

**DREWS
ARTHUR**

THE CHRIST
MYTH

Arthur Drews
The Christ Myth

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The Christ Myth:

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Arthur Drews

The Christ Myth

PREFACE TO THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS

Since David Frederick Strauss, in his “Life of Jesus,” attempted for the first time to trace the Gospel stories and accounts of miracles back to myths and pious fictions, doubts regarding the existence of an historical Jesus have never been lulled to rest. Bruno Bauer also in his “Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte und der Synoptiker” (1841–42, 2nd ed. 1846),¹ disputed the historical existence of Jesus; later, in his “Christ und die Cäsaren, der Ursprung des Christentums aus dem römischen Griechentum” (1877), he attempted to show that the life of Jesus was a pure invention of the first evangelist, Mark, and to account for the whole Christian religion from the Stoic and Alexandrine culture of the second century, ascribing to Seneca especially a material influence upon the development of the Christian point of view. But it was reserved for the present day, encouraged by the essentially negative results of the so-called critical theology, to take up the subject energetically, and thereby to attain to results

¹ Cf. also his “Kritik der Evangelien,” 2 vols. (1850–51).

even bolder and more startling.

In England John M. Robertson, in "Christianity and Mythology" (1900), in "A Short History of Christianity" (1902), as well as in his work "Pagan Christs: Studies in Comparative Hierology" (1903), has traced the picture of Christ in the Gospels to a mixture of mythological elements in heathenism and Judaism.

In France, as early as the end of the eighteenth century, Dupuis ("L'origine de tous les cultes," 1795) and Voltaire ("Les Ruines," 1791) traced back the essential points of the history of the Christian redemption to astral myths, while Émile Burnouf ("La science des religions," 4th ed., 1885) and Hochart ("Études d'histoire religieuse," 1890) collected important material for the clearing up of the origin of Christianity, and by their results cast considerable doubt upon the existence of an historical Christ.

In Italy Milesbo (Emilio Bossi) has attempted to prove the non-historicity of Jesus in his book "Gesù Christo non è mai esistito" (1904).

In Holland the Leyden Professor of Philosophy, Bolland, handled the same matter in a series of works ("Het Lijden en Sterven van Jezus Christus," 1907; "De Achtergrond der Evangelien. Eene Bijdrage tot de kennis van de Wording des Christendoms," 1907; "De evangelische Jozua. Eene poging tot aanwijzing van den oorsprong des Christendoms," 1907).

In Poland the mythical character of the story of Jesus has been shown by Andrzej Niemojewski in his book "Bóg Jezus" (1909),

which rests on the astral-mythological theories of Dupuis and the school of Winckler.

In Germany the Bremen Pastor Kalthoff, in his work, "Das Christusproblem, Grundlinien zu einer Sozialtheologie" (1903), thought that the appearance of the Christian religion could be accounted for without the help of an historical Jesus, simply from a social movement of the lower classes under the Empire, subsequently attempting to remove the one-sidedness of this view by his work "Die Entstehung des Christentums. Neue Beiträge zum Christusproblem" (1904). (Cf. also his work "Was wissen wir von Jesus? Eine Abrechnung mit Professor D. Bousset," 1904.) A supplement to the works of Kalthoff in question is furnished by Fr. Steudel in "Das Christusproblem und die Zukunft des Protestantismus" (Deutsche Wiedergeburt, 1909).

Finally, the American, William Benjamin Smith, in his work, "The Pre-Christian Jesus" (1906), has thrown so clear a light upon a number of important points in the rise of Christianity, and elucidated so many topics which give us a deeper insight into the actual correlation of events, that we gradually commence to see clearly in this connection.

"The time is passed," says Jülicher, "when among the learned the question could be put whether an 'historical' Jesus existed at all."² The literature cited does not appear to justify this assertion. On the contrary, that time seems only commencing. Indeed, an

² "Kultur d. Gegenwart: Gesch. d. christl. Religion," 2nd ed., 1909, 47.

unprejudiced judge might find that even Jülicher's own essay, in which he treated of the so-called founder of the Christian religion in the "Kultur der Gegenwart," and in which he declared it "tasteless" to look upon the contents of the Gospels as a myth, speaks rather against than for the historical reality of Jesus. For the rest, official learning in Germany, and especially theology, has, up to the present, remained, we may almost say, wholly unmoved by all the above-mentioned publications. To my mind it has not yet taken up a serious position regarding Robertson. Its sparing citations of his "Pagan Christs" do not give the impression that there can be any talk of its having a real knowledge of his expositions.³

It has, moreover, passed Kalthoff over with the mien of a better informed superiority or preferably with silent scorn, and up to the present it has avoided with care any thoroughgoing examination of Smith.⁴ And yet such a distinguished theologian

³ The same is true of Clemen, who, judging by his "Religionsgeschichtl. Erklärung d. N.T." (1909), appears to be acquainted with Robertson's masterpiece, "Christianity and Mythology," only from a would-be witty notice of Réville, and furthermore only cites the author when he thinks he can demolish him with ease.

⁴ A. Hausrath, in his work "Jesus u. die neutestamentlichen Schriftsteller," vol. i. (1908), offers a striking example of how light a matter our theologians make it to overthrow the attacks of the opponents of an historical Jesus. In scarcely three pages at the commencement of his compendious work he rejects the myth theory of Bruno Bauer with the favourite appeal to a few individual and historical features of the Gospel tradition which are intrinsically of no significance, finishing up this "refutation" with a reckless citation from Weinle which proves nothing for the historical character of Jesus.

as Professor Paul Schmiedel, of Zürich, who furnished a foreword to Smith's work, laid such an examination upon his colleagues as a "duty of all theologians making any claim to a scientific temper," and strongly warned them against any under-estimation of Smith's highly scientific work! "How can one then confidently stand by his former views," Schmiedel cries to his theological colleagues, "unless he investigates whether they have not in whole or in part been undermined by these new opinions? Or is it a question of some secondary matter merely, and not rather of exactly what for the majority forms the fundamental part of their Christian conviction? But if these new opinions are so completely futile, then it must be an easy matter, indeed a mere nothing, to show this."

In the meantime there are many voices which speak out against the existence of an historical Jesus. In wide circles the doubt grows as to the historical character of the picture of Christ given in the Gospels. Popular works written with a purpose, such as the investigations of the Frenchman Jacolliot, worked up by Plange into "Jesus ein Inder" (1898), have to serve to alleviate this thirst for knowledge and confuse views more than they clear them. In a short work, "Die Entstehung des Christentums" (1905), Promus has afforded a brief *résumé* of the most important matter bearing on the point, without any working up of it on its own account, and attacked the existence of an historical Jesus. Lately Karl Voller, the prematurely deceased Jena Orientalist, in his valuable work, "Die Weltreligionen

in ihrem geschichtlichen Zusammenhange" (1907), voiced the opinion "that weighty reasons favour this radical myth interpretation, and that no absolutely decisive arguments for the historicity of the person of Jesus can be brought forward" (*op. cit.* i. 163).

Another Orientalist, P. Jensen, in his work "Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur" (1906), even thinks that he can show that both the main lines of the Old Testament story and the whole narrative of the life of Jesus given in the Gospels are simply variations of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic (about 2000 B.C.), and consequently a pure myth.⁵

While criticism of the Gospel documents is advancing more boldly and always leaving in existence less of an historical Jesus, the number of works in popular religious literature intended to glorify Jesus the man grows enormously. These endeavour to make up for the deficiency in certain historical material by sentimental phrases and the deep tone of conviction; indeed, the rhetoric which is disseminated with this design⁶ seems to find more sympathy in proportion as it works with less historical restraint. And yet learning as such has long come to the point when the historical Jesus threatens to disappear from under its hands. The latest results in the province of Oriental mythology and religion, the advances in the comparative history of religion,

⁵ Cf. also his work "Moses, Jesus, Paulus. Drei sagen varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesch," 2nd ed., 1909.

⁶ Cf., for example, "Jesus Vier Vorträge, geh. in Frankf." 1910.

that are associated in England with the names of Frazer and Robertson especially, and in Germany with those of Winckler, Jeremias, Gunkel, Jensen, &c., have so much increased our knowledge of the religious position of Nearer Asia in the last century before Christ, that we are no longer obliged to rely exclusively upon the Gospels and the other books of the New Testament for the rise of Christianity.⁷ The critical and historical theology of Protestantism has itself thrown so deep a light upon the origins of the Christian religion that the question as to the historical existence of Jesus loses all paradox which hitherto

⁷ In other respects the “progress” in the province of religious history is not so great as I formerly believed I could assume. That is to say, in essentials modern learning in this connection has only brought facts to light and given a new focus to points of view which were already possessed (cf. Dupuis and Volney) by the eighteenth century. In the twenties and forties of the nineteenth century investigations, unprejudiced and independent of theology, had already reached in the case of some of their representatives, such as Gfrörer, Lützelberger, Ghillany, Nork, and others, the point which is to-day again represented by the most advanced learning. The revolution of 1848 and the reaction consequent on it in ecclesiastical matters then again shook, on account of their radical tendency, those views which had been already arrived at. The liberal Protestantism, too, that rose as a recoil against orthodoxy in its effort to work out the “historical” Jesus as the kernel of Christianity on its part had no interest in again bringing up the old results. Indeed, it actually makes it a reproach to a person of the present day if he quotes the works of those earlier investigators, and reminds him that religious learning did not begin only with the modern Coryphaei, with Holtzmann, Harnack, &c. Whoever looks upon things from this point of view can most probably agree in the melancholy reflection of a reviewer of the first edition of “The Christ Myth,” when he says with reference to the “latest investigations”: “Apparently the whole learning of the nineteenth century so far as relates to investigations into the moving forces of civilisation and national upheavals will be considered by future research as an arsenal of errors” (O. Hauser in the *Neue Freie Presse*, August 8, 1909).

may have attached to it in the eyes of many. So, too, Protestant theology no longer has any grounds for becoming excited if the question is answered in a sense opposed to its own answer.

The author of the present work had hoped until lately that one of the historians of Christianity would himself arise and extract the present results of the criticisms of the Gospel, which to-day are clear. These hopes have not been fulfilled. On the contrary, in theological circles religious views continue to be quietly drawn from the "fact" of an historical Jesus, and he is considered as the impassable height in the religious development of the individual, as though nothing has occurred and the existence of such a Jesus was only the more clearly established by the investigations of critical theology in this connection. The author has accordingly thought that he should no longer keep back his own views, which he long since arrived at out of the works of specialists, and has taken upon himself the thankless task of bringing together the grounds which tell against the theory of an historical Jesus.

Whoever, though not a specialist, invades the province of any science, and ventures to express an opinion opposed to its official representatives, must be prepared to be rejected by them with anger, to be accused of a lack of scholarship, "dilettantism," or "want of method," and to be treated as a complete ignoramus. This has been the experience of all up to now who, while not theologians, have expressed themselves on the subject of an historical Jesus. The like experience was not spared the author of the present work after the appearance of its first edition.

He has been accused of “lack of historical training,” “bias,” “incapacity for any real historical way of thinking,” &c., and it has been held up against him that in his investigations their result was settled beforehand – as if this was not precisely the case with theologians, who write on the subject of a historical Jesus, since it is just the task of theology to defend and establish the truth of the New Testament writings. Whoever has looked about him in the turmoil of science knows that generally each fellow-worker is accustomed to regard as “method” that only which he himself uses as such, and that the famous conception of “scientific method” is very often ruled by points of view purely casual and personal.⁸ Thus, for example, we see the theologian

⁸ It has also been reckoned as a want of “method” in this work that I have often made use of a cautious and restrained mode of expression, that I have spoken of mere “suppositions” and employed locutions such as “it appears,” &c., when it has been for the time being impossible for science or myself to give complete certainty to an assertion. This reproach sounds strange in the mouths of such as plume themselves upon “scientific method.” For I should think that it was indeed more scientific in the given cases to express oneself in the manner chosen by me, than by an unmeasured certainty in assertions to puff out pure suppositions into undoubted facts. I must leave such a mode of proceeding to the historical theologians. They work purely with hypotheses. All their endeavours to obtain an historical kernel from the Gospels rest upon conjectures simply. Above everything, their explanation of the origin of Christianity simply from an historical Jesus is, in spite of the certainty and self-confidence with which it comes out, a pure hypothesis, and that of very doubtful value. For that in reality the new religion should have been called into life by the “all-subduing influence of the personality of Jesus” and its accompaniments, the visions and hallucinations of the disciples worked up into ecstasies, is so improbable, and the whole view is psychologically so assailable, and, moreover, so futile, that even a liberal theologian like Gunkel declares it entirely insufficient (“Zum religionsgesichtl.

Clemen, in his investigation into the method of explaining the New Testament on religious-historical lines, seriously put the question to himself whether one “could not dispense himself from refuting such books as finally arrive at the unauthenticity of all the Pauline epistles and the non-historicity of the whole, or at least of almost the whole, tradition concerning Jesus; for example, not only that of Bauer, but also those of Jensen and Smith.” This same Clemen advances the famous methodological axiom: “An explanation on religious-historical lines is impossible if it of necessity leads to untenable consequences or sets out from such hypotheses,”⁹ obviously thinking here of the denial of an historical Christ. For the rest, the “method” of “critical theology” consists, as is well known, in applying an already settled picture of Jesus to the Gospels and undertaking the critical sifting of their contents according to this measure. This picture makes the founder of the Christian religion merely a pious preacher of morality in the sense of present-day liberalism, the “representative of the noblest individuality,” the incarnation of the modern ideal of personality, or of some other fashionable theological view. Theologians commence with the conviction

Verständnis d. N.T.,” 89 *sq.*). With this explanation, however, stands or falls the whole modern Jesus-religion. For if they cannot show how the Pauline and Johannine Christology could develop from the mere existence of an historical Jesus, if this now forms “the problem of problems of New Testament research” (Gunkel, *op. cit.*), then their whole conception of the rise of Christianity disappears into air, and they have no right to hold up against others who seek a better explanation the partially hypothetical character of the views advanced by them.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, 10 *sq.*

that the historical Jesus was a kind of “anticipation of modern religious consciousness.” They think that they discern the real historical import of the Gospels in their “moral-religious kernel” so far as this is good for all time, and they arrive in this manner at its “strictly scientific conception” of Jesus by casting out all such features as do not fit this picture, thus recognising only the “everlasting human” and the “modern” as historical.¹⁰

¹⁰ Cf. K. Dunkmann, “Der historische Jesus, der mythologische Christus, und Jesus der Christ” (1910). Cf. also Pfeleiderer, “Das Christusbild des urchristlichen Glaubens in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung” (1903), 6 *sq.* Here, too, it is pointed out that modern scientific theology in its description of the figure of Christ proceeds in anything but an unprejudiced manner. Out of the belief in Christ as contained in the New Testament it “only draws forth what is acceptable to present modes of thinking – passing over everything else and reading in much that is its own – in order to construct an ideal Christ according to modern taste.” Pfeleiderer declares it a “great illusion” to believe that the pictures of Christ in works such as Harnack’s “Wesen des Christentums,” each differently drawn according to the peculiarities of their composers, but all more or less in the modern style, are the result of scientific historical research, and are related to the old conceptions of Christ like truth to error. “One should,” he says, “be reasonable and honourable enough to confess that both the modern and the antique conceptions of Christ are alike creations of the common religious spirit of their times and sprung from the natural need of faith to fix its special principle in a typical figure and to illustrate it. The differences between the two correspond to the differences of the times, the former a simple mythical Epic, the latter a sentimental and conscious Romance.” In the same sense Alb. Schweitzer also characterises the famous “method” of historical theology as “a continual experimentation according to settled hypotheses in which the leading thought rests in the last resort upon an intuition” (“Von Reimarus bis Wrede,” 1906). Indeed, Weinel himself, who cannot hold up against the author with sufficient scorn his lack of method and his dilettantism has to confess that the same blemishes which in his opinion characterise dilettantism are to be found even in the most prominent representatives of historical theology, in a Wrede or a Wellhausen. He reproaches both of these with

If one keeps this before his eyes he will not be particularly moved by the talk about “method” and “lack of scientific system.” One could then at most wonder that it should be forbidden to philosophers particularly to have a say in theological matters. As though the peace at present reigning between philosophy and theology and their mutual efforts at a *rapprochement* did not clearly indicate that upon one of the two sides, or upon both, something cannot be in order, and that consequently it was high time, if no one else undertakes it, for a philosopher to notice theology in order to terminate the make-believe peace which is for both so fateful. For what

the fact that in their researches “serious faults of a general nature and in method” are present (21). He advises the greatest prudence in respect to Wellhausen’s Gospel Commentaries “on account of their serious general blemishes” (26). He objects to Wrede that to be consistent he must himself go over to radical dilettantism (22). He charges Schweitzer actually with dilettantism and blind bias which cause every literary consideration to be lacking (25 *sq.*). Indeed, he finds himself, in face of the “dilettante endeavours” to deny the historical Jesus, compelled even to admit that liberal theology for the future “must learn to express itself with more caution and to exhibit more surely the method of religious historical comparison” (14). He blames Gunkel for imprudence in declaring Christianity to be a syncretic religion, and demands that the historical works of liberal theology “should be clearer in their results and more convincing in their methods” (16). He says that the method which they employ is at present not sure and clear enough since “it has been spoken of generally in very loose if not misleading terms,” and he confesses: “We have apparently not made the measure, according to which we decide upon what is authentic and what not so in the tradition, so plain that it can always be recognised with security” (29). Now, if matters are in such a position, we non-theologians need not take too tragically the reproach of dilettantism and lack of scientific method, since it appears very much as though historical theology, with the exception at most of Herr Weinell, has no sure method.

does Lessing say? “With orthodoxy God be thanked one had arrived at a tolerable understanding. Between it and philosophy a partition had been raised behind which each could continue its way without hindering the other. But what is now being done? The partition is again being demolished, and under the pretext of making us reasonable Christians we are being made unreasonable philosophers.”

The author of this book has been reproached with following in it tendencies merely destructive. Indeed, one guardian of Zion, particularly inflamed with rage, has even expressed himself to this effect, that the author’s researches do not originate in a serious desire for knowledge, but only in a wish to deny. One who, as I have done, has in all his previous work emphasised the positive nature of the ethical and religious life against the denying and destroying spirit of the age, who has in his work “Die Religion als Selbst-Bewusstsein Gottes” (1906) sought to build up anew from within the shattered religious outlook upon the world, who in the last chapter of the present work has left no doubt remaining that he regards the present falling away of religious consciousness as one of the most important phenomena of our spiritual life and as a misfortune for our whole civilisation, should be protected against such reproaches. In reality, “The Christ Myth” has been written pre-eminently in the interests of religion, from the conviction that its previous forms no longer suffice for men of to-day, that above all the “Jesuanism” of historical theology is in its deepest nature irreligious, and that this

itself forms the greatest hindrance to all real religious progress. I agree with E. v. Hartmann and W. v. Schnehen in the opinion that this so-called Christianity of the liberal pastors is in every direction full of internal contradiction, that it is false through and through (in so saying naturally no individual representative of this movement is accused of subjective untruthfulness). I agree that by its moving rhetoric and its bold appearance of being scientific it is systematically undermining the simple intellectual truthfulness of our people; and that on this account this romantic cult of Jesus must be combated at all costs, but that this cannot be done more effectually than by taking its basis in the theory of the historical Jesus¹¹ from beneath its feet.

This work seeks to prove that more or less all the features of the picture of the historical Jesus, at any rate all those of any important religious significance, bear a purely mythical character, and no opening exists for seeking an historical figure behind the Christ myth. It is not the imagined historical Jesus but, if any one, Paul who is that “great personality” that called Christianity into life as a new religion, and by the speculative range of his intellect and the depth of his moral experience gave it the strength for its journey, the strength which bestowed upon it victory over the other competing religions. Without Jesus the rise of Christianity can be quite well understood, without

¹¹ Cf. W. v. Schnehen, “Der moderne Jesuskultus,” 2nd ed., 1907, p. 41, a work with which even a Pfleiderer has agreed in the main points; also the same author’s “Fr. Naumann vor dem Bankrott des Christentums,” 1907.

Paul not so. If in spite of this any one thinks that besides the latter a Jesus also cannot be dispensed with, this can naturally not be opposed; but we know nothing of this Jesus. Even in the representations of historical theology he is scarcely more than the shadow of a shadow. Consequently it is self-deceit to make the figure of this “unique” and “mighty” personality, to which a man may believe he must on historical grounds hold fast, the central point of religious consciousness. Jesus Christ may be great and worthy of reverence as a religious idea, as the symbolical personification of the unity of nature in God and man, on the belief in which the possibility of the “redemption” depends. As a purely historical individual, as liberal theology views him, he sinks back to the level of other great historical personalities, and from the religious point of view is exactly as unessential as they, indeed, more capable of being dispensed with than they, for in spite of all rhetoric he is in the light of historical theology of to-day, even at best only “a figure swimming obscurely in the mists of tradition.”¹²

PROFESSOR DR. ARTHUR DREWS.

Karlsruhe, January, 1910.

¹² The excursus on “The Legend of Peter” which was contained in the first edition of this work, and there appears to have been rather misunderstood, has recently (1910) appeared more closely worked out and reasoned in an independent form in the *Neuer Frankfurter Verlag* under the title “Die Petrus Legende. Ein Beitrag zur Mythologie des Christentums.”

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The time since the appearance of the second edition was too short for any material alterations to be undertaken in the third edition now appearing. However, the phraseology here and there has been improved and many things put more strongly. Above all, the famous passage in Tacitus and the passage 1 Cor. ii. 23 et seq. has been so handled that its lack of significance as regards the existence of an historical Jesus should now appear more clearly than hitherto. That Paul in reality is not a witness for an historical Jesus and is wrongly considered as the “foundation” of the faith in such a figure, should be already established for every unprejudiced person as the result of the discussion so far on the “Christ Myth.” The *Protestantenblatt* finds itself now compelled to the admission that the historical image of the person of Jesus as a matter of fact “can no longer be clearly recognised” (No. 6, 1910). How then does it fare with the new “bases” of Schmiedel? To no refutation of the assertions which I represent has greater significance been hitherto ascribed on the theological side than to those supposed supports of a “really scientific life of Jesus” (in the discussions of “the Christ Myth” this has again received the strongest expression). And yet these bases were advanced by their originator obviously with a view to a conception quite

different from mine, and, as I have now shown, do not affect, generally speaking, the view represented by me regarding the rise of the supposed historical picture of Jesus. When, above all, the “historical references to Jesus” are supposed to be contained in them, and these, according to the *Protestantenblatt*, lie “like blocks of granite” in my path – then this is a pure illusion of the theologians.

As can be conceived, my assertion that a pre-Christian cult of Jesus existed has found the most decisive rejection. This, however, is for the most part only due to the fact that the researches in this connection of the American, Smith, and the Englishman, Robertson, were not known, and, moreover, the opinion was held that one need not trouble about these “foreigners,” who further were not “specialists.” And yet Gunkel, in his work “Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments,” had already sufficiently prepared that view, as one might have thought, when, among other things, he declares “that even before Jesus there existed in Jewish syncretistic circles a belief in the death and resurrection of Christ.”¹³ Again, it can only be rejected without more ado by such as seek the traces of the pre-Christian cult of Jesus in well-worn places and will only allow that to be “proved” which they have established by direct original documentary evidence before their eyes. In this connection it is forgotten that we are dealing with a secret cult, the existence of which we can decide upon only by indirect

¹³ *Op cit.*, 82.

means. It is forgotten also that the hypothesis of a pre-Christian cult of Jesus, if urged upon us from another quarter, cannot be forthwith rejected because it does not suit the current views, and because it may be that it is impossible for the time being to place it beyond all doubt. Where everything is so hypothetical, uncertain, and covered with darkness, as is the case with the origins of Christianity, every hypothesis should be welcomed and tested which appears to be in some way or the other suitable for opening up a new point of view and clearing away the darkness. For as Dunkmann says in his sympathetic and genuine discussion of "The Christ Myth": "Irregularities and even violences of combination must be borne in science for the simple reason that our sources are too scanty and full of contradictions. Our hypotheses will in all such cases have something rash, bold, and surprising in them; if even they are in the main correct, *i. e.*, if they are irrefutable according to the method of investigation" ("Der historische Jesus, der mythologische Jesus, und Jesus der Christ," 1910, 55). But if that very hypothesis is not established, yet this makes no difference in the fact that there existed a pre-Christian Jesus Christ, at least as a complex myth, and this quite suffices for the explanation of the Pauline Christology and the so-called "original community" of Jerusalem. I can, accordingly, only regard it as a misleading of the public when the other side, after rejecting the hypothesis of a pre-Christian cult of Jesus, bear themselves as though they had thereby taken away the foundations for the whole body of

my views regarding an historical Jesus.

Meanwhile the storm which has been raised against my book in theological circles and in the Press, and has even led to mass meetings of protest in the Busch Circus and in the Dom at Berlin, shows me that I have “hit the bull’s-eye” with my performance and have in truth touched the sore point of Christianity. The way in which the battle is being waged, the means by which my opponents attempt to disparage the author of “The Christ Myth,” or to make me ridiculous in the eyes of the public by personal slanders, their habit of trying to injure me by throwing doubt on my intellectual capabilities, and to undermine my scientific honour and official position (Bornemann, Beth) – all this can only make me more determined to continue the work of illumination that I have begun, and only proves to me that my “Christ Myth” cannot be so absolutely “unscientific” and so completely a *quantité négligeable* as its opponents are disposed to represent it.

The means by which the “Christ Myth” is opposed to-day are exactly the same as those which were employed against Strauss’s “Leben Jesu,” without, however, the least result being attained. I accordingly await the further attacks of the enemy with complete coolness of mind, confident in the fact that what is true in my book will make its way of itself, and that a work which, like mine, has arisen from serious motives, and has been carried through with a disregard of personal advantages, cannot be lost but will be serviceable to the spiritual progress of mankind. The attacks

which have so far come to my notice in pamphlets (Bornemann, v. Soden, Delbrück, Beth) and in the Press have not had the effect of making any weaker my fundamental convictions. On the contrary, they have only served to reveal to me still further the weakness of the opposing position, which is much greater than I myself had hitherto imagined. I am, however, at all times ready and pleased – and I have shown this too by the corrections undertaken since the first edition of this work – to give attention to real objections and to put right possible errors. All that matters to me is simply the fact as such. The question before us in “The Christ Myth,” as it is not unnecessary to point out here once again, is a purely scientific one. For possible suggestions and advice in this direction I will accordingly at all times be grateful. On the contrary, I am left perfectly cold by personal slanders, anonymous threats, and pious corrections, meetings of protest in which the Minister of Public Worship takes part with obligatory trombone choirs and professions of faith, as well as by the uproar of the multitude roused to fanaticism in this manner by the “guardian of their souls.” They are everything except refutations.

PROFESSOR DR. ARTHUR DREWS.

Karlsruhe, March, 1910.

THE PRE-CHRISTIAN JESUS

“If you see a man undaunted by dangers, undisturbed by passions, happy when fortune frowns, calm in the midst of storms, will you not be filled with reverence for him? Will you not say that here is something too great and grand to be regarded as of the same nature as the trivial body in which it dwells? A divine force has descended here – a heavenly power moves a soul so wonderful, so calm, one which passes through all life as though it were of small account, and smiles at all our hopes and fears. Nothing so great can exist without the help of God, and therefore in the main it belongs to that from which it came down. Just as the rays of the sun touch the earth, but belong to that from which they are sent, so a great and holy spirit, sent here that we may have a more intimate knowledge of deity, lives indeed in our midst, but remains in contact with its source. On that it depends, thither its eyes are turned, thither its life tends: among men it dwells as a noble guest. What then is this soul? One which relies upon no goodness but its own. What is proper to man is his soul and the perfect reason in the soul: for man is a rational animal: therefore his highest good is reached when he is filled with that of which he is born.”

With these words the Roman philosopher Seneca (4 B.C. – 65 A.D.) portrays the ideally great and good man that we may

be moved to imitate him.¹⁴ “We must choose some good man,” he says, “and always have him before our eyes; and we must live and act as if he were watching us. A great number of sins would remain uncommitted were there a witness present to those about to sin. Our heart must have someone whom it honours, and by whose example its inner life can be inspired. Happy is he whose reverence for another enables him to fashion his life after the picture living in his memory. We need some one upon whose life we may model our own: without the rule you cannot correct what is amiss” (Ep. 11). “Rely on the mind of a great man and detach yourself from the opinions of the mob. Hold fast to the image of the most beautiful and exalted virtue, which must be worshipped not with crowns but with sweat and blood” (Ep. 67). “Could we but gaze upon the soul of a good man, what a beautiful picture should we see, how worthy of our reverence in its loftiness and peace. There would justice shine forth and courage and prudence and wisdom: and humanity, that rare virtue, would pour its light over all. Every one would declare him worthy of honour and of love. If any one saw that face, more lofty and splendid than any usually found among men, would he not stand in dumb wonder as before a God, and silently pray that it might be for his good to have seen it? Then, overcome by the inviting grace of the vision, he would kneel in prayer, and after long meditation, filled with wondering awe, he would break forth into Virgil’s words: ‘Hail to thee, whoe’er thou art! O lighten thou our cares!’ There is no

¹⁴ Ep. ad Luc. 41.

one, I repeat, who would not be inflamed with love were it given him to gaze upon such an ideal. Now indeed much obscures our vision: but if we would only make our eyes pure and remove the veil that covers them, we should be able to behold virtue even though covered by the body, and clouded by poverty, lowliness and shame. We should see its loveliness even through the most sordid veils” (Ep. 115).

The attitude expressed in these words was widespread in the whole of the civilised world at the beginning of the Christian era. A feeling of the uncertainty of all things human weighed like a ghastly dream upon most minds. The general distress of the time, the collapse of the nation states under the rough hand of the Roman conquerors, the loss of independence, the uncertainty of political and social conditions, the incessant warfare and the heavy death-roll it involved – all this forced men back upon their own inner life, and compelled them to seek there for some support against the loss of outer happiness in a philosophy which raised and invigorated the soul. But the ancient philosophy had spent itself. The naïve interplay of nature and spirit, that ingenuous trust in external reality which had been the expression of a youthful vigour in the Mediterranean peoples, from which indeed the ancient civilisation was derived, now was shattered. To the eyes of men at that time Nature and Spirit stood opposed as hostile and irreconcilable facts. All efforts to restore the shattered unity were frustrated by the impossibility of regaining the primitive attitude. A fruitless scepticism which satisfied no

one, but out of which no way was known, paralysed all joy in outward or inner activities, and prevented men from having any pleasure in life. Therefore all eyes were turned towards a supernatural support, a direct divine enlightenment, a revelation; and the desire arose of finding once again the lost certainty in the ordering of life by dependence upon an ideal and superhuman being.

Many saw in the exalted person of the Emperor the incarnation of such a divine being. It was not then always pure flattery, but often enough the expression of real gratitude towards individual Imperial benefactors, combined with a longing for direct proximity with and visible presence of a god, which gave to the worship of the Emperor its great significance throughout the whole Roman Empire.

An Augustus who had put an end to the horrors of the civil war must, in spite of everything, have appeared as a prince of peace and a saviour in the uttermost extremity, who had come to renew the world and to bring back the fair days of the Golden Age. He had again given to mankind an aim in life and to existence some meaning. As the head of the Roman State religion, a person through whose hands the threads of the policy of the whole world passed, as the ruler of an empire such as the world had never before seen, he might well appear to men as a God, as Jupiter himself come down to earth, to dwell among men. "Now at length the time is passed," runs an inscription, apparently of the ninth year before Christ, found at Priene not long ago, "when man had

to lament that he had been born. That providence, which directs all life, has sent this man as a saviour to us and the generations to come. He will put an end to all feuds, and dispose all things nobly. In his appearance are the hopes of the past fulfilled. All earlier benefactors of mankind he has surpassed. It is impossible that a greater should come. The birthday of the God has brought for the world the messages of salvation (Gospels) which attend him. From his birth a new epoch must begin.”¹⁵

It was not only the longing of mankind for a new structure of society, for peace, justice, and happiness upon earth, which lay at the root of the cult of the Emperors. Deeper minds sought not only an improvement in political and social circumstances, but felt disturbed by thoughts of death and the fate of the soul after its parting from its bodily shell. They trembled at the expectation of the early occurrence of a world-wide catastrophe, which would put a terrible end to all existence. The apocalyptic frame of mind was so widespread at the commencement of the Christian era that even a Seneca could not keep his thoughts from the early arrival of the end of the world. Finally, there also grew up a superstitious fear of evil spirits and Dæmons, which we can scarcely exaggerate. And here no philosophic musings could offer a support to anxious minds, but religion alone. Seldom in

¹⁵ E. v. Mommsen and Wilamowitz in the *Transactions* of the German Archæological Institute, xxiii. Part iii.; “Christl. Welt,” 1899, No. 57. Compare as a specially characteristic expression of that period’s longing for redemption the famous Fourth Eclogue of Virgil. Also Jeremias, “Babylonisches im Neuen Testament,” 1905, pp. 57 *sqq.* Lietzmann, “Der Weltheiland,” 1909.

the history of mankind has the need for religion been so strongly felt as in the last century before and the first century after Christ. But it was not from the old hereditary national religions that deliverance was expected. It was from the unrestrained commingling and unification of all existing religions, a religious syncretism, which was specially furthered by acquaintance with the strange, but on that account all the more attractive, religions of the East. Already Rome had become a Pantheon of almost all religions which one could believe, while in the Far East, in Nearer Asia, that breeding-place of ancient Gods and cults, there were continually appearing new, more daring and secret forms of religious activity. These, too, in a short while obtained their place in the consciousness of Western humanity. Where the public worship of the recognised Gods did not suffice, men sought a deeper satisfaction in the numberless mystic associations of that time, or formed themselves with others of like mind into private religious bodies or pious brotherhoods, in order to nourish in the quiet of private ritualistic observance an individual religious life apart from the official State religion.

I

THE INFLUENCE OF PARSEEISM ON THE BELIEF IN A MESSIAH

Among no people was the longing for redemption so lively and the expectation of a speedy end of the world so strong as among the Jews. Since the Babylonian captivity (586–536 B.C.) the former Jewish outlook upon the world had undergone a great change. Fifty years had been spent by the Israelites in the land of the stranger. For two hundred years after their return to their own land they were under Persian overlordship. As a consequence of this they were in close connection politically and economically with the Achæmenidean Empire, and this did not cease when Alexander overthrew the Persian power and brought the whole Eastern world under Greek influence. During this lengthy period Persian modes of thinking and Persian religious views had influenced in many ways the old Jewish opinions, and had introduced a large number of new ideas. First of all the extreme dualism of the Persians had impressed a distinctly dual character upon Jewish Monotheism. God and the world, which in the old ideas had often mingled with one another, were separated and made to stand in opposition to each other. Following the same train of thought, the old national God Jahwe, in imitation of the Persian Ahuramazda (Ormuzd), had developed from a

God of fire, light, and sky into a God of supernatural purity and holiness. Surrounded by light and enthroned in the Beyond, like Ahuramazda, the source of all life, the living God held intercourse with his creatures upon the earth only through the instrumentality of a court of angels. These messengers of God or intermediate beings in countless numbers moved between heaven and earth upon his service. And just as Angromainyu (Ahriman), the evil, was opposed to Ahuramazda, the good, and the struggle between darkness and light, truth and falsehood, life and death, was, according to Persian ideas, reproduced in the course of earthly events, so the Jews too ascribed to Satan the rôle of an adversary of God, a corrupter of the divine creation, and made him, as Prince of this world and leader of the forces of hell, measure his strength with the King of Heaven.¹⁶

In the struggle of the two opposing worlds, according to Persian ideas, Mithras stood in the foreground, the spirit of light, truth, and justice, the divine “friend” of men, the “mediator,”

¹⁶ It is certain that the old Israelite Jahwe only attained that spiritualised character for which he is nowadays extolled under the influence of the Persians’ imageless worship of God. All efforts to construct, in spite of this admission, a “qualitative” difference between Jahwe and Ahuramazda, as, for example, Stave does in his work (*Der Einfluss des Parsismus auf das Judentum*, 1898, 122 *sq.*) are unavailing. According to Stave, the conception of good and evil is not grasped in Mazdeism in all its purity and truth, but “has been confused with the natural.” But is that distinction “grasped in all its purity” in Judaism with its ritualistic legality? Indeed, has it come to a really pure realisation even in Christianity, in which piety and attachment to the Church so often pass as identical ideas? Let us give to each religion its due, and cease to be subtle in drawing such artificial distinctions in favour of our own – distinctions which fall into nothingness before every unprejudiced consideration.

“deliverer,” and “saviour” of the world. He shared his office with Honover, Ahuramazda’s Word of creation and revelation; and indeed in most things their attributes were mingled. An incarnation of fire or the sun, above all of the struggling, suffering, triumphant light, which presses victoriously through night and darkness, Mithras was also connected with death and immortality, and passed as guide of souls and judge in the under-world. He was the “divine son,” of whom it was said that Ahuramazda had fashioned him as great and worthy of reverence as his own self. Indeed, he was in essence Ahuramazda himself, proceeding from his supernatural light, and given a concrete individuality. As companion in creation and “protector” of the world he kept the universe standing in its struggle against its enemies. At the head of the heavenly host he fought for God, and with his sword of flame he drove the Dæmons of Darkness in terror back into the shadows. To take part in this combat on the side of God, to build up the future kingdom of God by the work of a life-giving civilisation, by the rendering fruitful of sterile wastes, the extinction of noxious animals, and by moral self-education, seemed the proper end of human existence. But when the time should have been fulfilled and the present epoch come to an end, according to Persian belief, Ahuramazda was then to raise up from the seed of Zarathustra, the founder of this religion, the “virgin’s son,” Saoshyant (Sraosha, Sosiosch, which signifies the Saviour), or, as it ran according to another rendering, Mithras himself should descend upon the earth and in a last fierce struggle

overwhelm Angromainyu and his hosts, and cast them down into the Nether World. He would then raise the dead in bodily shape, and after a General Judgment of the whole world, in which the wicked should be condemned to the punishments of hell and the good raised to heavenly glory, establish the “millennial Kingdom of Peace.” Hell itself was not to last for ever, for a great reconciliation was to be finally held out even to the damned. Then Angromainyu also would make peace with Ahuramazda, and upon a new earth beneath a new heaven all were to be united to one another in everlasting blessedness.

These ideas entered the circle of Jewish thought and there brought about a complete transformation of the former belief in a Messiah.

Messiah – that is, the Anointed (in Greek, Christos) – originally signified the king as representative of Jahwe before the people and of the people before Jahwe. According to 2 Sam. vii. 13 *sq.*, he was placed in the same relation of an obedient “son” to his “father,” in which the whole people was conscious of standing.¹⁷ Then the opposition between the holy dignity of the “Anointed” of God and the humanly imperfect personality of the Jewish kings led to the ideal of the Messiah being transferred to the future and the complete realisation of the rule of Jahwe over his people being expected only then. In this sense the ancient prophets had already celebrated the Messiah as an ideal King of the future, who would experience in the fullest sense the high

¹⁷ Exod. iv. 22; Deut. xxxii. 6; Hosea xi. 1.

assurances of Jahwe's favour, of which David had been deemed worthy, since he would be completely worthy of them. They had described him as the Hero, who would be more than Moses and Joshua, who would establish the promised glory of Israel, dispose the people anew, and bring Jahwe's religion even to the heathen.¹⁸ They had glorified him in that he would span the heavens afresh, establish a new earth, and make Israel Lord over all nations.¹⁹ In this they had at first understood the Messiah only as a human being, as a new David or of his seed – theocratic king, divinely favoured prince of peace and just ruler over his people, just as the Persian Saoshyant was to be a man of the seed of Zarathustra. In this sense a Cyrus, the deliverer of the people from the Babylonian captivity, the rescuer and overlord of Israel, had been acclaimed Messiah.²⁰ But just as Saoshyant had been undesignedly transfigured in the imagination of the people into a divine being and made one with the figure of Mithras,²¹ so also among the prophets the Messiah was more and more assigned the part of a divine king. He was called “divine hero,” “Father of Eternity,” and the prophet Isaiah indulged in a description of his kingdom of peace, in which the wolf would lie down by the lamb, men would no longer die before their time, and

¹⁸ Isa. xlix. 6, 8.

¹⁹ *Id.* li. 16.

²⁰ Isa. xlv. 28, xlv. 1 *sq.*

²¹ Cumont, “Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra,” 1899, vol. i. 188.

would enjoy the fruit of their fields without tithe, while right and justice would reign upon earth under this king of a golden age as it had never done before.²² Secret and supernatural, as was his nature, so should the birth of the Messiah be. Though a divine child, he was to be born in lowly state.²³ The personality of the Messiah mingled with that of Jahwe himself, as though it were God himself of whose ascending the throne and journey heavenwards the Psalmists sing.²⁴

These alternations of the Messiah between a human and a divine nature appear still more clearly in the Jewish apocalypics of the last century before and the first century after Christ. Thus the Apocalypse of Daniel (about 165 B.C.) speaks of one who as Son of Man will descend upon the clouds of heaven and will be brought before the "Ancient of Days." The whole tone of the passage leaves no doubt that the Son of Man (*barnasa*) is a superhuman being representing the Deity. To him the majesty and kingdom of God have been entrusted in order that, at the end of the existing epoch, he should descend upon the clouds of heaven, surrounded by a troop of angels, and establish an everlasting power, a Kingdom of Heaven. In the picture-language of Enoch (in the last decade before Christ) the Messiah, the "Chosen One," the "Son of Man," appears as a supernatural pre-existing being, who was hidden in God before the world

²² Isa. xi. 65, 17 *sqq.*

²³ Isa. ix. 6; Micah v. 1.

²⁴ Psa. xlvii. 6, 9, lvii. 12.

was created, whose glory continues from eternity to eternity and his might from generation to generation, in whom the spirit of wisdom and power dwells, who judges hidden things, punishes the wicked, but will save the holy and just.²⁵ Indeed, the Apocalypse of Esdras (the so-called fourth Book of Esdras) expressly combats the opinion that the judgment of the world will come through another than God, and likewise describes the Messiah as a kind of “second God,” as the “Son of God,” as the human incarnation of the Godhead.²⁶

In all of this the influence of Persian beliefs is unmistakable, whether these arose in Iran itself directly, or whether the idea of a God-appointed king and deliverer of the world was borrowed by the Persians from the circle of Babylonian ideas. Here this conception had taken deep root and was applied at different times now to this king, now to that.²⁷ Just as in the Persian religion the image of Saoshyant, so also in the Jewish view the picture of the Messiah wavered between a human king of the race of David and a supernatural being of divine nature descended from heaven. And just as in the Persian representation of the coming of Saoshyant and the final victory of the Kingdom of Light there would be a preceding period during which threatening signs would appear in the heavens, the whole of nature would find itself

²⁵ Ch. xlv.–li.

²⁶ Ch. vi. 1 *sqq.*

²⁷ Cf. Gunkel, “Zum religionsgesch. Verständnis des Neuen Testaments,” 1903, p. 23, note 4.

in upheaval and mankind would be scourged with fearful plagues, so also the Jewish Apocalypse speaks of the “woes” of the Messiah and describes a period of terror which would precede the coming of the Messiah. The coming of the power of God was looked upon as a miraculous catastrophe suddenly breaking in from on high, as a conflagration of the world followed by a new creation. The Jewish agreed with the Persian view in this also, that it made a heavenly kingdom of undisturbed bliss “in the light of the everlasting life and in likeness of the angels” follow the earthly world-wide empire of the Messiah. This they imagined on exactly the same lines as the Persian Paradise. There would the holy drink of the “Water of Life” and nourish themselves on the fruit which hang upon the “Tree of Life.” The wicked, on the other hand, would be cast into hell and suffer in fearful torments the just punishment of their sins.²⁸

The conception of a resurrection of the dead and a last judgment had hitherto been strange to the Jews. In pre-exilic days they allowed the body to die and the soul after death to go down as a shadow without feeling into Hades (Sheol), without disturbing themselves further about its fate. Now, however, with the doctrine of the destruction of the world by fire and the general judgment, the idea of personal immortality entered the world of Jewish thought. Thus it is said by Daniel that on the day of judgment the dead will rise again, some waking to everlasting

²⁸ Revelation xxii.; cf. Pfeleiderer, “Das Urchristentum. Seine Schriften und seine Lehren,” 2nd edit., 1902, vol. ii. 54 *sqq.*

life, others to everlasting perdition. "But the teachers will shine as the brightness of heaven, and those who led the multitude to justice as the stars for ever and ever."²⁹ With the acceptance of personal immortality the whole tone of religious thought was deepened and enriched in the direction of thought for the individual. Former Jewish morality had been essentially of a collective kind. It was not so much the individual as the people viewed collectively that was looked upon as the object of divine solicitude. At this point the position, the road to which had been already prepared by the prophets, was definitely established, that the individual hoped for a personal religious salvation and as a consequence felt in direct personal relationship with Jahwe. God indeed remained, as the Persians had taught them to understand him, the superhuman lord of heaven enthroned in pure light, the source of all life, the living God. His metaphysical qualities, however, his dazzling glory and unconquerable might were ever more and more overshadowed by his moral attributes: goodness, grace, and mercy appeared as the most prominent features in the character of Jahwe. God seemed a loving father who leads his children through life with kindly care, and without whose consent not a hair of one of his creatures could be touched. The strong tendency within Judaism, represented by the upper currents of pharisaic rabbinism, continually drew the national boundaries closer, and was ever more anxiously occupied with a painfully strict observance of the letter of the law

²⁹ Dan. xii. 3.

and a conscientious observance of ritualistic ordinances. Ethics threatened to be extinguished under a system of conventional rules of an essentially juristic nature. Yet all the while a more human and natural morality was arising, an inward piety, warm-hearted, popular, and sound, which broke through the narrow limits of Jewish nationalism, and sent a fresh current into the heavy atmosphere of official legality. It was then that the groundwork of later Christian ethics was laid in the purified morality of the psalms, aphorisms, and other edificatory writings of a Job, Baruch, Jesus son of Sirach, &c. It was then that the Jewish Monotheism set itself to extend its sway beyond the boundaries of its own land and to enter into competition with the other religions of antiquity, from which it was to draw back vanquished only before a matured Christianity.

II

THE HELLENISTIC IDEA OF A MEDIATOR (PHILO)

With Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire Palestine also was drawn within the circle of Hellenistic culture. It was at first a vassal state of the Egyptian Ptolemies, and consequently at the commencement of the second century before Christ came under the overlordship of the Syrian Seleucids. The customs and intellectual life of Greece forced their way into the quiet isolation of the priest-ruled Jewish state and could not be expelled again, despite the national reaction under the Maccabees against foreign influences. Above all, however, the dispersal of the Jews contributed to bring about a settlement of opposing views. Since the Exile the Jews had spread over all the countries of the East Mediterranean. Some had remained in Babylon, others were permanently settled especially in the ports as tradesmen, bankers, and merchants. They controlled the entire money market and trade of the East through their assiduous industry, mercantile sharpness, their lack of scruples, and the tenacity with which they held together, supported therein by their worship in common in the Synagogue. In the atmosphere of Greek philosophy and morality a still further transformation and purification of Jahwe took place. All common human and material lineaments were

dropped, and he developed into a spiritual being of perfect goodness, such as Plato had described the Godhead. Here the Jews found themselves face to face with the same problem that had long occupied the Greek philosophers. This was the reconciliation of the supernatural loftiness and aloofness from the world of their God with the demands of the religious consciousness that required the immediate presence of Godhead.

Among the ideas which were borrowed by Judaism from the Persian religion belonged those connected with the mediatory "Word." As the creative power of the Godhead, the bearer of revelation and representative of God upon earth, the expression "the word" had already appeared in aphoristic literature. Under Græco-Egyptian influence the term "wisdom" (*sophia*) had become the naturalised expression for it. "Wisdom" served to describe the activities in regard to man of the God who held aloof from the world. In this connection it may be noted that according to Persian ideas "Wisdom" under the name of Spenta Armaiti was considered as one of the six or seven Amesha Spentas (Amshaspands), those spirits that stood as a bodyguard closest to the throne of God and corresponded to the Jewish archangels. She was considered by the Persians as the daughter or spouse of Ahuramazda. Already, in the so-called "Wisdom of Solomon," written by an Alexandrian Jew in the last century before Christ, she was declared to be a separately existing spirit in close relation to God. Under the guise of a half-personal, half-material being – a power controlling the

whole of nature – she was described as the principle of the revelation of God in the creation, maintenance, and ruling of the world, as the common principle of life from on high and as the intermediary organ of religious salvation. Just as Plato had sought to overcome the dualism of the ideal and the material world by the conception of a “world-soul,” so “Wisdom” was intended to serve as an intermediary between the opposites, the God of the Jews and his creation. These efforts were continued by the Alexandrian Jew Philo (30 B.C. to 50 A.D.), who tried to bring the Perso-Jewish conception of the “Word” or “Wisdom” into closer accord with the ideas of Greek philosophy than the author of the “Book of Wisdom” had already done. Philo, too, commenced with the opposition between an unknowable, unnameable God, absolutely raised above the world, and material created existence. He imagined this opposition bridged over by means of “powers” which, as relatively self-existing individuals, messengers, servants, and representatives of God, at one time more closely resembled Persian angels or Greek Dæmons, at another time the Platonic “Ideas,” the originals and patterns of God in creating. Essentially, however, they bore the character of the so-called “Fructifying powers,” those creative forces which infused a soul and design into formless matter and by means of which the Stoic philosophers sought to explain existence. As the first of these intermediate forces, or, indeed, as the essence of them all, Philo considered the “Logos,” efficacious reason or the creative word of God. He called him the “first-born son of God”

or the “second God,” the representative, interpreter, ambassador, Archangel of God, or Prince of Angels. He considered him as the High Priest, who made intercession with God for the world, the affairs of which he represented before him as the paraclete, the advocate and consoler of the world, who was the channel to it of the divine promises; as the tool with which God had fashioned the world, the original and ideal of it to which God had given effect in its creation – that which operated in all things; in a word, as the soul or spirit of the world, which the Stoics had identified with their God, but which Philo distinguished from the other-world Divinity and looked upon as his revelation and manifestation.

In essence only an expression for the sum total of all divine forces and activities, the Logos of Philo also was sometimes an impersonal metaphysical principle, simply the efficacy of the Godhead, and sometimes an independent personality distinct from God. Just as the Stoics had personified their world-reason in Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, so the Egyptians had raised Amun Ra’s magic word of creation to a self-existing personal mediatory being in Thoth the guide of souls; the Babylonians, the word of fate of the great God Marduk in the shape of Nabu; the Persians, the word of Ahuramazda in Vohu mano as well as in the Spenta Armaiti, the good thought of the creative God. And just as according to Persian ideas it was at one time the divine “son” and mediator “Mithras,” the collectivity of all divine forces, at another the ideal man Saoshyant who appeared as Saviour and Deliverer of the world, and just as both mingled in one form, so

Philo also at one time described the Word as the collectivity of all creative ideas, at another only as the unembodied idea of man, the ideal man, the direct divine image and immaterial pattern of the material exemplars of humanity, that is effective therein as the subject of all religious redemption. Indeed, he occasionally identified him with the tree of life in Paradise, since both were everlasting and “stood in the middle.”

According to Philo, man is unable of his own strength to free himself from the bonds of earthly existence. All deliverance depends upon the emancipation of the soul from the body and its sensuous desires. In conformity with his true spiritual and godlike nature, to become as perfect as God, is the highest virtue and at the same time true happiness. This is attained by an insight into the divine reality of things, by whole-hearted trust in God, by grateful recognition of the goodness and love bestowed by him, showing itself in piety towards God as well as in charity and justice towards other men. But in addition the Logos itself must be in us and cause for us the insight into our divine nature. The Logos must guide us, come to the aid of our human weakness with his supernatural strength in the struggles against the world and sin and raise us up to God. Thus the apotheosis of man is the goal aimed at in all religious activity. The Logos, however, is the only means to this end, in so far as we are raised through union with him in faith and love to our true origin and life's source, “the vision of God,” and thereby have participation in his life.

III

JESUS AS CULT-GOD IN THE CREED OF JEWISH SECTS

All religious spirits of the time longed to secure this happy vision and communion with God, and to obtain even here on earth a foretaste of the heavenly life. The Jews sought to attain this end by a painfully exact observance of the ordinances of their law, but in so doing they became entangled in a mesh of such minute and tiresome regulations that the more they applied themselves to the service of the law the more difficult it appeared. It seemed to be no longer possible to reconcile the demands of everyday life with one's religious duties. Some therefore withdrew from the life of the world and in retirement and quiet endeavoured to devote themselves exclusively to the "inner life." In Egypt the Therapeutes or Physicians, a religious association composed of Jews and their proselytes, with their headquarters in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, sought in this manner, as Philo informs us in his work "On the Contemplative Life," to give effect to the claims of religion as expressed by Philo himself.³⁰ Their religious observances resembled those of

³⁰ The assertion advanced by Grätz and Lucius that the work mentioned is a forgery of a fourth-century Christian foisted upon Philo with the object of recommending the Christian "Ascesis," and that a sect of Therapeutes never existed, can now be considered disposed of, since its refutation by Massebiau and Conybeare. Cf.

the Orphic-Pythagorean sects, as in abstinence from flesh and wine, admiration for virginity, voluntary poverty, religious feasts and community singing, and the use of white garments.

They made a deep study of the mystical writings of revelation that had been handed down, and these they used as a guide in the allegorical explanation of the Mosaic law. They united a contemplative piety with a common religious observance, and thus sought to strengthen themselves mutually in the certainty of religious salvation. Beyond the Jordan the Jewish sect of the Essenes (from the Syrian word *chase*, plural *chasen* or *chasaja*) had their chief settlement. These called themselves, as is expressed by their name, the “Pious” or “Godfearing.” In their esteem of temperance, celibacy, and poverty, their reprobation of slavery, private property, the taking of oaths, and blood-sacrifice, in the honour they paid the sun as a visible manifestation of the divine light, they agreed with the Therapeutes. They differed from them, however, in their monastic organisation and the regular manner in which the life of the community was divided among different classes, their strict subordination to superiors, their maintenance of a novitiate of several years, the secrecy of the traditions of the sect, and their cultivation of the healing art and magic. The Therapeutes passed their lives in leisurely contemplation and spiritual exercises; the Essenes, on the other hand, engaged in the rearing of stock, farming, and bee-culture, or they pursued a handicraft, and in

the country places or towns of Judæa, where they often dwelt together in houses of the order, they lived as dwellers in a desert the life of purity and sanctity. Both sects, again, were alike in expecting an early end of the world and in seeking to prepare themselves for the reception of the promises of God by the cultivation of brotherly dispositions amongst themselves, by justice, good works, and benevolence towards their fellow-men, finding therein the special occupation of their lives.³¹

Of what nature were the secret traditions upon which these sects rested? We know from the Jewish historian Josephus that the Essenes clung to an extreme dualism of soul and body, in which, indeed, they agreed with the other religious associations of antiquity. Like all mystical sects, they regarded the body as the grave and prison-house of the immortal soul, to which it had been banished from an earlier life in light and blessedness. They also grounded their longing for deliverance from the world of sense and their strivings towards the glory of a better life of the soul beyond the grave upon pessimism in regard to human existence. They even regarded the performance of secret rites as a necessary condition of redemption. But in the opinion of the Essenes it was essential above all to know the names of the angels and dæmons who opened the passage to the different heavens, disposed one above another. This knowledge was to be revealed to men by one of the higher gods, a god-redeemer. A conception allied to

³¹ Cf. as regards the Essenes, Schürer, "Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi," 1898, II. 573–584.

that lay at the root of the Book of Wisdom, as well as of Philo's work – the belief in the magic power of the redemptive word of God, mingled by the Essenes with many strange Egyptian, Persian, and Babylonian ingredients and removed from the sphere of philosophic thought to the region of a rankly luxuriant superstition. Thus the closely related Jewish Apocalypse had expressly supported the revelation of a secret divine wisdom.³² Indeed, we now know that this whole world of thought belonged to an exceedingly manifold syncretic religious system, composed of Babylonian, Persian, Jewish, and Greek ingredients, which ruled the whole of Western Asia in the last centuries before Christ. Its followers called themselves Adonæi, after the name of its supposed founder, Ado (? Adonis). It is, however, generally described as the Mandaic religion, according to another name for its followers, the so-called Mandæi (Gnostics).³³

Of the numberless sects into which this religion split only a few names have come down to us, of which some played a part in the history of the heresies of early Christianity; for example, the Ophites or Nassenes, the Ebionites, Perates, Sethianes, Heliognostics, Sampsæes, &c.³⁴ We are thus much better acquainted with their fundamental ideas, which were very

³² Regarding the connection between the Essenes and the Apocalypse, cf. Hilgenfeld, "Die jüdische Apokalyptik," 1857, p. 253 *sqq.*

³³ On this point, cf. Brandt, "Die mandäische Religion," 1899; "Realenzyklop, f.d. protest. Theologie u. Kirche," xii. 160 *sqq.*; Gunkel, *op. cit.*, 18 *sqq.*

³⁴ Cf. Hilgenfeld, "Ketzer Geschichte des Urchristentums," 1884.

fantastic and complicated. They all subscribed to the belief in the redemption of the soul of man from its grave of darkness by a mediatory being, originally hidden in God and then expressly awakened or appointed by him for this purpose. In original Mandaism he bore the name of Mandâ de hajjê – that is, Gnosis, or “word” of life. In the form of Hibil-ziwâ, the Babylonian Marduk or Nabu, he was to descend from heaven with the keys thereof, and by means of his magic obtain the dominion of the world. He was to conquer those dæmons that had fallen away from God, introduce the end of the world, and lead back the souls of light to the highest Godhead.

As the Apocalypics show, this view had numerous adherents among the Jews of Palestine also. All those who found no satisfaction in the literalness of the Pharasaic beliefs and the business-like superficiality of the official Jewish religion, found edification in ideas of this sort, which excited the imagination. They dealt with them as “mysteries,” and sought, as may well be from fear of conflicts with traditional religion, to keep them secret from the public.³⁵ Hence it is that we have such an incomplete knowledge of this side of the religious life of the Jews. At any rate they clothed their expected Messiah with the attributes of the Mandaic God of Mediation, and they appear, as is clear from the Apocalypse of Daniel and that of John, to have taken particular pleasure in the description of the scene where God calls (“awakes”) the Redeemer to his mediatory office and

³⁵ Gunkel, *op. cit.*, 29.

installs him as Deliverer, Ruler of the World, and Judge of the living and the dead.

We are accustomed to look upon the Jewish religion as strictly monotheistic. In truth, it never was, even in the Mosaic times, until after the return from Exile. And this is clear, in spite of the trouble which the composers of the so-called historic books of the Old Testament have taken to work up the traditions in a monotheistic sense and to obliterate the traces of the early Jewish polytheism, by transforming the ancient gods into patriarchs, heroes, angels, and servants of Jahwe. It was not entirely Babylonian, Persian, and Greek opinions which influenced Judaism in a polytheistic direction; from the beginning, besides the theory of one God, emphasised by the priesthood and official world, there existed a belief in other Gods. This constantly received fresh nourishment from foreign influences, and it appears to have been chiefly cultivated in the secret societies. On the descent of the Israelites into Canaan each tribe brought with it its special God, under whose specific guidance it believed its deeds were accomplished. By the reforms of the Prophets these Gods were suppressed; but the higher grew the regard for Jahwe (apparently the God of the tribe of Judah), and the further he was in consequence withdrawn from the world to an unapproachable distance, the more strongly the remembrance of the ancient Gods again arose and assumed the form of the recognition of divine intermediate beings, the so-called "Sons of God." In these the longing for the direct

presence and visible representation of God sought expression. Such appears to have been the “Presence,” or “Angel of God,” with whom Jacob wrestled in the desert,³⁶ who led the Israelites out of Egypt and went before them as a pillar of flame,³⁷ who fought against their enemies, drove the Canaanites from their homes,³⁸ held intercourse with the prophets Elijah and Ezekiel,³⁹ and stood by the people of Jahwe in every difficulty.⁴⁰ He is also called the “King” (Melech), or “Son” of Jahwe,⁴¹ and thus exactly resembles the Babylonian Marduk, the Persian Mithras, the Phœnician Hercules or Moloch, “the first-born son” of God (Protogonos), who also appeared among the Orphics under the name of Phanes (*i. e.*, Countenance), who wrestles with Zeus at Olympia as Jacob with Jahwe, and, like him, dislocates his hip in the struggle with Hippokoon. In the rabbinic theology he is compared with the mystic Metatron, a being related to the Logos, “The Prince of the Presence,” “Leader of Angels,” “Lord of Lords,” “King of Kings,” “Commencement of the Way of God.” He was also called the “Protector,” “Sentinel,” and “Advocate” of Israel, who lays petitions before God, and “in whom is the name

³⁶ Gen. xxxii. 24.

³⁷ Numb. xx. 16; Exod. xiii. 21.

³⁸ Exod. xxxiii. 14; 2 Sam. v. 23.

³⁹ 1 Kings i. 3; Ezek. xliii. 5.

⁴⁰ Isa. lxiii. 9 *sqq.*

⁴¹ Psa. ii.

of the Lord.”⁴² Thus he is identical with that Angel promised in the second Book of Moses, in whom also is the name of Jahwe, who was to lead Israel to victory over the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites.⁴³ But he, again, is no other than Joshua, who was said to have overthrown these nations with Jahwe’s aid.⁴⁴ But Joshua himself is apparently an ancient Ephraimitic God of the Sun and Fruitfulness, who stood in close relation to the Feast of the Pasch and to the custom of circumcision.⁴⁵

Now, many signs speak in favour of the fact that Joshua or Jesus was the name under which the expected Messiah was honoured in certain Jewish sects. In Zech. iii. Joshua, who, according to Ezra iii. 2, led back the Jews into their old homes after the Babylonian captivity, just as the older Joshua brought back the Israelites into Canaan, the promised land of their fathers, was invested as High Priest by the “Angel of the Lord,”

⁴² Cf. Ghillany, “Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer,” 1842, 326–334; Eisenmenger, “Entdecktes Judentum,” 1711, i. 311, 395 *sqq.* Also Movers, “Die Phönizier,” 1841; i. 398 *sq.*

⁴³ Exod. xxiii. 20 *sqq.*

⁴⁴ Jos. xxiv. 11.

⁴⁵ Jos. v. 2–10. The unhistorical nature of Joshua is admitted also by Stade. Stade counts him an Ephraimitic myth, recalling to mind in so doing that the Samaritans possessed an apocryphal book of the same name in place of our Book of Joshua (“Gesch. d. Volkes Israel,” 1887, i. 64 *sqq.*, 135). The Samaritan Book of Joshua (Chronicum Samaritanum, published 1848) was written in Arabic during the thirteenth century in Egypt, and is based upon an old work composed in the third century B.C. containing stories which in part do not appear in our Book of Joshua.

and promised the continuance of his priesthood so long as he walked in the ways of the Lord. In Zech. vi. 9–15 the High Priest Joshua is crowned as Messiah and brought into connection with the “branch” under which the glory of God’s kingdom will come to pass. It is true that in this passage under the title of Messiah Zerubbabel, the leader of the Jews of the race of David, was originally understood. In him the prophet thought he could discern that “branch” by which, in accordance with Isaiah xi. 1, the House of David was again to obtain the rule. Since, however, the great hopes set upon Zerubbabel as Messiah were not fulfilled, a correction was made (and this before the Bible was translated into Greek) in the text of the prophet, as follows: The name of Zerubbabel was struck out, the plural changed into the singular, so that Joshua alone was represented as having been crowned, the promises regarding the Messiah accordingly also passing over to him (Stade, “Gesch. des Volkes Israel,” 1888, ii. 126, note. Hühn, “Die messianischen Weissagungen des israel. Volkes,” 1889, 62 *et sq.*).

Jesus was a name given, as will be still more clearly shown, not only to the High Priest of Zechariah and to the successor of Moses, both of whom were said to have led Israel back into its ancient home, both having a decidedly Messianic character. The name in ancient times also belonged to the Healthbringer and Patron of the Physician – namely, Jasios or Jason, the pupil of Chiron skilled in healing⁴⁶– who in general shows a

⁴⁶ That the hypothesis of Smith here mentioned is quite admissible from the

remarkable resemblance to the Christian Redeemer. Consider also the significant fact that three times at decisive turning-points in the history of the Israelites a Joshua appears who leads his people into their promised home, into Canaan and Jerusalem, into the Kingdom of God – the “New Jerusalem.” Now, as Epiphanius remarks in his “History of the Heretics,” Jesus bears in the Hebrew language the same meaning as curator, therapeutēs – that is, physician and curer. But the Therapeutēs and Essenes regarded themselves as physicians, and, above all, physicians of the soul. It is accordingly by no means improbable that they too honoured the God of their sect under this name.⁴⁷ We, moreover, read in a Parisian magic-papyrus recently found and published by Wessely (line 3119 *et sq.*): “I exort thee by Jesus the God of the Hebrews.” The words are found in an ostensibly “Hebrew Logos” of that papyrus, the tone of which is quite ancient, moreover shows no trace of Christian influence, and is ascribed by the transcriber to “the Pure,” under which name, according to Dieterich, the Essenes or Therapeutēs are to be understood.⁴⁸ The Jessaēs or Jessenes (Jessaioi) named themselves after Jesus, or after “the branch from the root of Jesse.”⁴⁹ They were closely connected on one side with the Essenes and on the other side

linguistic point of view has lately been maintained by Schmiedel in opposition to Weinel (*Protestantenbl.*, 1910, No. 17, 438).

⁴⁷ Epiph., “Hæresiol.” xxix.

⁴⁸ Smith, *op. cit.*, 37 *sq.*, 54.

⁴⁹ Isa. ii. 1. Cf. Epiphanius, *op. cit.*

with the Jewish sect of the Nazarenes or Nazoraes (Nazoraiori), if they were not absolutely identical. These were, as Epiphanius shows, in existence long before Christ, and had no knowledge of him.⁵⁰ They were, however, called Nazoraes (Nazarenes (Nazarenos) is only a linguistic variation of it, cf. Essaes and Essenes) because they honoured the Mediator God, the divine “son,” as a protector and guardian (Syrian, Nasaryá; Hebrew, Hanôsrî) (cf. “the Protector of Israel,” also the fact that Mithras was honoured as “Protector of the World”). According to Acts xxiv. 5 the first followers of Jesus were also called Nazoraes or Nazarenes. The expressions “Jesus” and “Nazorean” were therefore originally of almost like meaning, and by the addition of “the Nazorean” or “Nazarene” Jesus is not characterised as the man of Nazareth, as the Evangelists represent it, but as the Healer and Deliverer.

Whether there was a place called Nazareth in pre-Christian days must be considered as at least very doubtful. Such a place is not mentioned either in the Old Testament or in the Talmud, which, however, mentions more than sixty Galilean towns; nor, again, by the Jewish historian Josephus, nor in the Apocrypha. Cheyne believes himself justified by this in the conclusion that Nazareth in the New Testament is a pure geographical fiction.⁵¹

It is only in the later phases of the tradition that the name appears in the New Testament as a place-name. In the earlier

⁵⁰ *Id.* xxix. 6.

⁵¹ “Enc. Bibl.,” art. “Nazareth.”

ones the Nazorean (Nazarene) only signifies the follower of a particular sect, or is a surname of Jesus which characterises the significance attached to him in the thoughts of his followers. “The Nazorean” appears here only as an integral part of the whole name of Jesus, as Zeus Xenios, Hermes Psychopompos, Apollo Pythios, &c., &c. It is applied to Jesus only as Guardian of the world, Protector and Deliverer of Men from the power of sin and Dæmons, but without any reference to a quite obscure and entirely unknown village named Nazareth, which is mentioned in documents beyond any dispute, only from the fourth century on (see Eusebius, Jerome, and Epiphanius). Or where else is a sect named after the birthplace of its founder?⁵² Moreover, even in the Gospels it is not Nazareth but Capernaum which is described as his city; while Nazareth does not play any part at all in the life of Jesus. For the passages Matt. xiii. 53–58 and Mark vi. 1–6, according to which he had no success with his miracles in his “patris” on account of the unbelief of the people, leave the question open whether under the name of “patris” one is to understand his father-city Nazareth or somewhere else. The corresponding passage, Luke iv. 16–31, mentions Nazareth, it

⁵² “Since ha-nosrîm was a very usual term for guardians or protectors, it follows that when the term or its Greek equivalent hoi Nazoraioi was used the adoption of its well-known meaning was unavoidable. Even if the name was really derived from the village of Nazareth, no one would have thought of it. Every one would have unavoidably struck at once upon the current meaning. If a class of persons was called protectors, every one would understand that as meaning that they protected something. No one would hit upon it to derive their name from an otherwise unknown village named Protection” (Smith, *op. cit.*, 47).

is true, in connection with this incident; but it is in discrepancy with the older versions of Matthew and Mark, and it appears otherwise recognisable as a later redaction of the passages in the other Gospels.⁵³

Now the expression nazar or netzer in the sense of twig (sprout) is found not only in the well-known passage Isaiah xi. 1, where the Messiah is described as the “rod from the tree of Jesse” or “the twig from its root.” In fine, was not the twig looked upon as a symbol of the Redeemer in his character of a God of vegetation and life, as was the case in the worship of Mithras, of Men, a god of Asia Minor, of Attis, Apollo,⁵⁴ &c., and did not this idea also make itself felt in the name of the Nazareans? “He shall be called a Nazarene,”⁵⁵ accordingly, does not signify that he was to be born in the small village of Nazareth, which probably did not exist in the time of Jesus, but that he is the promised netzer or Zemah, who makes all new, and restores the time when “one loads the other beneath vine and fig-tree,”⁵⁶ and wonderful increase will appear.⁵⁷ Again, the possibility is not excluded of the name of the Nazareans having been confused with that of the Nasirae (Nazirites), those “holy” or “dedicated” ones, who were a survival in Judea from the times

⁵³ Cf. in this connection Smith, *op. cit.*, 36 *sq.*, 42 *sqq.*

⁵⁴ Cf. Cumont, *op. cit.*, 195 *sq.*

⁵⁵ Matt. ii. 25.

⁵⁶ Zech. iii. 10.

⁵⁷ Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 56; cf. also 33 and 46, notes.

when the Israelite tribes were nomads. These sought to express their opposition to the higher civilisation of the conquered land by patriarchal simplicity and purity of life, abstinence from the use of oil, wine, and the shears, &c.⁵⁸

According to this, Jesus (Joshua) was originally a divinity, a mediator, and God of healing of those pre-Christian Jewish sectaries, with reference to whom we are obliged to describe the Judaism of the time – as regards certain of its tendencies, that is – as a syncretic religion.⁵⁹ “The Revelation of John” also appears to be a Christian redaction of an original Jewish work which in all likelihood belonged to a pre-Christian cult of Jesus. The God Jesus which appears in it has nothing to do with the Christian Jesus. Moreover, its whole range of ideas is so foreign even to ancient Judaism that it can be explained only by the influence of heathen religions upon the Jewish.⁶⁰ It is exactly the same with the so-called “Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles.” This too displays a Jewish foundation, and speaks of a Jesus in the context of the words of the supper, who is in no wise the same as the Christian Redeemer.⁶¹ It is comprehensible that the later Christians did all they could in order to draw the veil of forgetfulness over these things. Nevertheless Smith has succeeded in his book, “The Pre-Christian Jesus,” in showing

⁵⁸ Robertson, “A Short History of Christianity,” 1902, 9 *sqq.*

⁵⁹ Gunkel, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁶⁰ *Id.*, *op. cit.*, 39–63; cf. also Robertson, “Pagan Christs,” 1903, 155 *seq.*

⁶¹ Cf. Robertson, *op. cit.*, 156.

clear evidences even in the New Testament of a cult of an old God Jesus. Among other things the phrase “τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ” (“the things concerning Jesus”)⁶² which according to all appearance has no reference to the history of Jesus, but only means the doctrines concerning him, and in any case could originally only have had this meaning, involves a pre-Christian form of belief in a Jesus. But this point is above all supported by the circumstance that even at the earliest commencement of the Christian propaganda we meet with the name of Jesus used in such a manner as to point to a long history of that name. For it is employed from the beginning in the driving out of evil spirits, a fact that would be quite incomprehensible if its bearer had been merely a man. Now we know from the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles that it was not only the disciples of the Jesus of the Gospels, but also others even in his lifetime (*i. e.*, even in the first commencement of the Christian propaganda), healed diseases, and drove out evil spirits in the name of Jesus. From this it is to be concluded that the magic of names was associated from of old with the conception of a divine healer and protector, and that Jesus, like Marduk, was a name for this God of Healing.⁶³ Judging by this the Persian, but above all the Babylonian, religion must have influenced the views of the above-named sects. For the superstition regarding names, the belief in the magic power

⁶² Mark v. 27; Luke xxiv. 19; Acts xviii. 25, xxviii. 31.

⁶³ Luke ix. 49, x. 17; Acts iii. 16; James v. 14 *sq.* For more details regarding Name magic, see W. Heitmüller, “Im Namen Jesu,” 1903.

attributed to the name of a divine being, as well as the belief in Star Gods and Astral mythology, which is a characteristic of Mandaeism, all have Babylon as their home. The Essenes also appear to have exercised the magical and healing art of which they boasted in the form of wonder-working and the driving out of evil spirits by a solemn invocation of the name of their God of Healing.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Cf. on whole subject Robertson, *op. cit.*, 153–160.

IV

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE MESSIAH

In the most different religions the belief in a divine Saviour and Redeemer is found bound up with the conception of a suffering and dying God, and this idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was by no means unknown to the Jews. It may be of no importance that in the Apocalypse of Esdras⁶⁵ the death of Christ is spoken of, since in the opinion of many this work only appeared in the first century after Christ; but Deutero-Isaiah too, during the Exile, describes the chosen one and messenger of God as the “suffering servant of God,” as one who had already appeared, although he had remained unknown and despised, had died shamefully and been buried, but as one also who would rise up again in order to fulfil the splendour of the divine promise.⁶⁶ This brings to mind the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Gods of Babylon and of the whole of Nearer Asia; for example, Tammuz, Mithras, Attis, Melkart, and Adonis, Dionysus, the Cretan Zeus, and the Egyptian Osiris. The prophet Zechariah, moreover, speaks of the secret murder of a God over which the inhabitants of Jerusalem would raise their lament, “as in the case of Hadad-rimmon (Rammân) in the valley of Megiddon,” that

⁶⁵ Ch. vii. 29.

⁶⁶ Isa. iii.

is, as at the death of Adonis, one of the chief figures among the Gods believed in by the Syrians.⁶⁷ Ezekiel also describes the women of Jerusalem, sitting before the north gate of the city and weeping over Tammuz.⁶⁸ The ancient Israelites, too, were already well acquainted with the suffering and dying Gods of the neighbouring peoples. Now, indeed, it is customary for Isaiah's "servant of God" to be held to refer to the present sufferings and future glory of the Jewish people, and there is no doubt that the prophet understood the image in that sense. At the same time Gunkel rightly maintains that in the passage of Isaiah referred to, the figure of a God who dies and rises again stands in the background, and the reference to Israel signifies nothing more than a new symbolical explanation of the actual fate of a God.⁶⁹

Every year the forces of nature die away to reawaken to a new life only after a long period. The minds of all peoples used to be deeply moved by this occurrence – the death whether of nature as a whole beneath the influence of the cold of winter, or of vegetable growth under the parching rays of the summer sun. Men looked upon it as the fate of a fair young God whose death they deeply lamented and whose rebirth or resurrection they greeted with unrestrained rejoicing. On this account from earliest antiquity there was bound up with the celebration of this God an imitative mystery under the form

⁶⁷ Ch. xii. 10 *sq.*; cf. Movers, *op. cit.*, i. 196.

⁶⁸ Ch. viii. 14.

⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, 78.

of a ritualistic representation of his death and resurrection. In the primitive stages of worship, when the boundaries between spirit and nature remained almost entirely indistinct, and man still felt himself inwardly in a sympathetic correspondence with surrounding nature, it was believed that one could even exercise an influence upon nature or help it in its interchange between life and death, and turn the course of events to one's own interest. For this purpose man was obliged to imitate it. "Nowhere," says Frazer, to whom we are indebted for a searching inquiry into all ideas and ritualistic customs in this connection, "were these efforts more strictly and systematically carried out than in Western Asia. As far as names go they differed in different places, in essence they were everywhere alike. A man, whom the unrestrained phantasy of his adorers clothed with the garments and attributes of a God, used to give his life for the life of the world. After he had poured from his own body into the stagnating veins of nature a fresh stream of vital energy, he was himself delivered over to death before his own sinking strength should have brought about a general ruin of the forces of nature, and his place was then taken by another, who, like all his forerunners, played the ever-recurring drama of the divine resurrection and death."⁷⁰ Even in historic times this was frequently carried out with living persons. These had formerly been the kings of the country or the priests of the God in question, but their place was now taken by criminals. In other cases the sacrifice of the deified

⁷⁰ Frazer, "The Golden Bough," 1900, ii. 196 *sq.*

man took place only symbolically, as with the Egyptian Osiris, the Persian Mithras, the Phrygian Attis, the Syrian Adonis, and the Tarsic (Cilician) Sandan (Sandes). In these cases a picture of the God, an effigy, or a sacred tree-trunk took the place of the “God man.” Sufficient signs, however, still show that in such cases it was only a question of a substitute under milder forms of ritual for the former human victim. Thus, for example, the name of the High Priest of Attis, being also Attis, that is, “father,” the sacrificial self-inflicted wound on the occasion of the great feast of the God (March 22nd to 27th), and the sprinkling with his blood of the picture of the God that then took place, makes us recognise still more plainly a later softening of an earlier custom of self-immolation.⁷¹ With the idea of revivifying dying nature by the sacrifice of a man was associated that of the “scapegoat.” The victim did not only represent to the people their God, but at the same time stood for the people before God and had to expiate by his death the misdeeds committed by them during the year.⁷² As regards the manner of death, however, this varied in different places between death by his own sword or that of the priest, by the pyre or the gibbet (gallows).

In this way we understand the 53rd chapter of Isaiah: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:

⁷¹ Frazer, “Adonis, Attis, Osiris,” 1908, 128 *sqq.*

⁷² “The Golden Bough,” i., iii. 20 *sq.*

the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself, and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul [? sufferings], and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Here we obviously have to do with a man who dies as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of his people, and by his death benefiting the lives of the others is on that account raised to be a God. Indeed, the picture of the just man suffering, all innocent as he is, itself varies between a human and a divine being.

And now let us enter into the condition of the soul of such an unhappy one, who as “God man” suffers death upon the gibbet,

and we understand the words of the 22nd Psalm: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou answerest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in Thee, and were not ashamed. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the lip, saying, Commit thyself unto the Lord, let him deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him... Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouth, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water. And all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels... They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones. They look and stare upon me: they part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots. But be not thou far off, O Lord: O Thou, my succour, haste Thee to help me... Save me from the lion’s mouth, yea, from the horns of the wild oxen...”

When the poet of the psalms wished to describe helplessness in its direst extremity, before his eyes there came the picture of a man, who, hanging upon the gibbet, calls upon God’s aid, while round about him the people gloat over his sufferings, which are to

save them; and the attendants who had taken part in the sacrifice divide among themselves the costly garments with which the God-king had been adorned.

The employment of such a picture presupposes that the occurrence depicted was not unknown to the poet and his public, whether it came before their eyes from acquaintance with the religious ideas of their neighbours or because they were accustomed to see it in their own native usages. As a matter of fact in ancient Israel human sacrifices were by no means unusual. This appears from numberless passages of the Old Testament, and has been already exhaustively set forth by Ghillany in his book “Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer” (1842), and by Daumer in his “Der Feuer- und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer.” Thus we read in 2 Sam. xxi. 6–9 of the seven sons of the House of Saul, who were delivered over by David to the Gibeonites, who hung them on the mountain before the Lord. Thus was God appeased towards the land.⁷³ In Numb. xxv. 4 Jahwe bade Moses hang the chiefs of the people “to the Lord before the sun, in order that the bitter wrath of the Lord might be turned from Israel.” And according to the Book of Joshua this latter dedicated the inhabitants of the city of Ain to the Lord, and after the capture of the city hung their king upon a tree,⁷⁴ while in the tenth chapter (15–26) he even hangs five kings at one time. Indeed, it appears that human sacrifice formed a regular part of the Jewish

⁷³ Verse 14.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, viii. 24–29.

religion in the period before the Exile; which indeed was but to be expected, considering the relationship between Jahwe and the Phœnician Baal. Jahwe himself was, moreover, originally only another form of the old Semitic Fire- and Sun-God; the God-king (Moloch or Melech), who was honoured under the image of a Bull, was represented at this time as a “smoking furnace”⁷⁵ and was gratified and propitiated by human sacrifices.⁷⁶ Even during the Babylonian captivity, despite the voices raised against it by some prophets in the last years of the Jewish state, sacrifices of this kind were offered by the Jews; until they were suppressed under the rule of the Persians, and in the new Jewish state were expressly forbidden. But even then they continued in secret and could easily be revived at any time, so soon as the excitement of the popular mind in some time of great need seemed to demand an extraordinary victim.⁷⁷

Now the putting to death of a man in the rôle of a divine ruler

⁷⁵ 1 Gen. xv. 17.

⁷⁶ Ghillany, *op. cit.*, 148, 195, 279, 299, 318 *sqq.* Cf. especially the chapter “Der alte hebräische Nationalgott Jahve,” 264 *sqq.*

⁷⁷ J. M. Robertson, “Pagan Christs,” 140–148. It cannot be sufficiently insisted upon that it was only under Persian influence that Jahwe was separated from the Gods of the other Semitic races, from Baal, Melkart, Moloch, Chemosh, &c., with whom hitherto he had been almost completely identified; also that it was only through being worked upon by Hellenistic civilisation that he became that “unique” God, of whom we usually think on hearing the name. The idea of a special religious position of the Jewish people, the expression of which was Jahwe, above all belongs to those myths of religious history which one repeats to another without thought, but which science should finally put out of the way.

was in ancient times very often connected with the celebration of the new year. This is brought to our mind even at the present day by the German and Slav custom of the “bearing out” of death at the beginning of spring, when a man or an image of straw symbolising the old year or winter, is taken round amidst lively jesting and is finally thrown into the water or ceremonially burnt, while the “Lord of May,” crowned with flowers, makes his entrance. Again, the Roman Saturnalia, celebrated in December, during which a mock king wielded his sceptre over a world of joy and licence and unbounded folly, and all relationships were topsy-turvy, the masters playing the part of slaves and *vice-versâ*, in the most ancient times used to be held in March as a festival of spring. And in this case, too, the king of the festival had to pay for his short reign with his life. In fact, the Acts of St. Dasius, published by Cumont, show that the bloody custom was still observed by the Roman soldiers on the frontiers of the Empire in the year 303 A.D.⁷⁸

In Babylon the Feast of the Sakæes corresponded to the Roman Saturnalia. It was ostensibly a memorial of the inroad of the Scythian Sakes into Nearer Asia, and according to Frazer was identical with the very ancient new year’s festival of the Babylonians, the Zakmuk. This too was associated with a reversal of all usual relationships. A mock king, a criminal condemned to death, was here also the central figure – an unhappy being, to whom for a few days was accorded absolute

⁷⁸ “Golden Bough,” iii. 138–146.

freedom and every kind of pleasure, even to the using of the royal harem, until on the last day he was divested of his borrowed dignity, stripped naked, scourged, and then burnt.⁷⁹ The Jews gained a knowledge of this feast during the Babylonian captivity, borrowed it from their oppressors, and celebrated it shortly before their Pasch under the name of the Feast of Purim, ostensibly, as the Book of Esther is at pains to point out, as a memorial of a great danger from which in Persia during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) they were saved by the craft of Esther and her uncle Mordecai. Jensen, however, has pointed out in the Vienna *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*⁸⁰ that the basis of the narrative of Esther is an opposition between the chief Gods of Babylon and those of hostile Elam. According to his view under the names of Esther and Mordecai are hidden the names of Istar, the Babylonian Goddess of fertility, and Marduk, her “son” and “beloved.” At Babylon during the Feast of the Sakæes, under the names of the Elamite Gods Vashti and Haman (Humman), they were put out of the way as representatives of the old or wintry part of the year in order that they might rise up again under their real names and bring into the new year or the summer half of the year.⁸¹ Thus the Babylonian king of the Sakæes also played the part of a God and suffered death as such

⁷⁹ Movers, *op. cit.*, 480 *sqq.*

⁸⁰ VI. 47 *sqq.*, 209 *sqq.*

⁸¹ Cf. Gunkel, “Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit,” 1895. 309 *sq.* E. Schrader, “Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament,” 1902, 514–520.

upon the pyre. Now we have grounds for assuming that the later Jewish custom at the Feast of Purim of hanging upon a gibbet and burning a picture or effigy representing the evil Haman, originally consisted, as at Babylon, in the putting to death of a real man, some criminal condemned to death. Here, too, then was seen not only a representative of Haman, but one also of Mordecai, a representative of the old as well as of the new year, who in essence was one and the same being. While the former was put to death at the Purim feast, the latter, a criminal chosen by lot, was given his freedom on this occasion, clothed with the royal insignia of the dead man and honoured as the representative of Mordecai rewarded by Ahasuerus for his services.

“Mordecai,” it is said in the Book of Esther, “went out from the king in royal attire, gold and white, with a great crown of gold, and covered with a robe of linen and purple. And the town of Susa rejoiced and was merry.”⁸² Frazer has discovered that in this description we have before us the picture of an old Babylonian king of the Sakæes, who represented Marduk, as he entered the chief town of the country side, and thus introduced the new year. At the same time it appears that in reality the procession of the mock king was less serious and impressive than the author of the Book of Esther would out of national vanity make us believe. Thus Lagarde has drawn attention to an old Persian custom which used to be observed every year at the beginning of spring in the early days of March, which is

⁸² Ch. viii. 15. Cf. also vi. 8, 9.

known as “the Ride of the Beardless One.”⁸³ On this occasion a beardless and, when possible, one-eyed yokel, naked, and accompanied by a royal body-guard and a troop of outriders, was conducted in solemn pomp through the city seated upon an ass, amidst the acclamations of the crowd, who bore branches of palm and cheered the mock king. He had the right to collect contributions from the rich people and shopkeepers along the route which he followed. Part of these went into the coffers of the king, part were assigned to the collector, and he could without more ado appropriate the property of another in case the latter refused his demands. He had, however, to finish his progress and disappear within a strictly limited time, for in default of this he exposed himself to the danger of being seized by the crowd and mercilessly cudgelled to death. People hoped that from this procession of “the Beardless One” an early end of winter and a good year would result. From this it appears that here too we have to do with one of those innumerable and multiform spring customs, which at all times and among the most diverse nations served to hasten the approach of the better season. The Persian “Beardless One” corresponded with the Babylonian king of the Sakæes, and appears to have represented the departing winter. Frazer concludes from this that the criminal also who played the part of the Jewish “Mordecai” with similar pomp rode through the city like “the Beardless One,” and had to purchase his freedom with the amusement which he afforded the people.

⁸³ “Abhandlungen d. Kgl. Ges. d. Wissenschaften zu Göttingen,” xxxiv.

In this connection he recalls a statement of Philo according to which, on the occasion of the entry of the Jewish King Agrippa into Alexandria, a half-crazy street sweeper was solemnly chosen by the rabble to be king. After the manner of “the Beardless One,” covered with a robe and bearing a crown of paper upon his head and a stick in his hand for a sceptre, he was treated by a troop of merry-makers as a real king.⁸⁴ Philo calls the poor wretch Karabas. This is probably only a corruption of the Hebrew name Barabbas, which means “Son of the Father.” It was accordingly not the name of an individual, but the regular appellation of whoever had at the Purim feast to play the part of Mordecai, the Babylonian Marduk, that is, the new year. This is in accordance with the original divine character of the Jewish mock king. For as “sons” of the divine father all the Gods of vegetation and fertility of Nearer Asia suffered death, and the human representatives of these gods had to give their lives for the welfare of their people and the renewed growth of nature.⁸⁵ It thus appears that a kind of commingling of the Babylonian Feast of the Sakæes and the Persian feast of “the Beardless One” took place among the Jews, owing to their sojourn in Babylon under Persian overlordship. The released criminal made his procession

⁸⁴ Cf. also P. Wendland, “Ztschr. Hermes,” xxxiii., 1898, 175 *sqq.*, and Robertson, *op. cit.*, 138, note 1.

⁸⁵ In the same way the Phrygian Attis, whose name characterises him as himself the “father,” was also honoured as the “son,” beloved and spouse of Cybele, the mother Goddess. He thus varied between a Father God, the high King of Heaven, and the divine Son of that God.

as Marduk (Mordecai) the representative of the new life rising from the dead, but it was made in the ridiculous rôle of the Persian “Beardless One” – that is, the representative of the old year – while this latter was likewise represented by another criminal, who, as Haman, had to suffer death upon the gallows. In their account of the last events of the life of the Messiah, Jesus, the custom at the Jewish Purim feast, already referred to, passed through the minds of the Evangelists. They described Jesus as the Haman, Barabbas as the Mordecai of the year, and in so doing, on account of the symbol of the lamb of sacrifice, they merged the Purim feast in the feast of Easter, celebrated a little later. They, however, transferred the festive entry into Jerusalem of “the Beardless One,” his hostile measures against the shopkeepers and money-changers, and his being crowned in mockery as “King of the Jews,” from Mordecai-Barabbas to Haman-Jesus, thus anticipating symbolically the occurrences which should only have been completed on the resurrection of the Marduk of the new year.⁸⁶ According to an old reading of Math. xxvii. 18 *et seq.*, which, however, has disappeared from our texts since Origen, Barabbas, the criminal set against the Saviour, is called “Jesus Barabbas” – that is, “Jesus, the son of the Father.”⁸⁷ May an indication of the true state of the facts not lie herein, and may the figure of Jesus Barabbas, the God of the Year, corresponding to both halves of the year, that of the

⁸⁶ Frazer, *op. cit.*, iii. 138–200. Cf. also Robertson, “Pagan Christs,” 136–140.

⁸⁷ Keim, “Geschichte Jesu,” 1873, 331 note.

sun's course upwards and downwards, not have separated into two distinct personalities on the occasion of the new year's feast?

The Jewish Pasch was a feast of spring and the new year, on the occasion of which the firstfruits of the harvest and the first-born of men and beasts were offered to the God of sun and sky. Originally this was also associated with human sacrifices. Here too such a sacrifice passed, as was universal in antiquity, for a means of expiation, atoning for the sins of the past year and ensuring the favour of Jahwe for the new year.⁸⁸ "As representing all the souls of the first-born are given to God; they are the means of union between Jahwe and his people; the latter can only remain for ever Jahwe's own provided a new generation always offers its first-born in sacrifice to God. This was the chief dogma of ancient Judaism; all the hopes of the people were fixed thereon; the most far-reaching promises were grounded upon the readiness to sacrifice the first-born."⁸⁹ The more valuable such a victim was, the higher the rank which he bore in life, so much the more pleasing was his death to God. On this account they were "kings" who, according to the Books of Joshua and Samuel, were "consecrated" to the Lord. Indeed, in the case of the seven sons of the house of Saul whom David caused to be hung, the connection between their death and the Pasch is perfectly clear, when it is said that they died "before the Lord" at the time

⁸⁸ Ghillany, *op. cit.*, 510 *sqq.*

⁸⁹ *Id.* 505.

of the barley harvest (*i. e.*, of the Feast of the Pasch).⁹⁰ Thus there could be no more efficacious sacrifice than when a king or ruler offered his first-born. It was on this account that, as Justin informs us,⁹¹ the banished Carthaginian general Maleus caused his son Cartalo, decked out as a king and priest, to be hung in sight of Carthage while it was being besieged by him, thereby casting down the besiegers so much that he captured the city after a few days. It was on this account that the Carthaginian Hamilcar at the siege of Agrigentum (407 B.C.) sacrificed his own son, and that the Israelites relinquished the conquest of Moab, when the king of this country offered his first-born to the Gods.⁹² Here, too, the human victim seems to have been only the representative of a divine one, as when, for example, the Phœnicians in Tyre until the time of the siege of that city by Alexander sacrificed each year, according to Pliny, a boy to Kronos, *i. e.*, Melkart or Moloch (king).⁹³ This Tyrian Melkart, however, is the same as he to whom, as Porphyry states, a criminal was annually sacrificed at Rhodes. According to Philo of Byblos the God was called "Israel" among the Phœnicians, and on the occasion of a great pestilence, in order to check the mortality, he is said to have sacrificed his first-born son Jehud (Judah), *i. e.*, "the

⁹⁰ 2 Sam. xxi. 9; cf. Lev. xxiii. 10–14.

⁹¹ "Hist.," xviii. 7.

⁹² 2 Kings iii. 27.

⁹³ "Hist. Nat.," xxxiv. 4, § 26.

Only one,” having first decked him out in regal attire.⁹⁴ Thus Abraham also sacrificed his first-born to Jahwe. Abraham (the “great father”) is, however, only another name for Israel, “the mighty God.” This was the earliest designation of the God of the Hebrews, until it was displaced by the name Jahwe, being only employed henceforth as the name of the people belonging to him. The name of his son Isaac (Jishâk) marks the latter out as “the smiling one.” This however, does not refer, as Goldzither⁹⁵ thinks, to the smiling day or the morning light, but to the facial contortions of the victim called forth by the pains he endured from the flames in the embrace of the glowing oven. These contortions were anciently called “sardonic laughter,” on account of the sacrifices to Moloch in Crete and Sardinia.⁹⁶ When, as civilisation increased, human sacrifices were done away with in Israel, and with the development of monotheism the ancient Gods were transformed into men, the story of Genesis xxii. came into existence with the object of justifying “historically” the change from human to animal victims. The ancient custom according to which amongst many peoples of antiquity, kings, the sons of kings, and priests were not allowed to die a natural death, but, after the expiration of a certain time usually fixed by an oracle, had to suffer death as a sacrificial victim for the good

⁹⁴ Mentioned in Eusebius, “Praeparatio Evangelica,” i. 10. Cf. Movers, *op. cit.*, 303 sq.

⁹⁵ “Der Mythus bei den Hebräern,” 1876, 109–113.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ghillany, *op. cit.*, 451 sqq.; Daumer, *op. cit.*, 34 sqq., 111.

of their people, must accordingly have been in force originally in Israel also. Thus did Moses and Aaron also offer themselves for their people in their capacity of leader and high priest.⁹⁷ But since both, and especially Moses, passed as types of the Messiah, the opinion grew up quite naturally that the expected great and mighty leader and high priest of Israel, in whom Moses should live again,⁹⁸ had to suffer the holy death of Moses and Aaron as sacrificial victims.⁹⁹ The view that the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was unknown to the Jews cannot accordingly be maintained. Indeed, in Daniel ix. 26 mention is made of a dying Christ. We saw above that among the Jews of the post-exilic period the thought of the Messiah was associated with the personality of Cyrus. Now of Cyrus the story goes that this mighty Persian king suffered death upon the gibbet by the order of the Scythian queen Tomyris.¹⁰⁰ But in Justin the Jew Trypho asserts that the Messiah will suffer and die a death of violence.¹⁰¹ Indeed, what is more, the Talmud looks upon the death of the Messiah (with reference to Isaiah liii.) as an expiatory death for the sins of his people. From this it appears “that in the second century after Christ, people were, at any rate in certain circles of

⁹⁷ Numb. xx. 22 *sqq.*, xxvii. 12 *sqq.*, xxxiii. 37 *sqq.*, Deut. xxxii. 48 *sqq.* Cf. Ghillany, *op. cit.*, 709–721.

⁹⁸ Deut. xviii. 15.

⁹⁹ Cf. Heb. v.

¹⁰⁰ Diodorus Siculus, ii. 44.

¹⁰¹ Justin, “Dial. cum Tryphone,” cap. xc.

Judaism, familiar with the idea of a suffering Messiah, suffering too as an expiation for human sins.”¹⁰²

The Rabbinists separate more accurately two conceptions of the Messiah. According to one, in the character of a descendant of David and a great and divine hero he was to release the Jews from servitude, found the promised world-wide empire, and sit in judgment over men. This is the Jewish conception of the Messiah, of which King David was the ideal.¹⁰³ According to the other he was to assemble the ten tribes in Galilee and lead them against Jerusalem, only to be overthrown, however, in the battle against Gog and Magog under the leadership of Armillus on account of Jeroboam’s sin – that is, on account of the secession of the Israelites from the Jews. The Talmud describes the last-mentioned Messiah, in distinction from the first, as the son of Joseph or Ephraim. This is done with reference to the fact that the kingdom of Israel included above all the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and that these traced back their origin to the mythical Joseph. He is thus the Messiah of the Israelites who had separated from the Jews, and especially, as it appears, of the Samaritans. This Messiah, “the son of Joseph,” it is said, “will offer himself in sacrifice and pour forth his soul in death, and his blood will atone for the people of God.” He himself will go to heaven. Then, however, the other Messiah, “the son of David,” the Messiah of the Jews in a narrower sense, will come

¹⁰² Schürer, *op. cit.*, ii. 555. Cf. also Wünsche, “Die Leiden des Messias,” 1870.

¹⁰³ See above, page 40 *sqq.*

and fulfil the promises made to them, in which connection Zech. xii. 10 *sq.* and xiv. 3 *sq.* seem to have influenced this whole doctrine.¹⁰⁴ According to Dalman,¹⁰⁵ the figure of the Messiah ben Joseph first appeared in the second or third century after Christ. Bousset too appears to consider it a “later” tradition, although he cannot deny that the Jewish Apocalypses of the end of the first thousand years after Christ, which are the first to make extensive mention of the matter, may have contained “very ancient” traditions. According to Persian beliefs, too, Mithras was the suffering Redeemer and mediator between God and the world, while Saoshyant, on the other hand, was the judge of the world who would appear at the end of all time and obtain the victory over Ariman (Armillus). In the same way the Greek myth distinguished from the older Dionysus, Zagreus, the son of Persephone, who died a cruel death at the hands of the Titans, a younger God of the same name, son of Zeus and Semele, who was to deliver the world from the shackles of darkness. Precisely the same relationship exists between Prometheus, the suffering, and Heracles, the triumphant deliverer of the world. We thus obviously have to do here with a very old and wide-spread myth, and it is scarcely necessary to point out how closely the two

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Eisenmenger, *op. cit.*, ii. 720 *sqq.*; Gfrörer, “Das Jahrhundert des Heils,” 1838, ii. 260 *sqq.*; Lützelberger, “Die kirchl. Tradition über den Apostel Johannes u. s. Schriften,” 1840, 224–229; Dalman, “Der leidende und der sterbende Messias der Synagoge im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausend,” 1888; Bousset, “Die Religion des Judentums, im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter,” 1903, 218 *sq.*; Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 40 *sq.*

¹⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, 21.

figures of the Samaritan and Jewish Messiahs correspond to the Haman and Mardachai of the Jewish Purim feast, in order to prove the extreme antiquity of this whole conception. The Gospel united into one the two figures of the Messiah, which had been originally separate. From the Messiah ben Joseph it made the human Messiah, born in Galilee, and setting out from there with his followers for Jerusalem, there to succumb to his adversaries. On the other hand, from the Messiah ben David it made the Messiah of return and resurrection. At the same time it elevated and deepened the whole idea of the Messiah in the highest degree by commingling the conception of the self-sacrificing Messiah with that of the Paschal victim, and this again with that of the God who offers his own son in sacrifice. Along with the Jews it looked upon Jesus as the “son” of King David, at the same time, however, preserving a remembrance of the Israelite Messiah in that it also gave him Joseph as father; and while it said with respect to the first idea that he was born at Bethlehem, the city of David, it assigned him in connection with the latter Nazareth of Galilee as his birthplace, and invented the abstruse story of the journey of his parents to Bethlehem in order to be perfectly impartial towards both views.

And now, who is this Joseph, as son of whom the Messiah was to be a suffering and dying creature like any ordinary man? Winckler has pointed out in his “Geschichte Israels” that under the figure of the Joseph of the Old Testament, just as under that of Joshua, an ancient Ephraimitic tribal God is concealed.

Joseph is, as Winckler expresses it, “the heroic offspring of Baal of Garizim, an offshoot of the Sun-God, to whom at the same time characteristics of Tammuz, the God of the Spring Sun, are transferred.”¹⁰⁶ Just as Tammuz had to descend into the under-world, so was Joseph cast into the well, in which, according to the “Testament of the twelve Patriarchs,”¹⁰⁷ he spent three months and five days. This betokens the winter months and five additional days during which the sun remains in the under-world. And again he is cast into prison; and just as Tammuz, after his return from the under-world, brings a new spring to the earth, so does Joseph, after his release from confinement, introduce a season of peace and happiness for Egypt.¹⁰⁸ On this account he was called in Egypt Psontomphanech, that is, Deliverer of the World, in view of his divine nature, and later passed among the Jews also as a prototype of the Messiah. Indeed, it appears that the Evangelists themselves regarded him in such a light, for the story of the two fellow-prisoners of Joseph, the baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh, one of whom, as Joseph foretold, was hanged,¹⁰⁹ while the other was again received into favour by the king, was transformed by them into the story of the two robbers who were executed at the same time as Jesus, one of whom

¹⁰⁶ *Op. cit.*, 71 *sq.*

¹⁰⁷ Kautzsch, “Pseudoepigraphen,” 500.

¹⁰⁸ Winckler, *op. cit.*, 67–77. Cf. also Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 40, and his “Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients,” 1904, 239 *sq.*

¹⁰⁹ Gen. xl.

mocked the Saviour while the other besought him to remember him when he entered into his heavenly kingdom.¹¹⁰

But the Ephraimitic Joshua too must have been a kind of Tammuz or Adonis. His name (Joshua, Syrian, Jeshu) characterises him as saviour and deliverer. As such he also appears in the Old Testament, finally leading the people of Israel into the promised land after long privations and sufferings. According to the Jewish Calendar the commencement of his activity was upon the tenth of Nisan, on which the Paschal lamb was chosen, and it ended with the Feast of the Pasch. Moses introduced the custom of circumcision and the redemption of the first-born male, and Joshua was supposed to have revived it.¹¹¹ At the same time he is said to have replaced the child victims, which it had been customary to offer to Jahwe in early days, by the offering of the foreskin of the male and thereby to have established a more humane form of sacrificial worship. This brings to our mind the substitution of an animal victim for a human one in the story of Isaac (Jishâks). It also brings to mind Jesus who offered his own body in sacrifice at the Pasch as a substitute for the numberless bloody sacrifices of expiation of prior generations. Again, according to an ancient Arabian tradition, the mother of Joshua was called Mirzam (Mariám, Maria), as the mother of Jesus was, while the mother of Adonis bore the similar sounding name of Myrrha, which also expressed

¹¹⁰ Luke xxiii. 39–43; cf. also Isa. lxxx. 12.

¹¹¹ Jos. v. 2 *sqq.*

the mourning of the women at the lament for Adonis¹¹² and characterised the mother of the Redeemer God as “the mother of sorrow.”¹¹³

But what is above all decisive is that the son of the “Ploughman” Jephunneh, Caleb (*i. e.*, the Dog), stands by Joshua’s side as a hero of equal rank. His name points in the same way to the time of the summer solstice, when in the mouth of the “lion” the dog-star (Sirius) rises, while his descent from Nun, the Fish or Aquarius, indicates Joshua as representing the winter solstice.¹¹⁴ Just as Joshua belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, to which according to the Blessing of Jacob the Fishes of the the Zodiac refer,¹¹⁵ so Caleb belonged to the tribe of Judah, which Jacob’s Blessing likened to a lion;¹¹⁶ and while the latter as Calub (Chelub) has Shuhah for brother, that is, the Sun descending into the kingdom of shadows (the Southern Hemisphere),¹¹⁷ in like manner Joshua represents the Spring Sun rising out of the night of winter. They are thus both related to one another in the same way as the annual rise and decline of the sun, and as, according to Babylonian ideas, are Tammuz and Nergal, who similarly typify the two halves of the year. When Joshua dies at Timnath-heres,

¹¹² Amos viii. 10; cf. Movers, *op. cit.*, 243.

¹¹³ Cf. Robertson, “Pagan Christs,” 157.

¹¹⁴ Numb. xiv.

¹¹⁵ *Id.* xiii. 9; Gen. xlviii. 16.

¹¹⁶ *Id.* xiii. 7; Gen. xlix. 9.

¹¹⁷ 1 Chron. iv. 11.

the place of the eclipse of the Sun (*i. e.*, at the time of the summer solstice, at which the death of the Sun-God was celebrated¹¹⁸), he appears again as a kind of Tammuz, while the “lamentation” of the people at his death¹¹⁹ alludes possibly to the lamentation at the death of the Sun-God.¹²⁰

It cannot be denied after all this that the conception of a suffering and dying Messiah was of extreme antiquity amongst the Israelites and was connected with the earliest nature-worship, although later it may indeed have become restricted and peculiar to certain exclusive circles.¹²¹

The Jewish representative of Haman suffered death at the Feast of Purim on account of a crime, as a deserved punishment which had been awarded him. The Messiah Jesus, on the other hand, according to the words of Isaiah, took the punishment upon himself, being “just.” He was capable of being an expiatory victim for the sins of the whole people, precisely because he least of all deserved such a fate.

Plato had already in his “Republic” sketched the picture of a “just man” passing his life unknown and unhonoured amidst suffering and persecution. His righteousness is put to the proof and he reaches the highest degree of virtue, not allowing himself

¹¹⁸ Judges ii. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Id.* iv.

¹²⁰ Cf. Nork, “Realwörterbuch,” 1843–5, ii. 301 *sq.*

¹²¹ Cf. on whole subject Martin Brückner, “Der sterbende und auferstehende Gottheiland in den orientalischen Religionen und ihr Verhältnis zum Christentum. Religionsgesch. Volksbücher,” 1908.

to be shaken in his conduct. "The just man is scourged, racked, thrown into prison, blinded in both eyes, and finally, when he has endured all ills, he is executed, and he recognises that one should be determined not to be just but to appear so." In Pharisaic circles he passed as a just man who by his own undeserved sufferings made recompense for the sins of the others and made matters right for them before God, as, for example, in the Fourth Book of the Maccabees the blood of the martyrs is represented as the expiatory offering on account of which God delivered Israel. The hatred of the unjust and godless towards the just, the reward of the just and the punishment of the unjust, were favourite themes for aphoristic literature, and they were fully dealt with in the Book of Wisdom, the Alexandrian author of which was presumably not unacquainted with the Platonic picture of the just man. He makes the godless appear conversing and weaving plots against the just. "Let us then," he makes them say, "lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not to our liking and he is clean contrary to our doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the law and reproacheth us with our sins against our training. He professeth to have the knowledge of God; and he calleth himself the child of the Lord. He proved to be to us for the reproof of our designs. He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits; he abstaineth from our ways as from filth; he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed and maketh his boast that God is his father. Let us see if his words

be true: and let us prove what will happen in the end of him. For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies. Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture that we may know his meekness and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death: thus will he be known by his words.”¹²² “But the souls of the just,” continues the author of the Book of Wisdom, “are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us for utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men yet is their hopes full of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them and found them worthy for himself. As gold in the furnace hath he tried them, and received them as a burnt offering. And in the time of their visitation they shall shine and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble. They shall judge the nations and have dominion over the people and their Lord will rule for ever.”¹²³ It could easily be imagined that these words, which were understood by the author of the Book of Wisdom of the just man in general, referred to the just man *par excellence*, the Messiah, the “son” of God in the highest sense of the word, who gave his life for the sins of his people. A reason was found at the same time for the shameful death of the Messiah. He died the object

¹²² Ch. ii. 12–20.

¹²³ Ch. iii. 1–8.

of the hatred of the unjust; he accepted contempt and scorn as did the Haman and Barabbas of the Feast of Purim, but only in order that by this deep debasement he might be raised up by God, as is said of the just man in the Book of Wisdom: "That is he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness and his end to be without honour: Now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints."¹²⁴

Now we understand how the picture of the Messiah varied among the Jews between that of a divine and that of a human being; how he was "accounted just among the evil-doers"; how the idea became associated with a human being that he was a "Son of God" and at the same time "King of the Jews"; and how the idea could arise that in his shameful and undeserved death God had offered himself for mankind. Now too we can understand that he who died had after a short while to rise again from the dead, and this in order to ascend into heaven in splendour and glory and to unite himself with God the Father above. These were ideas which long before the Jesus of the Gospels were spread among the Jewish people, and indeed throughout the whole of Western Asia. In certain sects they were cherished as secret doctrines, and were the principal cause that precisely in this portion of the ancient world Christianity spread so early and with such unusual rapidity.

¹²⁴ Ch. v. 3-5.

V

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH. THE BAPTISM

It is not only the idea of the just man suffering, of the Messiah dying upon the gibbet, as “King of the Jews” and a criminal, and his rising again, which belongs to the centuries before Christ. The stories which relate to the miraculous birth of Jesus and to his early fortunes also date back to this time. Thus in the Revelation of John¹²⁵ we meet with the obviously very ancient mythical idea of the birth of a divine child, who is scarcely brought into the world before he is threatened by the Dragon of Darkness, but is withdrawn in time into heaven from his pursuer; whereupon the Archangel Michael renders the monster harmless. Gunkel thinks that this conception must be traced back to a very ancient Babylonian myth.¹²⁶ Others, as Dupuis¹²⁷ and Dieterich, have drawn attention to its resemblance to the Greek myth of Leto,¹²⁸ who, before the birth of the Light god Apollo, being pursued by the Earth dragon Pytho, was carried by the Wind god Boreas to Poseidon, and was brought safely

¹²⁵ Ch. xii.

¹²⁶ “Zum religionsgesch. Verst. d. N.T.,” 54.

¹²⁷ “L’origine de tous les cultes,” 1795, v. 133.

¹²⁸ “Abraxas,” 117.

by the latter to the Island of Ortygia, where she was able to bring forth her son unmolested by the hostile monster. Others again, like Bousset, have compared the Egyptian myth of Hathor, according to which Hathor or Isis sent her young son, the Light god Horus, fleeing out of Egypt upon an ass before the pursuit of his uncle Seth or Typhon. Pompeian frescoes represent this incident in such a manner as to recall feature for feature the Christian representations of the flight of Mary with the Child Jesus into Egypt; and coins with the picture of the fleeing Leto prove how diffused over the whole of Nearer Asia this myth must have been. The Assyrian prince Sargon also, being pursued by his uncle, is said to have been abandoned on the Euphrates in a basket made of reeds, to have been found by a water-carrier, and to have been brought up by him – a story which the Jews have interwoven into the account of the life of their fabulous Moses.¹²⁹ And very similar stories are related both in East and West, in ancient and in later times, of other Gods, distinguished heroes and kings, sons of the Gods, of Zeus, Attis, Dionysus, Œdipus, Perseus, Romulus and Remus, Augustus, and others. As is well known, the Indian God-man Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, is supposed to have been sought for immediately after his birth by his uncle, King Kansa, who had all the male children of the same age in his country put to death, the child being only

¹²⁹ Cf. regarding the mythical nature of Moses, who is to be looked upon as an offshoot of Jahwe and Tammuz, Winckler, *op. cit.*, 86–95.

saved from a like fate by taking refuge with a poor herdsman.¹³⁰ This recalls Herodotus's story of Cyrus,¹³¹ according to which Astyages, the grandfather of Cyrus, being warned by a dream, ordered his grandson to be exposed, the latter being saved from death, however, through being found by a poor herdsman and being brought up in his house. Now in Persian the word for son is Cyrus (Khorō,¹³² Greek Kyros), and Kyris or Kiris is the name of Adonis in Cyprus.¹³³ Thus it appears that the story of the birth of Cyrus came into existence through the transfer to King Cyrus of one of the myths concerning the Sun-God, the God in this way being confused with a human individual. Now since Cyrus, as has been said, was in the eyes of the Jews a kind of Messiah and was glorified by them as such, we can understand how the danger through which the Messianic child is supposed to have passed found a place in the Gospels. Again, a similar story of a king, who, having been warned by a dream or oracle, orders the death of the children born within a specified time, is found in the "Antiquities" of Josephus¹³⁴ in connection with the story of the childhood of Moses. Moses, however, passed like Cyrus for a kind of forerunner and anticipator of Christ; and Christ was

¹³⁰ Cf. also O. Pfleiderer, "Das Christusbild des urchristlichen Glaubens in religionsgesch. Beleuchtung," 1903, 37. Also Jeremias, "Das A.T. im Lichte des alten Orients," 254.

¹³¹ I. 107.

¹³² Cf. Plutarch, "Artaxerxes," ch. i.

¹³³ Movers, *op. cit.*, 228.

¹³⁴ II. 9, 2.

regarded as a Moses reappearing.¹³⁵ Again Joab, David's general, is said to have slaughtered every male in Edom; the young prince Hadad, however, escaped the massacre by fleeing into Egypt. Here he grew up and married the sister of the king, and after the death of his enemy King David he returned to his home.¹³⁶ But Hadad is, like Cyrus, (Kyrus) a name of the Syrian Adonis.

Another name of Adonis or Tammuz is Dôd, Dodo, Daud, or David. This signifies "the Beloved" and indicates "the beloved son" of the heavenly father, who offers himself for mankind, or "the Beloved" of the Queen of heaven (Atargatis, Mylitta, Istar).¹³⁷ As is well known, King David was also called "the man after the heart of God," and there is no doubt that characteristics of the divine Redeemer and Saviour of the same name have been intermingled in the story of David in the same way as in that of Cyrus.¹³⁸ According to Jeremiah xxx. 8 and Ezekiel xxxiv. 22 *sqq.* and xxxvii. 21, it was David himself who would appear as the Messiah and re-establish Israel in its ancient glory. Indeed, this even appears to have been the original conception of the Messiah. The Messiah David seems to have been changed into a descendant of David only with the progress of the monotheistic conception of God, under the influence of the Persian doctrine

¹³⁵ Bousset, "Das Judentum," 220.

¹³⁶ 1 Kings xi. 14 *sq.*

¹³⁷ Schrader, "Die Keilinschriften u. d. A.T.," 225.

¹³⁸ Winckler, *op. cit.*, 172 *sqq.*, Jeremias, "Das A.T. im Lichte d. a. O.," 2nd. ed., 488 *sqq.*; cf. also Baentsch, "David und sein Zeitalter. Wissenschaft u. Bildung," 1907.

concerning Saoshyant, the man “of the seed of Zarathustra.” Now David was supposed to have been born at Bethlehem. But in Bethlehem there was, as Jerome informs us,¹³⁹ an ancient grove and sanctuary of the Syrian Adonis, and as Jerome himself complains the very place where the Saviour first saw the light resounded with the lamentations over Tammuz.¹⁴⁰ At Bethlehem, the former Ephrata (*i. e.*, Place of Ashes), Rachel is said to have brought forth the youngest of the twelve month-sons of Jacob. She herself had christened him Benoni, son of the woeful lament. He was, however, usually called Benjamin, the Lord or Possessor of light. In the Blessing of Moses he is also called “a Darling of the Lord,” and his father Jacob loved him especially.¹⁴¹ He is the God of the new year born of the ashes of the past, at whose appearance lament and rejoicings are commingled one with another; and thus he is only a form of Tammuz (Hadad) bringing to mind the Christian Redeemer in that he presided over the month of the Ram.¹⁴²

Now we understand the prophecy of the prophet Micah: “Thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel, whose going forth is from of old,

¹³⁹ Ep. viii. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.* xlii. 58.

¹⁴¹ Ch. v. 1.

¹⁴² Gen. xxxv. 11–19; Deut. xxxiii. 12; Gen. xliv. 26.

from everlasting.”¹⁴³ Now, too, the story of the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem has its background in religious history. It is said in Matt. ii. 18, with reference to Jer. xxxi. 15, “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are not.” It is the lamentation of the women over the murdered Adonis which was raised each year at Bethlehem. This was transformed by the Evangelists into the lament over the murder of the children which took place at the birth of Hadad who was honoured at Bethlehem.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Cf. Nork, “Realwörterbuch,” i. 240 *sq.*

¹⁴⁴ The other famous “prophecy” supposed to refer to the birth of the Messiah, viz., Isaiah vii. 14, is at present no longer regarded as such by many. The passage obviously does not refer to the Messiah. This is shown by a glance at the text, and it would hardly have been considered so long as bearing that meaning, if any one had taken the trouble to read it in its context. Consider the situation. Queen Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel march against the Jewish King Ahaz, who is therefore much troubled. At the command of Jahwe the prophet goes to the king in order to exhort him to courage, and urges him to pray for a sign of the happy outcome of the fight. He, however, refuses to tempt God. Thereupon Isaiah himself gives him a sign. “Behold,” he says, “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God be with us. Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.” And undisturbed by the fact that this prophecy for the moment can give but little encouragement to the king, Isaiah goes with the help of two witnesses(!) to a prophetess and gets her with child in order to make his words true(!). The text does not say in what relationship the woman stood to Isaiah. The Hebrew word *Almah* may mean “young woman” as well as “virgin.” The Septuagint, however, thoughtlessly making the passage refer to the Messiah, and having before its eyes very possibly the stories of the miraculous birth of the heathen Redeemer Gods, translates the word straightway by “virgin,” without thinking what possible light it thereby threw upon Isaiah.

Hadad-Adonis is a God of Vegetation, a God of the rising sap of life and of fruitfulness: but, as was the case with all Gods of a similar nature, the thought of the fate of the sun, dying in winter and being born anew in the spring, played its part in the conception of this season God of Nearer Asia. Something of this kind may well have passed before the mind of Isaiah, when he foretold the future glory of the people of God under the image of a new birth of the sun from out of the blackness of night, with these “prophetic” words: “Arise, shine, for thy light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising... The abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah. They all shall come from Sheba: they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.”¹⁴⁵

As is well known, later generations were continually setting out this idea in a still more exuberant form. The imagination of the enslaved and impoverished Jews feasted upon the thought that the nations and their princes would do homage to the Messiah with gifts, while uncounted treasures poured into the temple at Jerusalem: “Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia

¹⁴⁵ Ch. lx. 1 *sqq.*

shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God ye kingdoms of the earth.”¹⁴⁶ This is the foundation of the Gospel story of the “Magi,” who lay their treasures at the feet of the new-born Christ and his “virgin mother.” But that we have here in reality to do with the new birth of the sun at the time of the winter solstice appears from the connection between the Magi, or kings, and the stars. For these Magi are nothing else than the three stars in the sword-belt of Orion, which at the winter solstice are opposed in the West to the constellation of the Virgin in the East; stars which according to Persian ideas at this time seek the son of the Queen of Heaven – that is, the lately rejuvenated sun, Mithras.¹⁴⁷ Now, as it has been said, Hadad also is a name of the Sun-God, and the Hadad of the Old Testament returns to his original home out of Egypt, whither he had fled from David. Thus we can understand how Hosea xi. 1, “I called my son out of Egypt,” could be referred to the Messiah and how the story that Jesus passed his early youth in Egypt was derived from it.¹⁴⁸

It may be fairly asked how it was that the sun came to be thus honoured by the people of Western Asia, with lament at its death and rejoicing at its new birth. For winter, the time of the sun’s “death,” in these southern countries offered scarcely any grounds at all for lament. It was precisely the best part of the year. The night, too, having regard to its coolness after the heat of the day,

¹⁴⁶ Psa. lxxviii. 32 *sq.*

¹⁴⁷ Dupuis, *op. cit.*, 268.

¹⁴⁸ Matt. i. 14 *sq.*

gave no occasion for desiring the new birth of the sun in the morning.

We are compelled to suppose that in the case of all the Gods of this nature the idea of the dying away of vegetation during the heat of the year and its revival had become intertwined and commingled with that of the declining and reviving strength of the sun. Thus, from this mingling of two distinct lines of thought, we have to explain the variations of the double-natured character of the Sun-Gods and Vegetation-Gods of Western Asia.¹⁴⁹ It is obvious, however, that the sun can only be regarded from such a tragic standpoint in a land where, and in the myths of a people for whom, it possesses in reality such a decisive significance that there are grounds for lamenting its absence or lack of strength during winter and for an anxious expectation of its return and revival.¹⁵⁰ But it is chiefly in the highlands of Iran and the

¹⁴⁹ The feasts of the Gods in question also correspond to this in character. They fell upon the solstice (the birthday or day of death of the sun), so far as their connection with the sun was emphasized. On the contrary, upon the equinoxes, so far as their connection with vegetation was concerned, sowing and harvest were brought into prominence. Usually, however, death and reappearance were joined in one single feast, and this was celebrated at the time in spring when day and night were of equal length, when vegetation was at its highest, and in the East the harvest was begun. Cf. Jeremias, "Babylonisches im N.T.," 10 *sq.*

¹⁵⁰ One should compare the description given by Hommel of the climate of Babylonia (*op. cit.*, 186) with the picture of the natural occurrences which, according to Gunkel, gave occasion for the myth of the birth of Marduk, and the threatening of the child by the "Winter Dragon," Tiâmat. "Before spring descends to the earth from heaven, winter has had its grim (!) rule upon the earth. Men pine away (in the country of the two rivers!) beneath its sway, and look up to heaven wondering if deliverance

mountainous hinterland of Asia Minor that this is the case to such an extent as to make this idea one of the central points of religious belief. Even here it points back to a past time when the people concerned still had their dwelling-place along with the kindred Aryan tribes in a much more northerly locality.¹⁵¹ Thus Mithras, the “Sol invictus” of the Romans, struggling victoriously through night and darkness, is a Sun hero, who must have found his way into Persia from the north. This is shown, amongst other things, by his birthday being celebrated on the 25th of December, the day of the winter solstice. Again, the birth of the infant Dionysus, who was so closely related to the season Gods of Nearer Asia, used to be celebrated as the feast of the new birth of the sun at about the same time, the God being then honoured as Liknites, as “the infant in the cradle” (the winnowing-fan). The Egyptians celebrated the birth of Osiris on the 6th of January, on which occasion the priests produced the figure of an infant from the sanctuary, and showed it to the

will not come. The myth consoles them with the story that the God of spring who will overthrow winter has already been born. The God of winter who knows for what he is destined is his enemy, and would be very pleased if he could devour him. And winter at present ruling is much stronger than the weak child. But his endeavour to get rid of his enemy comes to nought. Do you then want to know why he is so grim? He knows that he has only a short time. His might is already broken although we may be yet unaware of it. The year has already changed to spring. The child grows up in heaven; the days become longer, the light of the sun stronger. As soon as he is grown up he descends and overthrows his old enemy. ‘Only trust in God without despair, spring must come.’” (“Schöpfung und Chaos,” 389 *sq.*).

¹⁵¹ Dupuis has already pointed this out, *op. cit.*, 152.

people as a picture of the new-born God.¹⁵² That the Phrygian Attis came thither with the Aryans who made their way from Thrace into Asia Minor, and must have had his home originally in Northern Europe, appears at once from the striking resemblance of the myth concerning him with that of the northern myth of Balder. There can be no doubt that the story in Herodotus of Atys, son of Cræsus, who while out boar hunting accidentally met his death from the spear of his friend, only gives another version of the Attis myth. This story, however, so closely resembles that of the death of Balder, given in the Edda, that the theory of a connection between them is inevitably forced upon one's mind. In the Edda the wife of Balder is called Nanna. But Nanna (*i. e.*, "mother") was according to Arnobius¹⁵³ the name of the mother of the Phrygian Attis.

Now the Sun and Summer God Balder is only a form of Odin, the Father of Heaven, with summer attributes, and he too is said, like Attis, Adonis and Osiris, to have met his death through a wild boar. Just as anemones sprang from the blood of the slain Adonis and violets from that of Attis, so also the blood of the murdered Odin (Hackelbernd) is said to have been changed into spring flowers.¹⁵⁴ At the great feast of Attis in March a post or pine-tree trunk decked with violets, on which the picture of the God was hung, used to form the central point of the rite. This

¹⁵² Macrobius, "Saturnal.," i. 18, i. 34–35.

¹⁵³ "Adversus Nationes," v. 6 and 13.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Simrock, "Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie," 4th ed., 1874, 201 and 225.

was a reminder of the way in which in ancient times the human representative of the God passed from life to death, in order by sacrifice to revive exhausted nature. According to the verses of the Eddic Havamal, Odin says of himself: —

“I know that I hang on the wind-rocked tree
Throughout nine nights,
Wounded by the spear, dedicated to Odin,
I myself to myself.”¹⁵⁵

By this self-sacrifice and the agonies which he endured, the northern God, too, obtained new strength and life. For on this occasion he not only discovered the Runes of magic power, the knowledge of which made him lord over nature, but he obtained possession at the same time of the poetic mead which gave him immortality and raised the Nature God to be a God of spiritual creative power and of civilisation. This is obviously the same idea as is again found in the cult of Attis and in the belief in the death of the God. The relationship of all these different views seems

¹⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, 138. The transfixing of the victim with the holy lance, as we meet it in John xix. 34, appears to be a very old sacrificial custom, which is found among the most different races. For example, both among the Scythian tribes in Albania in the worship of Astarte (Strabo) and in Salamis, on the island of Cyprus, in that of Moloch (Eusebius, “Praep. Evang.,” iv. 16). “The lance thrust,” says Ghillany, with reference to the Saviour’s death, “was not given with the object of testing whether the sufferer was still alive, but was in order to correspond with the old method of sacrificing. The legs were not broken because the victim could not be mutilated. In the evening the corpse had to be taken down, just as Joshua only allowed the kings sacrificed to the sun to remain until evening upon the cross” (*op. cit.*, 558).

still more probable in that a sacrificial rite lay at the root of the Balder myth also. This myth is only, so to speak, the text of a religious drama which was performed every year for the benefit of dying nature – a drama in which a man representing the God was delivered over to death.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Frazer, *op. cit.*, 345 *sq.* F. Kauffmann, “Balder Mythus u. Sage nach ihren dichterischen u. religiösen Elementen untersucht,” 1902, 266 *sq.*

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