers. We quote again in full: (Rev. xix, 6).

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

“And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

“And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which

\*See note 5, page 16.



are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

“And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may

eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

This is not the meek Jesus; this is the Babylonian hero, a king of kings, who crushes his enemies and rejoices at the horrors of the battlefield. The redactor of the story is a Jewish Christian but the body of the legend has remained pagan and still bears all the symptoms of mythology.

Obviously this fragment is the echo of a Christianity which was quite different from that of the Gospel as we know it and it is scarcely probable that the author of these passages had ever seen any of the three synoptic Gospels, or even their prototypes.

If Revelations had not by some good chance found its way into the canon, the book would most likely have been lost and with it would have perished this valuable evidence of the existence of several rival Christianities, for we may assume that there were quite a number of such tentative formations of old traditions reconstructed in the spirit of the several authors.

## CHAPTER X.

### CHRISTIAN SENTIMENT IN PRE-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

ALL THE distinctions attributed to Christ and the strongest claims made for his divinity have been asserted of his predecessors, the Christs of ancient times; and the lofty ethics which we are in the habit of calling pre-eminently Christian are equally characteristic of the teachers of all nations. Not only Buddha but also the Greek philosophers have preached peace on earth and good will to men, even including our very enemies.

In the 49th chapter of *Crito*, Plato says, "We must neither return evil nor do any ill to any one among men, not even if we have to suffer from them." When Socrates was condemned to drink the hemlock, he said, "I do not bear the least grudge toward those who voted my death." And Pittacus taught this maxim, "Forgiveness is better than vengeance; the former shows culture, the latter is brutish."<sup>12</sup>

The Buddhist sacred books are full of injunctions of love and universal good will. We quote only one

<sup>12</sup>A number of similar quotations from Greek sages who inculcated the ethics of returning good for evil are collected in an article on Greek religion, published in *The Open Court*, Vol. XV, 9ff.

out of many and select the well-known lines from the *Sutta Nipata*:<sup>13</sup>

“Do not deceive, do not despise  
Each other, anywhere.  
Do not be angry, nor should ye  
Secret resentment bear;  
For as a mother risks her life  
And watches o’er her child:  
So boundless be your love to all,  
So tender, kind and mild.

“Yea, cherish good-will right and left,  
All round, early and late,  
And without hindrance, without stint,  
From envy free and hate,  
While standing, walking, sitting down,  
What e’er you have in mind,  
The rule of life that’s always best  
Is to be loving-kind.”

Bel Merodach, the Christ of ancient Babylon, descended into the underworld, broke the gates thereof, subdued death and returned to the domain of the living, having released the dead from captivity. In a hymn translated by Theophilus G. Pinches, he is called—

“The Lord of the Holy Incantation, bringing the dead to life;  
He who had mercy on the gods who were imprisoned;  
Took off the yoke laid on the gods who had been his enemies,  
To redeem them he created mankind.”

In the same text, Merodach is invoked in these words:

<sup>13</sup>Quoted from *The Dharma*, pp. 14-15. For an unversified translation see *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X, part II, page 25.

"The merciful one, with whom is the giving of life,  
May his word be established, and not forgotten,  
In the mouth of the black-headed ones<sup>14</sup> whom his hands have  
made."

In his *Legend of Merodach*, Pinches says, "He is described as the creator of vegetation, the light of the father his begetter, the life of the people, the pure being, the pure or holy crown, the pure incantation, he who knoweth the heart, etc., etc."

The Chinese sage, Lao Tse, one of the world's great moral teachers, who lived one hundred years before Buddha, said in his wonderful little book, *The Canon of Reason and Virtue*, "Requite hatred with goodness" (chapter 63); and in another chapter (49) he reasons thus: "The good, I meet with goodness; the bad I also meet with goodness; for thus I actualize goodness. The faithful I meet with faith; the faithless I also meet with faith, for thus I actualize faith."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>"The black-headed ones" is a common term denoting mankind. *Proceedings of the Society of Archaeology*, Feb., 1908.

<sup>15</sup>See also O. C. XX, 200 "Harmony of the Spheres."

## CHAPTER XI.

### WHY CHRISTIANITY CONQUERED.

**WE** HAVE seen that Christianity was not the only religion which claimed to be a world-religion and struggled for supremacy. There were several others, viz., neo-Platonism, Reformed Paganism, Mithraism, Mandæanism, Manichæism, Simonism, and a few others. We know that it had much in common with all of them, including those features which we now would point out as typically Christian, especially the saviour idea and a belief in the immortality of the soul. We shall have to ask now what distinguishes Christianity from its rivals and we may point out a number of features that helped to advance its cause.

Of the several reasons which insured the final success of Christianity we will here enumerate the most important ones.

1. First in order in our opinion stands the human character of the Christian saviour which rendered the story of salvation realistic and made it credible.

2. Another point in favor of the personality of Jesus was his passion and martyr death. Nothing sanctifies so much as suffering. Compassion and sympathy are powerful emotions and make zealous converts.

3. Jesus was perhaps the only saviour who was not compromised by any relation to the old pagan gods.

4. It appears that the narrative of Christ's life, especially in the form of the Fourth Gospel, is more sober than the story of any other saviour.

5. Christianity was less dualistic and less ascetic than any of its rival creeds. We know that most of them, especially neo-Platonism and Manichæism, were very stern in their psychology and ethics.

6. Another reason was the democratic, we might almost say the plebeian spirit of the primitive Church and the simplicity of its ritual, which made religion immediately accessible to the masses of the people. The ancient mysteries communicated the revelation of their religious truths to a select class of initiates, and Mithraism has preserved this feature which made its congregations resemble Masonic lodges with their several degrees.

7. We believe also that the cross of Jesus appealed to the mystic in whose mind still lingered the significance of crucifixion as an ancient offering to the sun, and who contemplated with satisfaction the contrast of the deepest humiliation of a shameful death to the highest glorification of the risen Christ. It will further be remembered that crucifixion was the death penalty of slaves and so the slaves saw in Christ a representative of their own class; but slaves and freedmen constituted an enormous part of the population of Rome and must have been a formidable power in the capital. The



Crucified One was an abomination to the Jew, an object of contempt for the few aristocrats, but he was the brother of the lowly, the downtrodden, the slave.

There may be many other reasons for the supremacy of Christianity, but we will mention only one more, which may appear to be quite indifferent, but has, in our opinion, been extremely effective. This is the connection of Christianity with Judaism.

The Jews of the dispersion were ever present before the eyes of the Gentile world, and their very existence served to call attention to Christianity and to support its claims.

The theories and doctrines of the rival religions of Christianity appealed to things distant, to abstract ideas and seemed to hang in the air, while Christianity could produce living witnesses in the shape of the Jews. The Jews contested the conclusions which the Christians drew from their literature, but they did not deny the main facts in question and supported the proposition that the God of Israel was the only true God who had chosen the Jews as the vehicle of his revelation.

The history of Israel was appropriated by the Christians, and at the very start the Jewish canon furnished them with a respectable literature which was both venerable by its antiquity, and imposing by the bewildering wealth of its contents. It took a man of uncommon scholarship to understand the Hebrew scriptures, let alone to refute the arguments based upon them.

It seems strange that Judaism which had originated in contrast to paganism and consisted in a denial of its salient doctrines, should be deemed the proper authority from which a paganism *redivivus*, which under the name of Christianity was destined to become the state religion of the Roman empire, should claim to have descended after the extinction of the old paganism. But the very contrast in which Judaism stood to the ancient paganism rendered it fit to serve as a medium of purification.

Judaism repudiated the polytheistic mythology of ancient paganism, which had become effete among all classes of the Græco-Roman world. But a new religion, a monotheistic paganism, a purified religion of the Gentiles, rose from the ruins of the old paganism, and when it sought for an authority that could worthily father the new movement and justify its condemnation of the objectionable features of its own past, none seemed better adapted to this purpose than Judaism for the very reason of its hostility to the old paganism.

THE ORIGIN OF JUDAISM  
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE  
FOR CHRISTIANITY.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PAGANISM OF ANCIENT ISRAEL.

**WE** HAVE so far spoken of Judaism as a known quantity and have used the terms "Jews" and "Gentiles" in their traditional meaning to express a contrast which was well established at the beginning of the Christian era; but Judaism has a history. For the sake of understanding how the new faith, though it had to be Gentile in character, could profit by becoming affiliated with the Jews, we must first acquaint ourselves with the nature of this remarkable people.

Judaism is a unique phenomenon in history. It is the product of contradictory tendencies which have been hardened in the furnace of national misfortune. The religion of the Jews combines the universalism of a monotheistic faith with the narrowness of a nationalism which localizes God and regards the Jews as the elect, the chosen people. Judaism is therefore characterized by a certain precocious maturity. At a time when monotheism was an esoteric doctrine in countries such as Egypt and Babylonia, a kind of philosophy of the educated classes, the Jews had adopted it as their national religion. Yet the revelations of this one and sole God, of the creator and ruler of the universe, were thought to have taken place in a very human way, and bloody sacrifices were still offered in the old pagan ✓

fashion at the altar of Jerusalem, which alone was declared to be the legitimate spot to approach God. Some antiquated and barbarous institutions, such as circumcision and other requirements of the so-called Mosaic law were enforced, and the purity of Jewish blood, to the exclusion of the Gentiles as impure, was vigorously insisted on.

The history of Judaism is a long story which is of great importance for the development of Christianity.

We have reason to believe that the religion of ancient Israel was quite similar in belief and moral principles to the religions of the surrounding Gentiles. Yahveh, or, as the name is now erroneously pronounced, Jehovah, was worshiped by other nations before the Israelites began to pray to him; it was Moses who adopted the Yahveh cult, not from his own ancestors, not from Abraham or Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel, but from Jethro, his Gentile father-in-law, a Kenite priest in the district of Mount Horeb in the Sinai peninsula.

Israel's God Yahveh was not very different from other gods. He demanded human sacrifices as they did and was originally the protector of his own people, a tribal deity. According to the Bible, the Children of Israel despoiled the Egyptians at the express command of Yahveh and slaughtered the inhabitants of conquered cities in his honor just as did the Moabites in honor of their god Khemosh. According to the word (i. e., the command) of Yahveh, did Hiel lay the

foundations of Jericho in Abiram, his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in Segub, his youngest son (1 Kings xvi, 34), while Jephthah sacrificed his daughter because he believed that Yahveh, the God of Israel, demanded it.

We know also that the patriarchs had idols, or *teraphim*,<sup>1</sup> for we learn incidentally that Rachel stole the images of her father (Gen. xxxi, 34). Even David, the hero of Israel, had such statues in his own house, for we read that when Saul sent messengers to slay David, his wife Michal helped him to escape by placing the figure of their house god<sup>2</sup> in his bed to mislead the King's messengers (1 Sam. xix, 12-17). The prophet Hosea (iii, 4) mentions the use of these idols, the *teraphim*, together with the Urim and Thummim, the Ephod and the Stone Pillar,<sup>3</sup> as an indispensable part of the religion of Israel.

Ancient Israel was not monotheistic. Yahveh was originally one god among other gods, but the patriotic Israelite was required to worship him alone. When the Israelites were saved from the power of Egypt, Moses glorified Yahveh in a hymn in which he exclaimed: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?"

#### תְּרָפִים

<sup>1</sup>The definite article is used תְּרָפִים which proves that it was a definite piece of furniture in their house, not an idol that by accident happened to be there.

#### מִצְבֵּה

There are many passages in the historical books which imply that it is deemed quite proper for Gentiles to worship their gods, but the Israelite is expected to worship Yahveh alone, the national god of the people.

Yahveh was worshiped in Israel under the form of a bull even in the days of the prophet Elijah. The subject is incidentally mentioned in Professor Cornill's *History of the People of Israel*, p. 127, where he says: "In this connection the fact is highly noteworthy, and yet is not generally given a clear explanation, that we do not hear a single word of rebuke on this subject from the prophet Elijah. When he denounces Baal in Samaria and Israel, he is simply advocating the 'calves of Dan and Bethel,' the only customary form of worship in the kingdom of Israel, and he himself did not attack it. The view that this whole species of worship was pure heathenism and the worship of God in an image folly and absurdity, is first found in the prophet Hosea and is an outgrowth of prophetic literature."

The temple of Solomon was built according to the plan of the Phœnician temples by Hiram, a Phœnician architect, and no objection was raised because a pagan built the temple of the God of Israel. This fact indicates that in the times of Solomon, the Phœnicians were not regarded as idolaters by the Israelites. Even in the days of Manasseh, in the seventh century B. C., the temple of Jerusalem was still in possession of all the paraphernalia of solar worship (2 Kings xxiii, 11).



In pre-Exilic times, no objection was ever raised to intermarriage with foreigners. Moses married first the daughter of a Kenite and then even an Ethiopian woman, which is commonly interpreted to mean a negress. Solomon was the son of a Hittite woman, and yet he became king of Israel. Schrader points out that even David, now considered the national hero of Israel, was not an Israelite but a Gentile. It is a fact commonly agreed on by Old Testament scholars, and Professor Sayce calls attention to David's appearance described in Samuel (xvi, 12, and again in xvii, 42) as red-haired and of a fair complexion.<sup>4</sup> Schrader thinks that he belonged to the tribes of the Cherithites and Pelethites, of whom his body-guard was composed. The etymology of Cherethites<sup>5</sup> has been brought into connection with the name of the Cretans and it seems probable that they, together with their kinsmen, the Aryan Philistines, must have come from the Greek islands in the Ægean Sea. This would prove David to be an Aryan instead of a Semite. The hostility between Saul and David was not purely personal, and it is noteworthy that when David fled before Saul, he sought refuge at the court of a Philistine king. The historical truth which Old Testament scholars discover

\*The authorized version translates Sam. xvii, 42, "ruddy and of a fair countenance." But the Hebrew word אֲדָמוּנִי which is also used of Esau (as already stated by Gesenius) can not designate a ruddy complexion but means "red-haired."

<sup>2</sup> Sam. xv, 18.

in the contradictory stories of David's life, points to the fact that he was the founder of the tribe of Judah which is mainly a conglomeration of southern clans of Edom, among them Kaleb, Peresh and Zerakh. Schrader (*Keilinschr. u. d. A. T.*, p. 228) says: "That there was no tribe of Judah belonging to Israel before David, can be safely concluded from Biblical sources alone. Further it follows, that in prehistoric times Judah did not stand in any relation to the other tribes." David was first chieftain of Kaleb, his capital being Hebron. After a conflict with the kingdom of Saul, David conquered part of the territory of Benjamin incorporating the tribes Peresh and Zerakh. They were formerly regarded as belonging to Benjamin, but later were treated as Judeans.

It was natural that later redactors with their tendency to represent David as a Judean and the national hero of Israel, tried to conceal his conflict with Benjamin. Schrader says (*ibid.*, p. 210):

"If the development of the monotheistic doctrine which was proclaimed in Judah-Israel in the name of Yahveh, must be assumed to have had its roots in the center of civilization of Hither Asia, then the purpose of the patriarchal legend—if it pursues at all an historical purpose besides the general one of instruction—can have been only to lay bare the threads which could be traced back to them from Judah. It is not the ethnological genesis of a small pure-blooded nation

which is to be described, but the growth of its religion and its world-conception. To be the representative of this world-conception, Judah ought to regard as her ideal calling,—although as a matter of fact at that time she neither did nor could so regard it.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE TEMPLE REFORM AND JUDAISM.

**M**ONOTHEISTIC tendencies manifested themselves both in Egypt and in Babylon, but they remained limited to the educated classes and had not affected the polytheistic service in the temples. In Egypt at the time when the Tel Amarna Tablets were written, the monotheistic reform had tried to influence the religion of the people, but had failed utterly. Conditions were more favorable in Persia; there it was a success.

We can not say how much Israel was influenced by these movements, but we know that a purer and deeper conception of God as a god of justice had been prepared through the prophets who denounced social wrongs as well as the abuses of religion, in opposition to the established priesthood and aristocracy. The movement spread among those who were zealous for a purification of the official worship of the country and at last exerted a strong hold on the more intelligent priesthood of the capital. The result was the famous temple reform of the year 621 B. C., which may be regarded as the date of the birth of Judaism.

The temple reform was a compromise between the prophetic party and the Jerusalemite priesthood. The prophetic party denounced worship on the heights, but

they looked up to the holy place on Mt. Zion as the national sanctuary and the favorite place of Yahveh, and the priests of Jerusalem were naturally pleased with this view, for it procured for them a religious monopoly.

The prophetic party was greatly respected in Jerusalem on account of a successful prophecy made by Isaiah about a quarter of a century before the temple reform. In the days of King Hezekiah, he had glorified Mount Zion as the holy place of Yahveh, and when the Assyrians in their campaign of 702-701 threatened Jerusalem, he declared "that the Lord had founded Zion and the poor of his people shall trust in it" (Is. xiv, 32; compare also 2 Kings xix, 31 ff.). Isaiah's confidence was justified by subsequent events, for it is reported that "the angel of the Lord smote an hundred fourscore and five thousand,"<sup>6</sup> and Sennacherib raised the siege and went home.

It is true that Jerusalem was spared the horrors of pillage and it is possible that the appearance of a sudden epidemic caused the king to lead the army home, but the event was not quite so glorious as it is described in the Bible and as it appeared in later times to the imagination of the Jews, for King Hezekiah remained a vassal of Assyria and Sennacherib had carried into captivity two hundred thousand inhabitants of Judea. It was merely the salvation of a remnant at which the

<sup>6</sup>2 Kings xix, 35; comp. Is. xxxvii, 36.

prophet rejoiced, and Hezekiah was thankful that he did not suffer the terrible fate of Samaria.

Sennacherib's account of this same expedition, written in cuneiform characters on a clay cylinder, is also preserved and the passage referring to Judea reads in an English translation thus:

“Six and forty of the fenced cities, and the fortresses, and the villages round about them, belonging to Hezekiah the Jew, who had not submitted to my rule, I besieged and stormed and captured. I carried away from them two hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty souls, great and small, male and female, and horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number. In his house in Jerusalem I shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage. I threw up mounds round about the city from which to attack it, and I blockaded his gates. The cities which I had captured from him I took away from his kingdom and I gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod.”

The preservation of Jerusalem is commonly spoken of by orthodox Christians as a mysterious event and a wonderful occurrence, but the main thing is that it was believed to be a miracle by the Jews. This belief had fatal consequences. It made the Jews overconfident in their faith so that they clung to their cause even when there was no hope of success; but while they ruined thereby their national existence, they sunk their nationality in their religion and developed in this way into an international people.

The confidence that the walls of Jerusalem were impregnable because Yahveh would not suffer Zion to fall into the hands of the Gentiles, made the Jews stubborn, so as to render the eventual downfall of Judea an inevitable necessity. The immediate result of the fulfilment of this prophecy was an increase of power for the prophetic party in Jerusalem and thereby they were enabled to carry into effect their momentous plan of a temple reform.

The story of the temple reform is told in 2 Kings xvii-xviii, and we will recapitulate the events leading to it in Professor Cornill's words where, on page 81 of his *Prophets of Israel*, he says :

"The prophetic party, which had apparently not been persecuted for some time, must have kept up secretly a continuous and successful agitation. The priests in the temple of Jerusalem must have been won over to it, or at least influenced by it, and especially must its aspirations have found access to the heart of the young king, who, from all we know of him, was a thoroughly good and noble character.

"The time now appeared ripe for a bold stroke.

"When, in the eighteenth year of Josiah, 621 B. C., Shaphan the scribe paid an official visit to the temple of Jerusalem, the priest Hilkiah handed to him a book of laws which had been found there. Shaphan took the book and immediately brought it to the King, before whom he read it."

The book was declared to be genuine and on the basis



of it the religion of Judea was newly regulated. Professor Cornill continues:

“Our first question must be: What is this book of laws of Josiah, which was discovered in the year 621? The youthful De Wette, in his thesis for a professorship at Jena in the year 1805, clearly proved that this book of laws was essentially the fifth book of Moses, known as Deuteronomy. The book is clearly and distinctly marked off from the rest of the Pentateuch and its legislation, whilst the reforms of worship introduced by Josiah correspond exactly to what it called for. The proofs adduced by De Wette have been generally accepted, and his view has become a common possession of Old Testament research.”

The priests in the country who opposed the temple reform were treated with great cruelty (See 2 Kings xiii, 20) and the wizards and witches of the land were also exterminated, as we read in 2 Kings xxiii, 24:

“Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the Lord.”



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BABYLONIAN EXILE.

THE TEMPLE reform established the supremacy of the priestly party, but the priests were poor statesmen. Believing that Yahveh would not suffer the temple to fall into the hands of his enemies, they pursued a short-sighted policy, siding always with the wrong party, and this ended in a most deplorable defeat. Jerusalem was taken, and the aristocracy of the people together with all their leaders, the educated classes, the scribes and even the smiths who could work in iron were deported into Babylon.<sup>7</sup>

This fate was sufficient to destroy any nation, but it did not ruin the Jews. Having gained by the temple reform the conviction that they were the chosen people of God, the exile only served to harden them in the furnace of tribulation, and so Judaism was prepared for the part which it was going to play in the further development of religious ideas.

When we bear in mind that the deported Jews belonged to the upper and more highly educated classes, we can easily understand that their ideas of monotheism, which in those days constituted an advanced stage of free thinking, soon became with them a monomania. They may have become acquainted with Babylonian

<sup>7</sup>See 2 Kings xxiv, 14-16.

monotheists, and whenever they had an opportunity to discuss religion may have claimed that their God was the only true God and that he had manifested himself in their literature. One thing is sure, they now interpreted the treasures of their literature in the spirit of this conviction, and their priests prepared new redactions of their old books in the light of the new faith.

While the Jewish conception of religion was rigorously monotheistic, for Yahveh was regarded as the only true God of the universe, the creator of heaven and earth, it was at the same time narrowed down to a most egotistical nationalism, and this nationalism was made the quintessence of their religion.

Every nation passes through a phase in which it regards itself as the favored people of the earth, looking with contempt or pity on all others. The Greeks called the non-Greeks barbarians, the Germanic tribes called the non-Germanic races Welsh, the Egyptians looked upon all foreigners as unclean, and the Chinese are possessed of similar notions up to this day. Among the Jews, this idea was incorporated into the fabric of their faith, and thus we may say that while Judaism marked a progress in the history of religion, it must at the same time be regarded as a contraction of the religious sentiment; instead of broadening the people, it restricted and limited their horizon. While liberating themselves from some of the grossest superstitions of paganism, the Jews cherished a mistaken and

most fatal belief in their own pre-eminence over the Gentiles.

Their adherence to this notion made the Jews so intolerable to others that they carried the cause of their calamity with them wherever they went. Whatever wrongs the Gentiles did, the Jews gave the first provocation, and the very way in which they banded themselves against the rest of the world made them naturally the "odium" of the human race, as Tacitus calls them. However innocent individuals may have been since, the race as a whole imbibed these ideas from childhood.

It is easy for us to see that the exclusiveness of the Jews was a fault, that their progressiveness was lamentably cramped by the reactionary spirit of a most Chauvinistic tribal patriotism, but this very fault rendered them fit to become the vessel that was wanted to hold the monotheistic belief. Without their superstition of the holiness of their tribal existence, they would never have persisted as Jews; they would have disappeared among the nations. In order to become the torch-bearers of the light of monotheism, their faith had to be hardened into a nationalistic religion and their very shortcoming rendered them fit to serve a higher purpose in the history of mankind.

We must grant one thing, that while the temple reform and the subsequent exile hardened the national character of the Jews to such an extent that the Jews

remained Jews wherever they went, this very persistence of the Jewish race ensured ultimately the success of Christianity as a world-religion.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DISPERSION.

ONE OF the most remarkable phenomena in the history of mankind, and in its way quite unique, is the Dispersion of the Jews. The Jews are the only people of antiquity which still exists and preserves its type, but the Jewish people differ from all other nations of the world in this one particular point, that they are a people without a country. Ancient Judea is no longer Jewish, the Jews live among the other nations; they are scattered and wherever we go, we find Jews. This Dispersion (or, as it was called in Greek, *Diaspora*) has been an object of awe and wonder; and though it gives the Jews a decided advantage in the struggle for existence, it has been regarded as a curse which rests upon this race of "rovers."

We are so accustomed to the dispersion of the Jews that it scarcely rouses our curiosity any longer, and I can not discover the slightest scientific attempt to explain the phenomenon. The best authorities, both Christian and Jewish, accept the facts in the traditional interpretation as a kind of mysterious doom. So for instance Professor Sayce, when discussing the peculiarities of the Jewish people, speaks of the Babylonian exile and the world-exile of the Jews as the two great national calamities of the race. He says:

“The Jews flourish everywhere except in the country of which they held possession for so long a time. The few Jewish colonies which exist there are mere exotics, influencing the surrounding population as little as the German colonies that have been founded beside them. That population is Canaanite. In physical features, in mental and moral characteristics, even in its folklore, it is the descendant of the population which the Israelitish invaders vainly attempted to extirpate. It has survived, while they have perished or wandered elsewhere. The Roman succeeded in driving the Jew from the soil which his fathers had won; the Jew never succeeded in driving from it, its original possessor. When the Jew departed from it, whether for exile in Babylonia, or for the longer exile in the world of a later day, the older population sprang up again in all its vigor and freshness, thus asserting its right to be indeed the child of the soil.”

Professor Graetz, the best Jewish authority on Jewish history, expresses himself thus (*Geschichte der Juden*, I, 619-620) :

“At the cradle of the Jewish nation was sung the song of ceaseless wandering and dispersion such as no other nation has ever known, and this dread lullaby came to fulfilment with terrible literalness. There was hardly a corner in either of the two dominant empires, the Roman and the Parthian, where Jews were not to be found, where they had not formed a religious community. The border of the great Mediterranean basin

and the estuaries of all the main rivers of the old world, the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Danube were peopled with Jews. As by an inexorable fate, the sons of Israel were driven farther and farther away from their center. But this dispersion was likewise a blessing and an act of providence. It sowed abroad the seeds which were destined to bear to all directions a nobler God-conception and a purer civilization."

Even Karl Vollers, the most recent liberal writer on the history of religion, says in *Die Weltreligionen*,<sup>8</sup> that "the dispersion (*Diaspora, Gola*) which had started centuries before [the breakdown of the Jewish theocracy] now becomes general, and down to our own days forms the signature of the history of the Jews."

Convinced of the enormous significance which the fact of the dispersion of the Jews possesses in the history of Christianity, I have given the problem some thought and I have come to the following conclusion:

The name Diaspora or Dispersion is misleading because it suggests that some mysterious cause scatters the Jews among the Gentiles. The truth is that the Jews scatter no more and no less than any other nationality, but while all other nationalities become acclimatized to their new homes, Jews remain Jews wherever they go. The problem therefore is not how did the Jews scatter, but how did they preserve their own type, and the answer is not far to seek.

Judaism is a prematurely acquired belief in monothe-

<sup>8</sup>Published at Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, Jena, 1907.

ism, which means that the Jews had adopted monotheism before they were able to grasp its significance.

The Jews of the Exile believed that there was but one God, the creator of heaven and earth and ruler of the universe, and that this only true God was their own God Yahveh; they identified him in their own history with the God-conceptions which their different tribes had held at different times. He was the Shaddai of Abraham, the Elohim of the patriarchs, the Zebaoth of Ephraim, and above all, he was Yahveh, the God of David and of Moses. All these names became designations of the same deity.

If the Jews had been ripe for monotheism, they would have abolished the barbarous and pagan institutions of which their religion was still possessed, as for instance the practice of offering bloody sacrifices to God, repeatedly denounced by the prophets. Had the Jews been sufficiently matured to understand the moral applications of a belief in one God, they would have seen that before God there is no difference between Jew and Gentile and that the chosen people are those who actualize the divine will in their lives. This inconsistency of the Jewish faith, which combined a universalistic breadth with an outspoken and almost unparalleled narrowness, pampered by national vanity, rendered it possible for them to cling to some old-fashioned institutions, called the Law, or the Law of Moses, which was kept with a remarkably punctilious



piety that would have been worthy of a better cause. But circumcision, abstinence from pork, certain rules of butchering, a rigorous observance of the Sabbath, etc., would in themselves have been harmless, had not their religion at the same time become a belief in the Jewish nationality which established a line of demarcation between the Jews and the rest of the world. Here lies the root of the tenacity of Judaism which has produced that most remarkable historical phenomenon of the preservation of the Jews in the midst of the other nations, a phenomenon known as the Dispersion.

All the nations scatter. The great capitals of the world contain representatives of any race that is suffered admittance, but within the second or third generation these strangers are being absorbed. The Jew alone resists absorption. He remains a Jew. The newcomer finds his co-religionist, and associates with him. The circle grows and a synagogue is built.

How many nations have sent their sons into Germany! Think of the innumerable French Huguenots, Italians such as the Cottas, the Brentanos. From Scotland came Kant's father, and Keith, the famous general of Frederick the Great. Who now thinks of their foreign ancestry? They have all become Germans.

The same is true of the Germans who settle in other countries, France, Italy, Spain, etc. The traveler comes across them here and there, but their children scarcely know whence their father or grandfather came.

The truth is that the children of every nation are scattered among the other nations. Everywhere there are people who go abroad to seek their fortunes. There is everywhere a constant tendency to migrations of small fractions of the population to distant countries where they are attracted by the hope of improving their condition. That the Jews are not assimilated as the others, is due to their religion, the main import of which, as we have seen, is the preservation of the Jewish nationality.

Every man has the inborn tendency of being a Hebrew, i. e., "a rover." All human life radiates. The Jew is not an exception. He simply follows the general rule, but he, at the same time, preserves his own kind. We find Jews everywhere, and this gives the impression that they are scattered all over the world. Not having a country of their own, the idea naturally originated that the Jews have become scattered because they no longer possess a country of their own, but the dispersion of the Jews antedates the destruction of Jerusalem and would be the same even if Jerusalem had never been destroyed.

The Jewish dispersion is frequently regarded as a mysterious curse that has befallen the race because they have rejected the Saviour and crucified Christ; and this romantic conception has found a poetic expression in the grewsome legend of Ahasuerus, the "Wandering Jew," the man who can not die. This occult interpretation of the phenomenon casts a glamour of mystery

upon the Jews and makes them an object of interest; not indeed of love, but of awe. We need not add that this view is more poetical than true, for the Jewish dispersion existed before the crucifixion. Horace quotes a proverb, *Credat Judæus Apella*, viz.: "Try to make the Jew Apella believe it,"—which implies that the Jews lived among the Romans and were known to them as sharp fellows who would not be taken in easily. They existed not only in Rome but all over the Græco-Roman empire, and wherever Paul went on his missionary journeys he found Jewish congregations,—in fact he himself was born during the Dispersion.

The Jews were known to the Gentiles as representatives of a rigorous monotheism; their claim that they were the worshipers of the only true God was reiterated, and their literature, written with mysterious characters in a strange tongue, was commonly accepted as a verification. The ancient pagan gods had lost the last semblance of authority, and so the Jewish protestation that they were idols, nonentities, vain conceits of an idle imagination, was willingly believed.

Taken all in all, the Jew was surrounded with a mystery which made it very plausible that some secret truth was hidden in Judaism. The striking characteristics which distinguish the Jew, called for an explanation and made it desirable for a universal religion, which like Judaism was monotheistic, to explain their existence and assign them a part in the development of truth.

This work was done by St. Paul, and his explanation was the more willingly accepted by the Gentiles as it explained also the odium in which the Jews were held. According to St. Paul, the Jews had been the chosen people of God, but who were now rejected on account of their stubborn attitude toward the Gospel which he preached.

There existed for some time a few Jewish colonies which were not dominated by the spirit of the post-Exilic reform. We name the one in Elephantine (or Jeb) in Upper Egypt and the other one in Tahpanhes, in Lower Egypt, both flourishing communities where, of late, interesting monuments have been discovered; but it is noteworthy that none of the colonies survived. Not being so narrow-minded as to condemn any approach to the life and habits of and intermarriage with the Gentiles, they disappeared in the long run. They lacked that preservative talisman without which the Jew would not essentially differ from other human beings.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JEW AND GENTILE.

**N**OW LET us ask what were the objections of the Jews to paganism?

We know that in all pagan religions a belief in the immortality of the soul was dearest to the pious, and judging from an ancient Babylonian poem, "Ishtar's Descent to Hell," and from other indications, we must assume that the Babylonians and other Gentiles tried to communicate with the dead in some way after the fashion of spiritualist seances by professional conjurers.

These mediums of ancient times are called in the Bible "wizards and witches," and their controls "familiar spirits." Against this class of people the ire of the exiled Jews seems to have blazed up most furiously, for they are condemned in the strongest terms in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic insertions of the priestly redactors. We are told again and again that they were expelled from Israel and the penalty of death by stoning was imposed upon them. And yet they must have existed in ancient times, for we have a graphic account of the witch of Endor whom Saul visited. Those verses which mention the expulsion of the wizards and witches by Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 9-10) are perhaps a later insertion of the priestly redactor

and, in order to explain how Saul could consult a witch, if witches were not tolerated in Israel, we are told that Saul visited the witch of Endor in the stealth of night. The account itself seems to be complete without these lines, and it would then appear that the king made no secret of his intention to seek an interview with the ghost of Samuel. At any rate the custom of citing ghosts was a great abomination to the Exilic and post-Exilic Jew, and it almost seems as if the leaders of the exiled Jews who gave a definite shape to Judaism by impressing their views upon the rest of the Jewish people, omitted, on account of their aversion to a ghost-conception of the dead, all references to a future life from their sacred literature and so gave the impression that they did not believe in immortality. It is difficult to say what the Israelites thought of the soul in the times of Saul, but it is probable that they then shared the views of their neighbors, while in post-Exilic times, the Jews were opposed to the immortality-conception of the Gentiles.

Now, at the same time we know that the Gentile belief in immortality is closely connected with their legends of the God-man who is born on earth, becomes a hero and a saviour, struggles for the cause of mankind, and is slain, to rise again from the tomb. All this was as much of an abomination to the Jew as was the worship of the Queen of Heaven. To the Jew, God was God and not a man, neither was he a woman. The idea

of a mother of God, a Goddess mother, or even a Goddess bride was to them so senseless that the Hebrew language avoided the formation of a word to express the female form of God.

We do not mean to defend the ancient paganism and its superstitions, but in fairness to truth we must say that many accusations of the Jews against the Gentile conception of gods is erroneous, especially so, the proposition that the Gentiles worshiped the very statues of their gods. The Psalmist says :

“The idols of the heathen are silver and gold  
The work of men’s hands.

“They have mouths, but they speak not ;  
Eyes have they, but they see not ;

“They have ears, but they hear not ;  
Neither is there any breath in their mouths,

“They that make them are like unto them :  
So is every one that trusteth in them.”

When we read the religious hymns of ancient Babylon and Egypt, many of which are full of noble inspiration, we receive quite another impression of the pagan polytheistic faith. Consider, for instance, the fervor and devotion of the following penitential psalm<sup>9</sup> which was sung in Babylon long before the Hebrew psalms were composed and may worthily be compared with the best of them :

“O that the heart of the Lord would turn his wrath far from  
me !

<sup>9</sup>Delitzch *Babel and Bible*, pp. 187, 206.



O Lord! my sins are many, great are my transgressions,  
 O my God, my Goddess, whether known or unknown to me,  
 Many are my sins and great are my transgressions—  
 I sought around about, but no one took my hand,  
 I wept, but there was none came near to comfort.  
 I cry aloud, but no one gives me ear,  
 Sorrowful, and overwhelmed, I can not look up.”

The venerable poets who sang hymns of this kind might very well be considered believers in monotheism, for the gods play the part of angels and archangels while one God reigns supreme in heaven. We read:

On earth—who is exalted? Thou alone art exalted!  
 When Thy word goeth forth in the heavens, the heavenly hosts  
 bow before Thee;

When Thy word goes forth upon earth, the spirits of earth  
 kiss the ground.

When upward mounteth Thy word like a hurricane, food and  
 drink are in plenty abounding.

Resoundeth Thy word in terrestrial places, green groweth the  
 grass in the meadows.

Thy word maketh fat the flocks and herds, and increaseth all  
 breath-endowed creatures.

We may be sure that the gods in the temples were not deemed to be gods themselves, but only their representative images, and we can see no difference between pagan idolatry so called and the use of icons in Christian churches. But this is a side issue; the main point is that the Jews were opposed to the worship of idols including the making of statues and images in any form; they were further opposed to the idea of a God-man, and to the belief in immortality



such as was held by all the Gentiles. These ideas, however, reasserted themselves in the Apocrypha and thus prepared the way for the foundation of gnostic views resembling Christianity, among such Jews as Philo, Apollos and finally St. Paul, the Apostle.

The contrast between Jew and Gentile is fundamentally based upon a temperamental difference. The Jew wants religion pure and simple; he takes monotheism seriously and brooks no mediation of intercessors, no mysticism, no allegorizing, no profound and abstruse symbols. The Gentile sees the divine everywhere. His monotheism is no rigid Unitarianism. He is a dualist whose conception of the duality of things is explained by a higher union and thus he formulates his belief in God as trinitarianism. He loves art and myth, and this makes him appear in the eye of the Jew as an idolator, a worshiper of images. He seeks God not only above the clouds but also in the living examples of heroes, of ideal men, of the great representatives of God on earth.

This same contrast of the two attitudes gave rise to the rigorously monotheistic Islam, but as there are Unitarians among the Christians, so there are among the Moslems, especially among the Sheites, those who believe in a second advent of Mohammed, of a Mahdi, or a saviour of some kind; and Behaism, the new religion that originated in Persia, proves that the idea of a divine Mediator is still alive in Mohammedan countries.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE JUDAISM OF JESUS.

**S**AINT PAUL speaks of Christ as the Son of David according to the flesh and follows in this the rabbinical tradition which was commonly established at the time of Jesus. David was the great hero in the history of Israel whose rule marks the period of the nation's greatest glory. In the times of their oppression they longed for a hero who would reestablish the kingdom of David and so it was but natural that the expected Messiah was called the son of David. But though the Messiah was so called, there is no reason why he should actually belong to the house of David. The house of David had died out with Zerubbabel, and if there were any of his family left they would have been able to trace their genealogy only indirectly to the royal house.

The genealogies of Joseph preserved in the New Testament are positively impossible and obviously of a late date. Even if they were tenable they would prove nothing of the descent of Jesus on the orthodox assumption, because Joseph was not deemed his father. We ought to have had a genealogy of Mary.

We must assume that in the days of Jesus, the claim of his disciples that he was the expected Messiah was met with the objection that nothing good could come

from Nazareth, and that the Messiah must be of the house of David. If Jesus could by any genealogy have established the claim of his descent from David, it would certainly have been recorded, but we have in the New Testament a passage repeated in the three synoptic Gospels which proves the very opposite, viz., that Jesus, in the presence of a large number of people assembled in the court of the temple, disproves the idea current among the scribes and Pharisees that the Messiah must be a son of David. This incident is repeated in Mark xii, 35-37; Matt. xxv, 41-46; and Luke xx, 41-44.

We quote the shortest report according to the Gospel of St. Mark as follows :

“And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

“For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

“David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.”

In reading these verses we must bear in mind that Psalm cx, to which Jesus refers, was in his days commonly ascribed to David, and the expression “My Lord” was interpreted to be addressed to the Anointed One, the Messiah. In claiming the dignity of Messiah, Jesus refutes the popular notion of a Messiahship which

was constituted merely by descent, the aristocracy of blood.

The question here is not whether the Psalm was really written by David nor whether the point which Christ makes is unanswerable. We have simply to note that by this argument he silenced the claim of the scribes and Pharisees which they must have made; for if this is an answer to a point raised by his enemies, it can only have been the proposition that no one else but a descendant of David ought to be the Messiah. The answer presupposes that Jesus was not of the family of David, but, that while he did not claim to be a descendant of the royal house, he yet held to the claim of Messiahship. If he was called the son of David by his adherents and by the sick who sought his help, it was only because in popular parlance the terms Messiah and Son of David had been identified.

For these reasons we must assume that Jesus was born a Galilean, a child of the people, and the story of his royal descent was an afterthought. It was attributed to him in the same way as five hundred years before him, it was claimed that Buddha was the son of a king.

While Jesus was probably a Galilean, and as such, of Gentile blood, though not purely Aryan,<sup>10</sup> yet he

<sup>10</sup>The Galileans were fanatical Jews according to their religion, but they were a mixed race and we will grant to Professor Haupt (See Open Court, Vol. XXIII, p. 193 ff.) that Galilee has been peopled by immigrants of Aryan descent. Granting the argument, we are, however, not prepared to say that Jesus was an Aryan. First we know that the Aryan immigrants were not

was certainly a Jew by religion. He sent out his disciples to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," and adds the special injunction not to go to the Samaritans nor to the Gentiles (Matt. x, 5-6). How little tenable it is to interpret this as a temporary measure to be superseded afterwards by a world mission, appears from verse 23, where Christ declares, "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the son of man be come," which can only mean the second advent of Christ in all his glory, for in any other possible sense the first advent had taken place, since the son of man had come and was speaking to them.

According to Matt. xv, 22 ff., and Mark vii, 25 ff., Jesus refuses his help to a Gentile woman. She is called a Canaanite in the former account and a Greek of Syro-Phœnician nationality in the other. Jesus says to her, "it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." She takes his harsh answer in full recognition of the superiority of the Jews, and taking up the same mode of expression which Jesus uses she answers, "Yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Only on account of pure Aryans, but, like the Persians and even more than they, were considerably mixed with Semitic blood, for their ancestors had been living among Semites for centuries; and in addition we know that many Syrians and Phœnicians and remnants of the aboriginal population were living in Galilee. All we can say is that Jesus was a Galilean and the Galileans were a people of mixed blood.

her great faith Jesus yields and heals her daughter. Luke, who is a Gentile himself, omits the story.

We must remember that the Jews called the Gentiles "dogs" and "swine" and we may very well interpret Christ's saying (Matt. vii, 6), that that which is "holy" should not be given to the dogs, and that pearls should not be cast before the swine, in this same sense, that the blessings of his Gospel do not belong to the Gentiles.

The most important passage in which Jesus stands up for Judaism is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, where we read:

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

The Greek words "jot" and "tittle" denote the diacritical points used in the Hebrew text, and so this saying of Jesus does not only insist on the law in the letter but includes the most unessential parts of the letter also. One could not express himself more severely as insisting on the significance of a literal presentation of the law than is done here in a word ascribed to Jesus, and this word stands in strong contradiction to the spirit which permeates the religion of Jesus as it is commonly understood, and especially to the principles in which the Sermon on the Mount is written. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists that the spirit is the main thing, and according to other passages he would abolish the letter in order to pre-

serve and insist on the spirit which constitutes the purpose of the law. But if this passage means what it says, the fulfilment of the law must go down into the most minute details, insisted on so vigorously that the law in its very letter is more stable than heaven and earth. Heaven and earth shall pass away before we can expect a relaxation of the Mosaic law. The parallel passage of this sentence is found in Luke xvi, 17, which reads as follows:

“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”

It is obvious that this doctrine is contrary to the interpretation which had been established in the Gentile churches, and we know that it was vigorously opposed by St. Paul. He claimed that the law had been fulfilled, and that the pagans need not be held to observe the details of the Mosaic law, such as circumcision, abstinence from pork, etc., and yet the passage is unequivocal. This seems to be the best proof of its genuineness.

Texts have often been altered to conform to new doctrines, and so we are justified in assuming that verses which incorporate an older but rejected view represent the original text and are traces of a belief that is no longer countenanced. Only by some inadvertence were they suffered to remain, and after the text became too sacred for alterations, proved a stumbling-block to exegetics. Our passage is to all appearance such a relic, the character of which still bears



witness to an older tradition. The severity with which the preservation of the Mosaic law is insisted upon is modified, however, by the words "Till all be fulfilled."

It is not impossible that this second clause in the sentence, "till all be fulfilled," is an addition made by a Gentile Christian scribe, with the intention of softening the meaning of this sentence. Paul claimed that the law was fulfilled in Christ, and for this reason it need no longer be observed by the Gentiles. Paul's arguments appealed to the Gentiles and they no longer felt bound to obey the Mosaic law, so the scribe by adding the clause "till all be fulfilled" reminds his readers of the Pauline doctrine that in spite of the acknowledged divinity of the Mosaic law it was no longer in force since it had been fulfilled in Christ; but in inserting this clause, "till all be fulfilled," he forgot to cancel the other statement which it was intended to replace, "till heaven and earth shall pass away"; and so we have here a double condition, one which reflects the original meaning, the other, the new interpretation put on it.

Since it is not probable that these passages which indicate the Jewish spirit of Jesus were later inventions, because the Gentile Church would not have invented these sayings and would not have superadded them to the sacred text, the opposite must be assumed to be nearer the truth, viz., that the original Jesus was and actually remained a Jew in his religion but that later traditions tended more and more to obliterate his



Jewish conviction and superadded to the traditional text, sayings of a more cosmopolitan character. It is noticeable, for instance, that the only important passage in which Jesus shows the intention of founding a universal religion is an utterance attributed to him after his death and before his ascension, when he says (Mark xvi, 15), "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

The personality of Jesus must have been unusually attractive and sympathetic, especially to the poor, the lowly, the oppressed; but he was a Jew in his convictions, and had he not been a Jew he would have been out of harmony with his surroundings, for cosmopolitan ideas would scarcely have appealed to the poor Galilean fisher-folk.

We do not accept the theory that the life of Jesus was a myth. We believe that he was a real person and that ultimately the Gospel accounts are based upon fact. Nevertheless the Gospel story is not history; it is strongly colored by the Christology of the Church, and the modifications which the original story underwent are the communal work of successive generations, until the Gospel assumed a shape that was generally acceptable to the majority of Christians. New Testament scholars are fairly well agreed that Mark represents the oldest account of the historical Jesus. It presupposes an earlier Gospel, the so-called Proto-Mark, which served as a source for the three synoptic Gospels and is, in its turn, based upon still older documents,

the Logia and other personal reminiscences of Jesus. Matthew is a Judaizing redaction and incorporates additional material, while Luke, being compiled from other sources, was adapted for the use of Gentiles.<sup>11</sup> The fourth Gospel, however, though it seems to have incorporated some new reliable information, probably genuine Johannine traditions, is, upon the whole, the least historical, but it ranges highest in its philosophical conception. It represents the final stage in which Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Man, has at last become the Christ, the Logos, the Saviour of all mankind.

There is a faction of Christianity to-day, as there always has been, who would discard the Christological additions and go back to the historical Jesus, but their procedure seems to me to be based upon an error. Religion can never be founded upon historical facts or single occurrences, nor upon individual characters, but must always rest upon eternal truths. It is not the life of Jesus that will be helpful, but what we make of it; mankind needs a Christ and thus each successive Christian generation has interpreted the story of Jesus in the spirit of its highest conception of Christ.

Scholarly investigations of Gospel documents to determine the facts of the life of Jesus as to his actuality, his views, his race, his character, etc., may be of archæ-

<sup>11</sup>That Luke quotes Buddhist texts as "Scriptures" has been proved by Mr. Albert J. Edmunds in his *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*.

ological interest, or may even possess historical value, but they are absolutely useless for religious purposes. It is quite indifferent whether Jesus was a Jew, or Galilean, whether a Semite or an Aryan, and it is also of very little consequence what view he held. Whether rightly or wrongly, the fact which we have to deal with is this, that to Christians Jesus has become the Christ. The personality of Jesus is a mere thread upon which Christians string the pearls of their religious interpretations of ideals of manhood, of the God-man, of the deity that has become flesh.

Historical investigations of the story of Jesus are apt to disclose conditions which would not please us, for it seems that what to a modern man is most repugnant, his claims of being able to drive out devils, is historically the most assured fact of his life. But what of it? Religion lets the dead past bury its dead. Jesus is gone, but Christ remains, and the living presence counts. The religion of the Christians has for good reasons been called, not Jesuism after the name of Jesus, but Christianity after Christ, the ideal of humanity, which is not an individual being but a super-personal presence, not a man who lived and died at a certain time, but like the Platonic ideas, an eternal type, the prototype of the highest ideal of manhood. And the Christian doctrine of the preexistence of Christ conveys a great truth, for this prototype is eternal with God; it is the Logos uncreate and without end; it is, to

use the mystic and profound symbolism of dogmatic Christianity, God the Son begotten in all eternity by God the Father.

CONCLUSION.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SUMMARY.

**C**HRISTIANITY may be compared to a composite portrait as made by Galton, who photographed a number of faces belonging to a certain class in such a way as to bring out their general type, taking only short exposures of each individual. They must be so posed that the noses and the eyes coincide upon the sensitive plate. In the composite picture which results therefrom, the individual differences disappear while the common features come out strongly and produce a new portrait, which is the ideal type of all its component factors.

The relation of Christianity to the ancient pagan religions is quite similar to that which obtains between the composite photograph and the several exposures which produce it. Every faith of antique paganism left an impression more or less dim and every one was repudiated with its individual traits. Nevertheless the underlying principles of all the several religions which were mostly the same, remained in the minds of the people, and they produced a new type which was impressed upon the dualistic world-conception then prevalent. This picture, a composite of all the previous religions, looked quite unlike each single one of the originals that had contributed its share to

the formation of the whole, and yet it was the sum total of their fusion.

The alliance between Christianity and Judaism was as close as childhood by adoption can be. Christianity entered upon the inheritance and claimed the history and traditions of Israel as its own, but for all that, its inmost constitution remained different from Judaism. The nature of an adopted child will not be that of its foster father, but will keep true to the blood of its own parents. The spirit of Christianity was Gentile from the start and has remained so in spite of the great influence of the Old Testament Scriptures upon its further development.

It is difficult to appreciate how closely the fate of rivals is always interlinked. Judaism gave to Christianity its finishing touches and Christianity incorporated into itself much of Judaism, yet the two have most fanatically anathematized each other in the past. In one sense Christianity supersedes the ancient paganism, and in another sense the ancient paganism reappears in a new form in Christian doctrines. Yet the Church Fathers can not speak of the pagans without maligning them bitterly and unjustly. It may be literally true that the bitterer the hostility between two rivals, the more similar are they in spirit; the more marked the contrast is, the greater must be their kinship. This statement almost appears like a corroboration of the pantheistic idea of the identity of Brahma



in all things, which makes the red slayer the same as his victim, the one he slays.

When we speak of the pagan character of Christianity, we mean neither to disparage Christianity nor to deny the fact that its appearance represents a new era in the history of the world. We use the term only to bring out forcibly the truth that (in spite of the important part played by Judaism) Christianity is in all its essential doctrines the legitimate result of the religious development of mankind,—not of Judaism, but of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, but mainly of the Gentiles, i. e., the nations. Instead of belittling Christianity, we must raise our estimate of and our respect for paganism, which was neither so thoughtlessly idolatrous, nor so immoral as it has been commonly represented.

The Jewish contribution to the development of religion is more negative than positive; it is like the salt that gives the flavor, but the meat was furnished by the Gentiles.

Christianity is like a big river which drains an enormous territory. It has not one source but innumerable sources, and the character of its waters together with its course depends upon the geography of the whole country, not upon what is commonly called its source. Yet people will insist on calling one spring of the whole system the source of the river, as if that alone had caused its existence and none of the others need be taken into consideration.

Sometimes it happens (as for instance in the Mississippi-Missouri system) that the largest stream which supplies most of the water and has the longest course does not bear the name of the main river, and the same is true in the history of Christianity. The largest supply of its substance and also the most essential ingredients so far as quality is concerned, viz., that portion which determines the nature of its doctrines, is not furnished by Judaism to which its origin is commonly traced, but by paganism; and when we pass in review the teachings of Jesus himself, as recorded in the synoptic gospels, we can discover nothing that is typically Christian.

There is a joke told by Austrians on a Magyar who is said to have traveled to the source of the Danube, where he stopped the water so that for a little while it would not flow, and with a mischievous twinkle in his eye he exclaimed: "What a surprise it will be to the people in Vienna when the Danube suddenly runs dry!" This view of the origin of rivers is not unlike the current interpretation of the history of Christianity which is supposed to have received all its momentum either from the Sermon on the Mount, or the death of Jesus on the cross.

The spread of the Gospel of Jesus which we trace in its continuity in ecclesiastic history, is to be complemented by a consideration of innumerable other lines of thought which, like tributaries of a stream, have

become merged into the Christian doctrines and have considerably modified them.

We shall never be able to understand the nature of the records of the life of Jesus that have come down to us, unless we bear in mind how they were altered and interpreted from the standpoint of these later additions, how they were redacted to remove what had become obsolete, and generally how they were again and again adapted to the new requirements.

Christianity is not the work of one man, but the product of ages. When the inhabitants of the countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea were, for the first time in history, united into one great empire, they became conscious of the solidarity of the human race and felt the need of a universal religion. In response to that need, answers were given by thinkers, moral teachers, and religious leaders, whose doctrines were more or less echoed in the sentiment of the large masses. These large masses were, after all, the ultimate court of appeal which would render a final decision.

Several religions originated, but Christianity alone survived, because it contained in a definite form what vaguely and indefinitely was slumbering in the subconscious sentiment of public opinion. Christianity had gathered into itself the quintessence of the past, and presented solutions of the problems of religion which were most compatible with the new conditions.

The generations of the first three centuries molded and remolded the Christian documents until they acquired a shape that would be in accord with the prevalent view of the times.

The subconscious ideal which in dim outlines animated multitudes, consisted of traditional religious views inherited from the hoary past. It was fashioned by the old religions and contained the ideas of a saviour, of the God-man, and of his martyr death, of his victory over all ill and of his return to life, of forgiveness of sins, of the restitution of the world, of a golden age, a millennium and the foundation of a kingdom of God on earth. Such was the demand of the age, and Virgil's fourth eclogue is one instance only in which this sentiment finds a poetical expression.

At the same time, all the fables of mythology were discredited. The tales of Heracles, and of Adonis, of Æsculapius, and of Osiris, of all the several ancient saviours, were no longer believed; they now appeared fantastical and had become untrue and unsatisfactory. A real saviour of historical actuality was demanded. It is natural that some people expected him to appear on the throne as the restorer of peace and many greeted Augustus as a divine incarnation, the representative of God on earth. But his successors did not come up to the expectations of the people and Nero's example alone was sufficient to overthrow the belief in the divinity of the Emperor. The saviour could not be of this world, he had to be a man, and yet a God, not of

secular power, but king of a spiritual empire, a king of truth, and so the personality of Jesus became more and more acceptable as the true saviour.

The ideal which constituted the demand was of Gentile manufacture, and Christianity, its fulfilment, is in this respect Gentile too; it was un-Jewish, or pagan. But being such, pagan means human; it denotes what is typical of mankind. The pagan world offered some positive solutions of the old world-problem and Judaism criticized them. Judaism represents the spirit of negation—albeit a much needed and wholesome negation.

We grant that paganism contains many objectionable features and so the Jewish attitude of negation is justified. Paganism was weighed and found wanting. Christianity then renewed the old issues but made them pass through the furnace of the Jewish condemnation of pagan mythology. The result was that the same old beliefs were so thoroughly transfigured as to render them something quite new.

Christianity accepts the old pagan world-conception and yet it is not a mere repetition of the old paganism. If we call it “paganism *redivivus*” we do not mean to say that it remains on the same level of primitive superstitions. It is the old paganism, broadened into universalism and purified by a severe monotheism. The old religion was thereby liberated of its most obvious faults, of narrowness, of crude literalism, of naive naturalism, and other childish notions.

The God of evolution works by laws and the marvels of his dispensation can be traced in the natural development of affairs. Just as the snowflake exhibits a design of unfailing regularity and great beauty, so the *denouement* of historical events takes place according to an intrinsic necessity which gives it a definite direction, and when at the seasonable time definite aims are attained—aims which have been prepared by preceding events—the result appears like the work of a predetermined purpose. It is an immanent teleology which dominates the world. The old legends naturally appear like prophecies which in Jesus Christ have found their fulfilment, and so we can truly speak of Christianity as the pleroma.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY.

**N**OW THE question arises, "What will become of Christianity?"

If the historical events of the past are to be taken as precedents, religions come and pass away according to definite conditions. They will have their beginning and their end, and Christianity may disappear just as the religions of antiquity died out. Christianity had its origin; it reached the heights of its dogmatic unfoldment; it passed through several phases, and at present, the current views of its most essential doctrines are fast changing. We have lost the naïveté of our forefathers. Some dogmas have been considerably modified, others have been silently dropped, and not a few have become purely symbolical. Upon the whole we may say that we no longer believe in the letter of the credo.

Are these facts to be considered as symptoms of decay which indicate the end of Christianity? We do not think so; all depends upon Christianity and its representatives. If Christianity possesses sufficient innate strength to assimilate the new truths of science, it will survive and emerge from the present crisis stronger than before; but if it rejects the new revelation it is doomed.

It has been customary to characterize scientific truth



as secular and purely human, in contrast with theological truth as divine, but this conception is based upon an error. The truth of science, if it is genuine truth, is not made by man, it is superhuman. Scientific truths are not fashioned by scientists, they are discovered, and being the eternalities of existence, they represent the divine thoughts that sway the world. Science is a genuine revelation, and we may look upon it, to use theological language, as the revelation of the Holy Spirit. There is a great truth in the saying that all sins may be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Spirit. If a portion of mankind—a church or a sect, or individuals—harden themselves against the light of science, if they shut out progress, if they deny truth, they will necessarily stunt their individual and moral growth. Their souls will be crippled thereby, they will cut themselves off from the tree of life by refusing the guidance of God's truth.

But the question before us is whether it is an essential feature of Christianity to shut out the light of science, to repudiate progress, and refuse to learn from the living revelation of God's eternal truths.

Christianity has adapted itself to new conditions again and again; it has grown thereby and gradually developed into the religion that it is to-day, and there is no reason to doubt that it will do so again. The Christianity of the future will be broader, deeper, and more in accord with scientific truth.



It is true enough that the confessions of faith made in former centuries are antiquated, but they must be regarded as historical documents; they were good for their time, but must make way for a more scientific comprehension. We grant the claim of those who cling to the old manner of thinking, that a scientific comprehension is not Christianity as it was originally understood, that it is something entirely new which in many respects destroys the childlike spirit of a literal belief. But did not the God of Christianity himself proclaim: "Lo, I make all things new"?

We, who have passed from the old to the new, sometimes become homesick for the old, comfortable belief when man was so easily satisfied with the symbol, with the parable, with a poetical figure and a pious sentiment. Even the remembrance of those days has remained dear to us. Goethe, who experienced this change of mind himself, has repeatedly described this attitude in glowing terms. Faust, on hearing the Easter bells proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, thinks of the faith of his childhood, and he regrets that the message has no longer a meaning for him since his belief is gone. Yet the vision of the faith of his earlier days haunts him. He thinks of his unbounded trust in God's eternal love, of seeking communion with Him in solitude and of the unspeakable rapture of fervent prayer:

"Und ein Gebet war brünstiger Genuss."

If the belief in the dogma is gone, shall we at the same time discard that religious sentiment which has been so important a guide to mankind in former centuries? Is that rapturous devotion that thrills the individual and adjusts his relation to the cosmos really a fantastic illusion, of which we must rid ourselves in future?

Christianity has been the sacred vessel in which the noble sentiments of religion have been treasured; and will not the contents be spilled if the cup be broken? Does the breakdown of dogmatism really forebode the end of religion?

A prominent French scholar, M. J. Guyau, has written a book which created a sensation, and its tenets have been adopted by innumerable freethinkers the world over. It is entitled "*The Irreligion of the Future*," and Guyau claims in it that, in ages to come, mankind will be without any religion, for science will have destroyed the strongholds of the old faith one after another until nothing is left and the formulæ of natural law will rule supreme. His views seem quite plausible to those who have grown up in a country where people have only the choice between the irreconcilable contrast of ultra-montanism on the one hand, and the *libres penseurs* on the other. In France, people who hold a middle ground are so rare, that during the last half century they have played no prominent part in public life. In Protestant countries conditions are different. The large majorities do not favor either

extreme, but are in a state of transition that will result in a new and higher conception. Protestantism has its weak points, but it has guided mankind on the right path and prepared a faith that will no longer stand in contradiction to science.

Protestantism is not the end or final state of religion. It is a movement which from the start was not conscious of its final aims. While its leaders tried only to bring about a reform, they actually introduced a new principle and led religion into a new phase of its development. It was originally a mere negation of some features in the administration of the Roman Catholic Church. The very name indicates that it started as a protest to the old; but it is bound to take the consequences of its first step, which is the recognition of scientific truth, of liberty of conscience, of the duty of inquiry. This will lead to a new assertion, and its position will advance to a firmer and more enduring foundation.

Unless the very nature of mankind changes, the future of history will not be irreligious. On the contrary, it will be more truly religious than ever. It will discard those superstitious elements that are so often regarded as the essential features of religion, and will insist, with greater emphasis, on essential truths. We are bound to reach the bottom rock where religion will have nothing to fear from the critique of science.

We venture to say that the new movement will

spring from the very orthodox ranks, which, by and by, will unhesitatingly recognize all the truth of science and reinterpret the old in the spirit of the new. They will retain all the good of their traditions without making the slightest concession to either hypocrisy or equivocation, and without sacrificing the uplift of genuine devotion. In a word, the future of religion will be a reinterpretation of the old, and it is natural that all religions will convergingly tend towards the same goal.

## CHAPTER XX.

### RELIGION ETERNAL.

#### THE FUTURE.

**T**HE RELIGION of the future will have to satisfy the essential needs of the human heart. We drift tempest-tossed on the ocean of life, and we need guidance and comfort and encouragement. In the face of the unrest that surrounds us, we want to have the assurance of a firm ground wherein our anchor can catch. We want to know our goal and the direction in which we have to steer. All this must be supplied by religion, and where our knowledge is insufficient, faith steps in.

Religion is inborn in every soul in the same way as gravity is an inalienable part of all matter. Every particle that exists is interlinked with the whole of the cosmos. Its momentum is determined in the exact proportion of its weight, of its position, and generally of its relation to the All. The innate energy of every particle, every molecule, every atom, presses forth in one direction or another beyond its own limits as if it were yearning beyond itself. No piece of matter is an existence in itself; its nature and its movements are conditioned by the rest of the universe and it can find the fulfilment of its longing only outside its own being. In the same way, every sentient soul yearns beyond

itself and becomes easily conscious of the fact that it is only a part of an immeasurably great whole, of the All that stretches forth into unknown infinitudes, and that the significance of its life lies outside the sphere of its ego. This All-feeling of the individual, this panpathy, is religion, and religion is a natural presence in every human breast.

Religion grows up in unconscious spontaneity and asserts itself first in sentiment. It is so strong that it may be counted as the deepest passion of which man is capable. It is possessed of a motive power that excels all other passions, even love not excepted, and can, if misdirected, lead to deeds that would otherwise be impossible, such as sacrifice of what is dearest to the heart, even the bodily sacrifice of oneself or of one's own children on the altar of a deity who is believed to demand such offerings.

But religion is not merely feeling. Religion enters into every fibre of man's spiritual existence, and throughout the development of human actions it remains the factor that adjusts the relation of the individual to the All. It grows and matures with the growth and maturity of man. It weaves out of his experiences a world-conception in which it appoints him to his place, assigns his duties and furnishes direction for his conduct.

Religion teaches us that we are parts only of a great whole. We are not alone in the world. Not only is our bodily existence at every moment determined by its

surroundings, but our souls also are interlinked with the fate of others, of creatures more or less like us, sentient beings who have developed by our side as formations parallel to us, in whose company we have become such as we are. Our own destiny extends to them, and makes them parts of this, our extended self. Neither are we the beginning nor the end of life. We come into being and disappear, while the whole, from which we have emerged, remains. From this state of things we learn to treat our fellows with consideration, yea, with respect, to look upon the past with reverence and upon the future with solicitude.

Our neighbor is our alter-ego. No one is a stranger to us; all are our brothers and we cannot maltreat them without hurting ourselves. The same truth that holds good for space, is applicable to time. We are a mere phase in the life of the whole. We have grown from the past and we owe to it our entire existence. In fact, we are the past as it continues in the present. The past has furnished even the potentialities from which we develop our noblest aspirations. Our very selves are additions made by us in building up the future, and in the future we continue. The future is the harvest which we expect. It is our own existence as we mold it, and all the duties we have in life are for the future. In the future lie the mansions which our souls build up, therein to live when our bodies have fallen to dust.



The function of religion, however, goes deeper still. This entire world is the actualization of eternal types. It develops according to law and brings into existence those possibilities which, in philosophy, are called Platonic Ideas. Accordingly, man is not a mere congeries of atoms, he is more than a corporeal conglomeration of matter, he is the actualization of the type of his personality; his essential and characteristic being consists in the ideas he thinks, in the aims he pursues, and in the significance which he possesses for the whole movement of human life.

In every one of us there is something eternal that has made its appearance in corporeal and visible shape, and no thinking man will identify himself with the dust of his body; he will seek his real being in his volitions, his aims, his ideals—in all that constitutes his spiritual nature.

Religion reminds us of the eternal background against which the fleeting phenomena of the material world take shape. The eternal of man's life is the essential part of his being transfiguring the transient in which it is actualized.

Man is not born a philosopher. He grows up from primitive conditions and is compelled to act and adjust his conduct even before he knows the world or himself. And so religion, which, as we have seen, animates his entire being and unconsciously dominates all his sentiments from the very bottom of his heart, comes to him



in the shape of allegories and symbols. He feels religion before he formulates it in doctrines, and the first doctrines are naturally mere formulations of the symbols wherein truth first dawns upon him. But the higher man rises, the better he understands how to distinguish between symbol and truth, between letter and spirit, between the parable and its meaning. In the dogmatic state we were like children, nursed with fairy tales and parables; but in manhood we shall see the truth face to face and shall have a clear and unequivocal comprehension of it.

That faith of the future which we know must come, will certainly not be less religious than its former phases. It will be simply the fulfilment of the present which we then shall regard as mere preparations for it, as mere stations on the road to the goal—the new pleroma, the pleroma expected to-day.

\* \* \*

We are aware that Christianity is not the only religion in the world, and its rivals, from their standpoint, have made honest endeavors to reach the truth in their own ways. In every part of the world man has used the light at his disposal. In consideration of this fact we can no longer look upon one religion as possessing the absolute truth, and upon all others as inventions of Satan. We know that all of them possess more or less of the truth and that not one of them is perfect.

We do not wish to be misunderstood; we do not

say that all religions are alike; we only say that all travel toward the same goal; they have reached different stations and are more or less advanced. The nearer to truth, to the living truth that teaches the right way of living, the higher they are.

There is a stage of development in which we lose the desire to glorify our own religion at the expense of others; and we look with a smile upon the anxiety of the sectarian who magnifies the merit of his own sect and delights in defaming others, although he does it *in maiorem Dei gloriam* in the hope of thus pleasing the deity whom he serves. There is a higher ideal than our own church affiliation. It is truth, and the God of truth is higher than our God, higher than our limited conception of deity.

We learn more and more to give honor to the truth wherever it may be found, and under the influence of this sentiment a brotherly feeling has originated which gave birth to the Religious Parliament in 1893, in which even the most orthodox churches took part. It is an actual instance wherein representatives of all the great faiths of the world came together in tolerance and kindness. Every one came to explain his own faith, not to disparage that of others; nor was there any intention to break down or to replace the old traditions by a new religion.

The new, when it comes, will have to develop from the old, and it will practically have to be the old in a

new interpretation. We must build the future from the past, and we have to utilize the materials which we have on hand.

We deem it possible that several religions may continue side by side to the end of the world, and there would be no harm in a disparity in name, institutions and organizations. These things are not the essential parts of religion. It might be good for the world, if rivalry would remain between different churches, different races, different nations. There can be no objection to a divergence of types; but, after all, whatever may be the names of religions and denominations, their essential doctrines, the meaning of their ceremonies and above all their moral ideals will have to become the same throughout the world, for these are the essentials of religion, and must accord with the eternal truths of cosmic existence.

The Church universal of the future need not be one large centralized body, it need not be one power consolidated into one organization, it need not be governed from one central point, but it must be one in spirit, it must be one in love of truth, one in brotherhood, and one in the earnestness of moral endeavor.

I conclude these remarks on the nature of the religion of the future with the words which, as secretary of the Religious Parliament Extension, I pronounced at the decennial celebration of the World's Religious Parliament in 1903:

“Let us all join in the work of extending true religion. Let us greet, not only our brethren, but also those who, in sincerity, disagree with us, and let us thus prepare a home in our hearts for truth, love and charity, so that the kingdom of heaven, which is as near at hand to-day as it was nineteen hundred years ago, may manifest itself within us, and become more and more the reformatory power of our public and private life.”

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