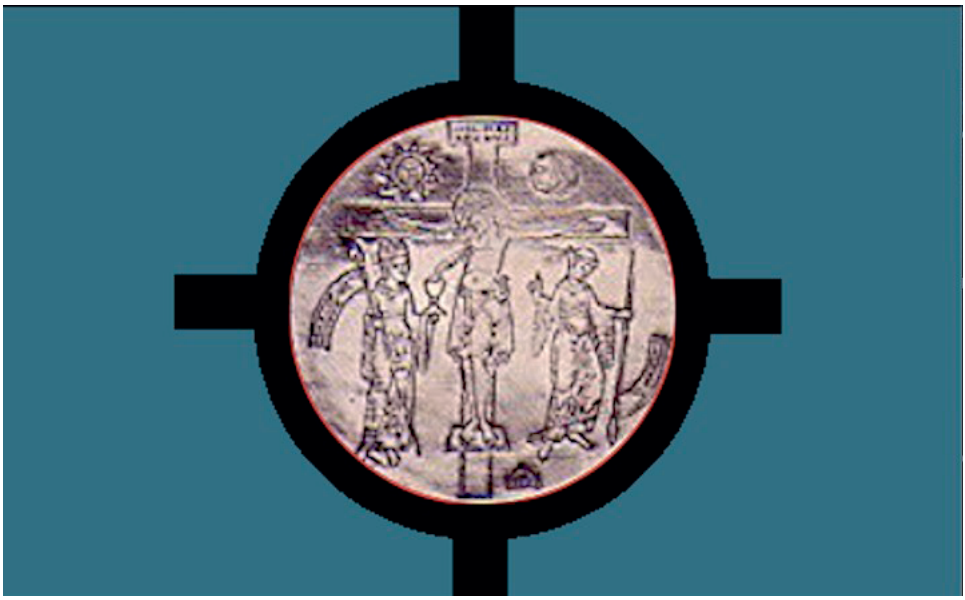
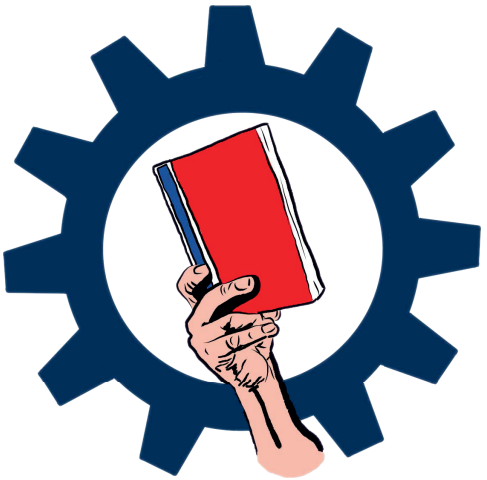
The Origins Of Christianity





New Outlook Publishers
1808 Hylan Blvd Suite 1009
Staten Island, New York 10305-1934
newoutlookpublishers.net

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to V. Gordon Childe for valuable criticism of the early chapters of this book, and to Maurice Cornforth, Christopher Hill and Jack Lindsay for valuable suggestions in regard to the whole book. While their advice has been useful in many places, I alone am responsible for the work as it now stands.

April, 1953. A. R.

CHAPTER I

HOW MAN MADE GOD

To many who are under the influence of traditional education it may seem that man is naturally religious. The Bible, the teaching of which is obligatory in most of our schools, depicts mankind as worshipping God from the earliest times. It is one of the commonplaces of religious teaching that the world about us proves the existence of an almighty and loving Creator, and that only perversity refuses to acknowledge and glorify him.

On reflection it is evident that we are not naturally religious. Those of us who believe in a religion do so only because we were taught it. The Churches themselves recognize this fact by using their political power to enforce religious teaching in our schools. Not only so, but the religion taught would be unintelligible to people who had not attained a certain level of culture. To take an obvious example, the first article of the Apostles' Creed affirms belief in "God the Father Almighty". The word "father" is at once intelligible to us, but would be unintelligible to primitive savages. There was a time when man was unacquainted with the fact of paternity; in fact some tribes are unacquainted with it today.

Man was always a social animal. Unless he had been, he would not have survived in the struggle for existence against beasts of prey and the rigours of climate. The basic difference between primitive, barbaric and civilized society is in productive equipment and the social relations to which this gives rise. Take away from man the steam and electric power of modern

industrialism; take away the printing press, mariner's compass and fire-arms of early capitalism; take away the art of writing evolved in ancient civilization; take away even the pastoral, agricultural and metallurgical arts achieved by prehistoric barbarism -- and man is back on the primitive level.

With primitive productive equipment goes a primitive economic structure; and with this goes a primitive ideology. This does not mean that the primitive is a fool. The Australian aborigines, though ignorant of pottery and agriculture, are clever enough to make the boomerang. The somewhat less primitive Melanesians, though ignorant of metal-work, are skilled in pottery, boat-building, fishing and gardening. These people are rational enough about what they know how to do. But where an element of luck enters in, the distinctive ideology of primitive society begins. This takes the form of magic, that is, of action designed to control events which the primitive has no real means of controlling -- the weather, the multiplication of plants and animals, and so forth. The commonest form of magic is "sympathetic" magic, in which you try to produce an effect by doing something like it. To multiply a species you mimic it in dance or song. To make it rain and thunder you whirl a noisy instrument called a "bull-roarer", drum on a kettle, or scatter water on the ground. Other magic is used to prevent death in child-birth, and to initiate youths into full membership of a tribe. The most primitive societies have magic, but no religion. Among "the aborigines of Australia", says Frazer, "magic is universally practised, whereas religion in the sense of a propitiation or conciliation of the higher powers seems to be nearly unknown."[1] Tribal magic is handed down by tradition along with such genuine knowledge as the tribe possesses. Youths at puberty are initiated into both. To explain rites of which no rational account can be given, myths are told. Thus in Australia uninitiated boys are not allowed to see a

bull-roarer, but are told that its noise is the voice of a mythical monster or ancestral spirit. On initiation they learn to use it, that is to practise thunder-making magic, causing "the rain to fall and everything to grow up new".

Bull-Roarer

Twirling a Bull-Roarer

Many barbaric tribes have a word denoting power of any kind, whether in men, animals, plants or inanimate objects --*orenda*, among the Iroquois, *wakanda* among the Sioux, *manitou* among the Algonquins, *mana* among the Melanesians, and so forth. Such terms may be rendered "spirit", provided we remember that they do not necessarily imply personality. Such power resides in a man, but also in a beast, bird, tree, stone or thunder-storm. "No man has ever seen *wakanda*" said an Omaha elder to an anthropologist.[2] Under primitive communism this is as near as man gets to an idea of God.

There is evidence in civilized societies that religion arose from tribal magic such as is still practised by primitives. But it is a considerable step from the primitive magic of the Australian aborigines o the developed religions of ancient civilization. In the one case there is ritual, but not worship; in the other the ritual is part of the worship of supposed external beings -- gods. This is

the difference between magic and religion properly so called. It is impossible to deal with so vast a development within the compass of this chapter except in a summary fashion from which much is necessarily omitted.

The passage from magic to religion is connected with the emergence from primitive communism of the beginnings of class society. In the most primitive societies there is no special class of rulers. Affairs are managed by the elders; and anyone may become an elder by living long enough. But in societies with a somewhat better productive equipment, as in Melanesia, the tribal surplus of food is enough to keep an unproductive class of magicians, and magicians with a run of luck to their credit live on offerings. Like other successful men, they have an extra share of *mana*. As Frazer puts it, "magicians or medicine-men appear to constitute the oldest artificial or professional class in the evolution of society".[3] "Round every big magician", says Malinowski, "there arises a halo made up of stories about his wonderful cures or kills, his catches, his victories, his conquests in love."[4] The tribe credit him with power over the forces of nature; or rather to them he is a force of nature -- while his luck holds.

The illusion is sustained by the customs associated with totemism. The primitive tribe is made up of different clans or kinship-groups. Each clan then uses its traditional magic to multiply a particular species -- its totem. But it does not eat its totem; it leaves it for the other clans of the tribe. The clan is said to be descended from its totem, and dire consequences are alleged to follow the infraction of the taboo. Totem, we may note, is simply an American-Indian word for "clan". The custom by which the magician, representing the clansmen, dresses up and impersonates the totem-animal during the multiplication

ceremonies helps to confirm the illusion that he is in a special sense the totem-animal -- the clan incarnate.

There is good evidence that the magician or medicine-man himself was the first god. In ancient society priesthood, kingship and godhead are only gradually separated. Early man, says Frazer, does not "draw any very sharp distinction between a god and a powerful sorcerer". Indeed in our sense of the word " the savage has no god at all ".[5] On ultimate analysis priest, king and god all go back to the early magician wielding his supposed mana for the good of the tribe.

In this embryonic phase of class society ruling is a dangerous trade. The luck of a magician does not last for ever. He is bound to have failures. Some failures may be cancelled by successes; others may be explained away by accusing enemy magicians or witches. But sooner or later the magician's claims cease to be credible. Then it is a bad day for the magician. He will be insulted, beaten, killed or driven into exile, as happens to this day in various African tribes. A rival may challenge him to fight, kill him and reign in his stead, as in the famous case of the "king of the wood" in ancient Latium ("the priest who slew the slayer, and shall himself be slain"), or as formerly in Bengal, where whoever killed the king was immediately acknowledged as king.

This is the more likely to happen when primitive technique gives place to agriculture. The rise of agriculture adds to the responsibilities of the magician, and therefore both to his prestige if successful and to his discredit if unsuccessful. The nature of paternity is now known; for developed agriculture (over and above mere gardening) depends on the domestication of animals, and ignorance of the nature of paternity can hardly survive the possession of livestock. On the principles of

sympathetic magic, therefore, the virility of the magician-chief, now become a "corn king", is believed to promote the fertility of the soil. But if so, a corn king with failing powers is of no use. It is better to kill him, as was done by the ancient Ethiopians, and even until modern times by some tribes of the upper Nile and Congo. Or, to make sure, he had better die after a fixed term of office that his power may go into the earth unabated. The custom of killing the corn king after a fixed term was formerly the rule even in modern times in some parts of southern India and Africa. Popular tradition in countries widely separate in space and time speaks of a god who dies and lives again for his people -- Osiris in Egypt, Tammuz among the ancient Semites, Attis in Asia Minor, Dionysus in Greece, even Odin among the peoples of the north.

Osiris

Tammuz

Attis

Dionysos

Odin

But with the rise of class society such treatment of chiefs becomes an anomaly. The passage to a pastoral and later to an agricultural economy increases the surplus food at the disposal of the tribe, makes it possible to keep slaves ("human cattle", as Engels puts it)[6] and makes easy the appropriation of wealth by the chief. The chief becomes rich and powerful, and yet he is expected after a term of years, or at the first sign of failing powers, to die that the tribe may live! Sooner or later, as we might expect, a chief whose time is up declines to die. In backward societies we have historical evidence of this. According to Diodorus, in the third century B.C. a king of Ethiopia, who had had a Greek education, was ordered by the priests to kill himself according to custom. He killed them instead. Potentates innocent of Greek have been just as ready to dodge their liabilities. A Portuguese historian cited by Frazer mentions a Kaffir king who refused to commit suicide according to precedent on losing a front tooth, and recommended his successors to follow his example. More usually the chief compounded for his immunity by sacrificing a substitute -- a son or, better still, a slave or someone else of no account.

In the first civilizations, of course, it happened much earlier. After the urban revolution in the Middle East which ushers in civilization properly so called -- the concentration of populations before 3000 B.C. in cities such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt -- and even more after the unification of cities in kingdoms under dynastic conquerors, the immolation of the ruler in person was unthinkable. To keep up the fiction that the divine king was killed, the substitute was treated as a divine king before being sacrificed. Thus in ancient Egypt, a victim impersonated Osiris, the corn-spirit, and was sacrificed in place of the Pharaoh, whose ancestors in prehistoric times had probably filled the role. This did not prevent the Pharaoh, when he came to die, from being venerated as Osiris just as if he had been the victim. At Babylon a condemned prisoner was annually dressed in royal robes, treated as king and allowed to enjoy himself with the king's concubines for five days before he was scourged and put to death. In Mexico before the Spanish conquest a prisoner was chosen a year beforehand, dressed as a god, worshipped as a god, feasted as a god, and children were brought to him to be blessed and sick folk to be cured, before he was killed and eaten at the spring festival. So with the growth of class society the king, by virtue of superior force, enjoyed the privileges of a magician-chief without his liabilities, while the victim picked for sacrifice shouldered his liabilities after a hollow show of privilege.

The custom of killing the magician-chief, or later a substitute, for the good of the tribe inevitably leads to a distinction between the god and his temporary representative. The successful magician who makes the rain fall and ensures your food supply is plainly stronger than you. But the unsuccessful magician who has fallen down on his job and has to be knocked on the head is plainly weaker than you. The magician, therefore, who succeeded yesterday and fails today is not the real author of your rainfall and

food supply. The anomaly demands a myth to explain it. Once long ago in the heroic past there was a very great magician, the ancestor of the tribe, who showed how magic should be done. From him his successors derive their power. When they are successful, his spirit is in them. When they fail, his spirit passes to another. Here at last we have the idea of god apart from man, or at least from any known man -- an idealized magician-chief other than the real magician-chief who fails and dies. On the Egyptian monuments the Theban god Amun, for example, is depicted as a man with the head and horns of a ram. No doubt originally the magician-chief of Thebes dressed up in this way to perform the rites which multiplied the Theban flocks and herds. Inscriptions at Luxor show that the Theban Pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty (about 1550-1350 B.C.) were held to be actually begotten by Amun, who in the form of the reigning Pharaoh impregnated the queen consort. Centuries later Alexander's claim to the throne of Egypt was confirmed by the oracle of Amun, which acknowledged him as the son of the god. In the same way in modern times the Shilluk tribes of the upper Nile held that their king, on whose health and strength their welfare depended, was a reincarnation of Nyakang, the divine founder of his line. In due course the Shilluk king was killed according to custom, and the son or other relative who succeeded him inherited his divinity. Among other Nilotic tribes, too, the ancestral spirit is believed to pass from each chief to his successor. The god, in short, from an individual magician-chief, the personification of a clan, has t become a projection of an ideal magician-chief, a personification of the ruling class in barbaric or early civilized society.

By the time, therefore, that civilization has emerged from barbarism, religion is already an amalgam of contradictory elements. Firstly it is a body of ritual traceable to primitive magic and carried out by priests or priest-kings, the civilized counterpart

of tribal magicians, in order to ensure food-supply as well as subsidiary advantages to the community which they rule. Secondly it is a body of myths relating to the ritual.

The elaborate Egyptian theology which settled the mutual relations of different local deities does not necessarily represent the real belief of the priests. It merely means that, when Egypt was unified, they had to reconcile the claims of each local god with those of other local gods. When later under the eighteenth dynasty Thebes became the capital of Egypt, its god Amun was amalgamated with Re and Horus and became the supreme god. To the Egyptian peasant, who lived, laboured and died in his native place, the priest-made pedigree relating his god to other gods did not matter so long as traditional ritual made the sun shine, the Nile rise, the corn grow, the beasts breed and village life go on.

As in Egypt, so in Babylonia the unification of the country first under one city-state, then under another, led to priestly attempts to arrange the gods of different cities in an ordered pantheon. After Babylon had become the ruling city about 2000 B.C., its god Marduk annexed the ritual and myths of the other gods. He became Bel-Marduk, lord of light, who had conquered Tiamat, the dragon of the waters, made heaven and earth out of her dismembered body, and created plants, animals and men. This ancient creation-myth has come down to us in more than one version. In the older legends not the Babylonian Marduk, but Ea, the god of Eridu (in those days washed by the Persian Gulf) is the creator. Doubtless the myth was first suggested by the struggles of early settlers in Babylonia to reclaim land from the marshes of the lower Euphrates and Tigris. Another echo of early struggles with the hostile water-element is the flood-story, of which also we have more than one version. The flooding of the rivers on which they

flourished must have been a standing threat to more than one early civilization, and particularly in the wide alluvial plain of Babylonia. The creation and flood stories in Genesis are Jewish adaptations of these Babylonian legends.

A notable feature of early religion is the progressive transference of its gods from earth to heaven and their transformation from magnified men into completely superhuman and celestial beings. The original god, as we saw, was a bigger and better magician-chief doing the things that a magician was expected to do -- making rain and multiplying the fruits of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea; He was not too divine to die and be buried and for his tomb to be pointed out. The annual cycle of life and death in nature, on which man's life depended, was for long the only measure of the year. But even before civilization arose a more exact method of reckoning became necessary. This was first afforded by the phases of the moon. These are more obvious to the eye than the annual motion of the sun. At the dawn of civilization, therefore, the moon plays an important part in economic life, and deities of earthly origin have often taken on lunar attributes. The close association of lunar reckoning with the beginnings of civilization is shown by the fact that in Egypt Thoth, at an early date identified with the moon, was credited with the invention of writing and of the calendar. In one text he is even said to have created the world. In Babylonia the moon-god, Sin, was called the "lord of wisdom". Later, as a result of observation by priests who had the necessary leisure to attend to the matter, the tropical year was measured with approximate exactitude. Thenceforth the sun took precedence of the moon and the earth in priestly estimation, and sun-gods became supreme, or older gods were invested with solar attributes. Thus in Egypt Re-Horus became the high god, and Thoth was demoted to the office of scribe.

The process is not completed until civilization is well established, until man has considerable mastery over nature, and until the dependence of the seasons on the sun is an ascertained fact. In spite of this accumulating knowledge, the priesthoods perpetuate traditional rituals of magical origin as a source of power and revenue. Ancient religion is thus an incongruous mixture of magic, totemism, ancestor-worship, nature-worship and rationalizing but contradictory myths -- "deposits of different ages of thought" (and, we may add, of different productive techniques and social relations) "sundered perhaps by thousands of years".[7] In these contradictory conceptions successive phases of magic and religion are mingled: the human and mortal magician making rain and multiplying food for his tribe; the totem-species which he impersonated in order to multiply; the legendary ancestor reputed to have taught his descendants magic and useful arts; and the external forces which magic claims to manipulate -- the earth, the rain, the seasons, the moon, the sun -- all going to make the final product, the god. Along with this process goes a widening contradiction between the ideology of the ruling class and the faith of the working masses. Among themselves the Egyptian priests came to regard Re, Horus, Amun, Ptah, Apis, Osiris and the rest as aspects or emanations of one sole being, the source of all life, whom they reasonably (for those times) identified with the sun. But woe to him who undermined their credit with the people by publicly "confounding the persons" and denying the prerogatives of each particular deity! So Pharaoh Akhenaton (1375-1358 B.C.) found to his cost when he tried to thrust aside the priests and suppress all cults but simple worship of the sun's light and power. His revolution perished with him.

Notes

1 Frazer, *Golden Bough*, abridged edition, ch. IV.

2 Alice Fletcher, cited by Jane Harrison, *Themis*, ch. III.

3 *Golden Bough*, abridged edition, ch. VII. This may be true even of some palaeolithic societies. Gordon Childe cites the case of artist-magicians among Magdalenian cave-dwellers. *What Happened in History*, chap. II.

4 Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, V, 4.

5 *Golden Bough*, abridged edition, ch. VII. Cf. Thomson: "The more advanced forms of worship develop in response to the rise of a ruling class -- hereditary magicians, priests, chiefs and kings . . . The idea of godhead springs from the reality of kingship; but in the human consciousness, split as it now is by the cleavage in society, this relation is inverted. The king's power appears to be derived from God, and his authority is accepted as being the will of God."*Aeschylus and Athens*, chap. I.

6 Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, chap. II.

7 L. R. Farnell, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article *Zeus*.

CHAPTER II

WHO WERE THE JEWS?

Palestine, the country of origin of Judaism and Christianity, owed its importance in ancient as in modern times to its geographical position. It lies at the south-western end of the "fertile crescent" which encircles the Arabian desert from the Persian Gulf to the frontier of Egypt. Here the predatory powers of Egypt and nearer Asia were bound to clash. The inhabitants of Palestine, therefore, in addition to the misery everywhere attending the passage from primitive communism to class society, suffered the special drawback of living in a land inviting invasion both by the nomads of the neighbouring desert and by great rival empires. For centuries before 2000 B.C. Amorites from the Arabian desert raided and infiltrated into the sown lands in such numbers that Syria and Palestine are known on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments as "the land of the Amorites". About 1800 B.C. Hyksos barbarians from the north overran the country on their way to conquer Egypt. After 1580 B.C. the Theban Pharaohs drove out the Hyksos, annexed Palestine and Syria, and enriched Egypt with plunder, slaves and tribute. After 1400 B.C. new invaders, the Hittites from the north and the Habiru (Hebrews) from the desert, took advantage of Egypt's decline to push into Palestine. In the thirteenth century B.C. Egypt temporarily reconquered the country. An inscription of Pharaoh Merneptah about 1223 records that "Israel is desolate, her seed is not." This is the first mention of Israel in any extant record. About 1200 a new people from the north, the Philistines, overran the country, put an end to Egyptian rule and gave Palestine the name which it still bears.

The Hebrews who invaded Palestine did not differ culturally from the barbaric peoples about them. They were not even a single people. Fourteenth-century Egyptian despatches (the Tell-el-Amarna tablets) call them sometimes "Habiru", sometimes simply "robbers". They were a miscellany of nomad tribes who, like many before and after, raided the country and, when the central government was weak, did "deals" with

local princelings and made permanent settlements. Israel seems to have entered Palestine earlier than Judah. There is no evidence on the monuments that they were fugitive slaves from Egypt. But it would be very natural for fugitive slaves who made their "getaway" to attach themselves to nomad tribes; so there may be some basis for the tradition of Egyptian oppression. They were not monotheists. The historical books of the Old Testament in their present form date from eight hundred to a thousand years after the Amarna period and have all been edited by monotheistic compilers. They are based on sources at most a few centuries older than themselves and in no case anything like contemporary with the Amarna tablets: they are even silent on the desolation of Israel by Pharaoh Merneptah. In fact the Biblical story of the exodus from Egypt under Moses and the conquest of Palestine under Joshua cannot be fitted into the Egyptian records.[1] It may contain a dim and distorted tradition of historical events, just as the Homeric poems contain a dim and distorted tradition of a real Trojan war. But the authority of the two stories is about on a level.

Nevertheless one fact leaps to the eye. With all their editing the compilers of Old Testament history are unable to conceal the fact that the Hebrews of the time of the invasion and for centuries after were, in their religion and in their whole way of life, barbarians. They worshipped their rain-god Jahu or Jahveh with rites which included human sacrifice. Jephthah sacrifices his daughter; Samuel hews Agag in pieces before Jahveh; David hangs seven sons of Saul to end a famine; and in no case does the source represent the act as other than right and proper.

Nor was Jahveh their only god. From their first settlement in Palestine the Hebrews, as was natural, adopted the cults of the country in which they had settled. Jahveh was only one *baal* (lord) among many, and indistinguishable from the local fertility-gods worshipped "under every green tree". On pieces of pottery excavated at Samaria proper names compounded with "baal" are more frequent than those compounded with "Jahu". Jahveh even had female consorts. Excavations at Mizpah in central Palestine show that in the ninth century B.C., in the time of the kings of Israel, there stood there side by side a temple of Jahveh and a temple of

Astarte -- a Syrian variant of the Babylonian Ishtar. Papyri discovered at Elephantine in Upper Egypt show that as late as 408 B.C., after the time of Nehemiah, a colony of Jews, settled there for more than a century, worshipped along with Jahu two variants of the mother-goddess, Anath and Ashima.

Cults such as these are characteristic of the oldest civilizations, in which a class of priests, lineal successors of barbaric magicians or medicine-men, perform traditional rites deemed to be necessary to the public welfare and enjoy in return exceptional wealth in land, offerings and slaves. Only gradually do the priestly and kingly functions become separated. Even in the Old Testament we read (in a source evidently older than the monopoly of the priesthood by the Levite clan) that "David's sons were priests."[2]

The cults of ancient Palestine differed from those of the neighbouring empires of Egypt and Babylonia only in the fact that the country was smaller and poorer, and its priests and kings therefore less firmly established and more exposed to attack in times of acute class struggle or national disaster. There were class struggles in other ancient societies; but Palestine differed from other countries in one important respect. Wherever a great empire arose, as in Egypt, Babylonia or later in the Graeco-Roman world, the exploited classes -- peasants, artisans and slaves -- were hopelessly defeated and held down. We know little of their struggles, for the simple reason that the slave-owning class wrote the history of the times. We have no Helot account of Greece, no Spartacist account of Rome. But in Palestine, owing to its position at the junction of rival empires and in close proximity to the tribal society of the desert, the struggle, though the final issue was the same, was more obstinate and more protracted. Until Rome appeared on the scene, Palestine was never under one great empire long enough to extinguish in the masses the will to resist and the hope of deliverance. After the fall of the Egyptian Empire in the twelfth century B.C. the petty kingdoms of Syria and Palestine, among which Israel and Judah were eventually numbered, were left alone to raid and plunder one another until the ninth century, when the Assyrian military machine began its great westward push. Assyria conquered

Palestine in the eighth century, but was itself conquered in the seventh by the Medes and Babylonians. The new Babylonian Empire in less than a lifetime fell before Persia. Persia held Palestine for two centuries, but for most of the time had to conciliate the Jews owing to their key position on the frontier of Egypt. Under Alexander's successors the country was continually fought for by rival dynasts. The result was that although Palestine had more than its share of massacres, devastations and deportations, the hold of the conquerors was never secure. The revolutionary movement, unlike those elsewhere, was able to organize, to flare up not once or twice but again and again into open revolt, and to produce in the prophetical books of the Old Testament the earliest considerable revolutionary literature which has come down to us.

The word "prophet" means to us one who foretells the future. But that was not its original sense. The Hebrew word *nabi*, which is translated "prophet", meant a speaker or announcer, whether what he announced referred to the future or not. When we first read of prophets in the Old Testament, they are an order very like the dervishes of modern Islam. They go about in organized bands "prophesying" to the accompaniment of music and are reckoned rather disreputable people. When the warrior Saul is seen with one such band, bystanders ask: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" and add in contempt: "And who is their father?"[3] We gather that prophets were usually of the poorer classes and disliked by the great families as mob-orators and trouble-makers. It cannot be accidental that their first appearance on the scene follows certain flagrant cases of priestly misrule -- the "racket" of the sons of Eli in I Samuel ii, and that of the sons of Samuel in I Samuel viii.

Closely allied to the prophets in the Old Testament are the Nazirites or "devotees", unkempt of person and vowed to total abstinence, and the very similar Rechabites, who lived a life of nomad simplicity in the midst of civilization and played a part in the revolution which exterminated the house of Ahab and put Jehu on the throne of Israel.

The early history of the prophets is wrapped in legend. The magnificently told stories of Elijah and Elisha are the work of devout partisans with an infinite appetite for miracle. We cannot be sure that these two prophets ever lived. Elijah's life is miraculous from beginning to end, and Elisha's hardly less so. But their stories at least tell us what people held to be the function of a prophet. It was to beard kings in their palaces at the risk of outlawry, exile and death, and to fight land-grabbing rulers to the point of revolution. To justify their attack on the established priesthoods the prophets invoked the name of Jahveh, the god of their nomad ancestors, and in the course of the struggle transformed him from a tribal idol, a nature-god like any other, into a symbol of the social justice for which they battled. As in other popular movements, we read in many places of prophets who are bought or intimidated by the ruling class -- of "prophets of Baal" who "eat at Jezebel's table",[4] and prophets who are silent or prophesy smooth things at the command of authority. The reader will be able to supply his own parallels.

The eighth-century prophet Amos was the first prophet, so far as we know, to commit anything to writing. He is a peasant poet attacking the enemies of his class -- the rulers of Syria and Palestine who make a hell for their subjects by their petty, but atrocious wars; the usurers who sell "the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes";[5] the lords who sit drinking with their ladies -- "cows of Bashan who oppress the poor", Amos impolitely calls them;[6] the swindling merchants who make "the ephah small, and the shekel great";[7] and the priests with their ornate services and sacrifices -- unknown, says Amos, to the desert ancestors of Israel. He does not attack idolatry as such. He attacks the priests of Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the kingdom of Israel, not for worshipping Jahveh in the form of a bull-calf, but for exacting tithes, burnt offerings and meal offerings instead of letting "judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream".[8]Another feature of Amos is his internationalism. He denounces the neighbouring kingdom of Moab for an atrocity against Edom, even though no Israelite was the victim. He tells his countrymen that they are no more important in the divine scheme than other nations and that their "sinful kingdom"[9] will be wiped off the face of the earth.

The greater part of the prophetical literature is written in rhythmical verse. This suggests that it was, as we should expect in a people's movement, passed from hand to hand among those who could read and committed to memory by those who could not. Naturally this method of propaganda led to extensive corruption of passages once they had ceased to be topical. Many passages of the prophets are so mutilated as to be no longer intelligible even to Hebrew scholars. And as writings were handed down from generation to generation, copyists would amend and interpolate them, and even add the work of a later writer to that of an earlier without indicating the different authorship. The result is that some prophetical books (especially Isaiah) are a patchwork in which the dates of different parts vary by several centuries. An acid test of authenticity is the consistency of a passage with the date of its ostensible writer. We can accept most (not all) of Amos as authentic, since it was evidently written when Samaria and Damascus were the capitals of independent kingdoms, and they ceased to be so soon after the reputed date of Amos. But we cannot accept as authentic prophecies of the end of a captivity which, when Amos wrote, had not even begun. And we cannot allow prophets who write in Assyrian times to get away with references to the rise of Persia, or prophets of the Persian period to write as if the main enemies of Israel were the Greeks. That sort of anomaly is frequent in the prophetical books.[10] Yet their general tendency is clear and points to a continuous movement deeply rooted in the social and political conditions of the age.

From the ninth century B.C. the armies of Assyria pressed on in ruthless pursuit of plunder and tribute. The petty kingdoms of Syria and Palestine occasionally made common cause against her, but more often bargained for her alliance in their internecine feuds. The kings of Israel from Jehu onward repeatedly paid her blackmail in the form of tribute in order to enlist her aid against Damascus. At the time of Amos, Assyria was temporarily weakened by civil war: hence he does not name her. But a few years later, under the military usurper Tiglath-Pileser III, a new push began. In 738 a western coalition was smashed, and Israel paid tribute again.[11] In 734 a new coalition between Israel and Damascus brought the Assyrian armies down on them. Syria and Palestine were ravaged as Assyria knew how to ravage. Damascus was besieged and in 732 ceased to exist as a kingdom. Israel survived a little longer, but rebelled in 727 after

the death of Tiglath-Pileser and in 722 shared the fate of Damascus: 27,000 Israelites were deported by Sargon to Assyria and replaced by colonists from other conquered lands. A considerable Israelite population, however, remained. Judah, the surviving Hebrew kingdom, had saved itself by becoming tributary to Assyria.[12]

After that Palestine was overrun again and again by Assyrian armies marching against this or that rebel city or against Egypt, which tried to avert its own danger by using the little states as pawns. The death of Sargon in 705 was followed by a general revolt of subject peoples -- Babylonia, the western states and the desert tribes between joining forces with Egypt against the Assyrian pest. Sennacherib, the new king, had to reconquer his empire country by country and could not attend to Palestine until 701. Then indeed "the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold". City after city was taken. Egypt came too late to help her allies and was beaten off. Two hundred thousand Jews were deported; and king Hezekiah was besieged in Jerusalem and paid a heavy indemnity in treasure and slaves.[13] Something -- perhaps an outbreak of plague in the Assyrian army -- saved Jerusalem from actual sack. But the Jewish story of a divine slaughter of 185,000 Assyrians is plain wishful thinking. Sennacherib's losses cannot have been crippling; for he was able next year to finish off the rebellion in Babylonia and to make his son king of Babylon.

To this miserable time in Jewish history belongs whatever is genuine in the book of Isaiah. In the existing book the work of many prophets from the eighth down to the second century B.C. has been strung together without regard to date or historical fitness. But in parts of the first half of the book we catch authentic echoes of the terror spread by the march of the Assyrian armies. The country is desolate, its cities burnt, its crops eaten by strangers, its people carried captive, and its impregnable city, "the virgin daughter of Zion", threatened with violation. Isaiah uses these disasters to ram home denunciations of priestly mummery, princely corruption, the land-grabbing of lords and the luxury of ladies, very much in the manner of Amos. He is not a peasant like Amos, but a citizen of Jerusalem, influential enough to threaten a rich court official with disgrace. Isaiah is married to a "prophetess" who presumably shares his

work. They give their children quaint, topical names such as "Remnant-shall-return"[14] and "Hasten-booty-speed-spoil"[15] -- like the English Puritans of a later age. Isaiah outdoes Amos in attacking idolatry as such. National disaster had so discredited the priesthood that a prophet could now openly mock those who "worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made".[16] But the main attack is on class oppression. "The spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith Jahveh, Jahveh god of hosts."[17] Such a society is not worth saving. Assyria, "the overflowing scourge",[18] will tread it down. Egypt, to which Jewish rulers look for help, will share their ruin. Isaiah allows himself only one consolation -- that Assyrian violence will overreach itself, and that the rod which Jahveh lifts up against his people will in his own good time be broken.

Very like the denunciations of Isaiah are those of Micah, who attacks the oppression of the people by rulers "who pluck their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones ",[19] and with a countryman's hatred of a big city, threatens that "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps".[20] The genuine work of both prophets is incongruously bound up with later matter predicting the conversion of all nations to Judaism and the advent of a reign of peace on earth. These prophecies contain magnificent poetry, but have nothing to do with Isaiah of Jerusalem or Micah of Moresheth. Assyria remained in possession of Palestine during the greater part of the seventh century B.C. In 670 her power reached its peak with the conquest of Egypt. But she had conquered more than she had the men or resources to hold. By the middle of the century Egypt with the aid of Greek mercenaries had recovered her independence. Babylonia too was repeatedly in revolt, and by 625 was independent and threatening Assyria from the south. Meanwhile Aryan-speaking hordes from the northern steppes invaded the exhausted Assyrian Empire and swept through Syria and Palestine to the frontier of Egypt, ending what was left of Assyrian power in the west. In 612 Nineveh itself was sacked by a detachment of these Scythians under Cyaxares the Mede, allied with the Babylonians under Nabopolassar. Thenceforth Assyria disappears from history.

But though avenged on their old oppressors, the Jews were not in happy case. The Scythians had wrought havoc in Palestine. We hear echoes of that havoc in the early chapters of Jeremiah -- the "seething cauldron from the north"; the summons to flee for safety to the fenced cities; the panic of kings, princes, priests and prophets; "destruction upon destruction"; the whole land spoiled and a desolation; cities forsaken; inhabitants fleeing to the thickets and the rocks; harvest and livestock eaten up by barbarian hordes.[21] The established cult had never been so discredited. The stalwarts of the prophetic party exploited its discredit. Jeremiah, the greatest prophet of that time, was a young priest disgusted with his class. Anathoth, his native town was a seat of the cult of Anath, whom the Jews of that day worshipped as a female consort of Jahveh. She is, no doubt, the "queen of heaven" whose cult Jeremiah repeatedly denounces.[22] The book which bears his name has been much edited and interpolated; but the genuine core gives a graphic picture of the time. All this has come upon the Jews, says Jeremiah, because they worship the works of their own hands, because the rich oppress the poor, and because prophets are false to their mission, and make themselves the tools of priestcraft. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith Jahveh: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"[23]

The priests were in a tight corner and knew it. In their extremity they did what a cornered ruling class often does. They compromised, and offered to accept part of the prophetic programme in order to serve their ov/n interests.

Before we examine the compromise, we must take a look at ancient Hebrew law. We know nothing of the laws of the nomad ancestors of Israel. The oldest extant Hebrew code is contained in Exodus xxi-xxii. Though attributed to Moses, it is framed for an agricultural society with fields and vineyards, and must be later than the settlement of Israel in Palestine. Many of its laws are borrowed or adapted from the Babylonian code of Hammurabi (about 2000 B.C.) which remained in force in Babylonia throughout ancient history and can easily have influenced Palestinian law. Thus both the Babylonian and Hebrew codes enact that a man guilty of assault shall pay for the medical treatment of his victim;

both provide a fine for causing miscarriage; both lay down compensation for damage by cattle, or for loss of goods deposited with another person. Neither code is exhaustive. The normal relations of life were regulated by custom, as interpreted by tribal elders or at need by a priest or a king. A code was meant to cover cases which might puzzle those who had to try them.

This early Hebrew code has come down to us through prophetic editors of the eighth or seventh century B.C. who amplified it in the interest of their reform programme. How far they amended the code itself we cannot tell -- perhaps considerably. But the original code (Exodus xxi, 2-xxii, 17) is rounded off by rhetorical exhortations in quite a different style against idolatry, usury, bribery, false witness, oppression of the widow, orphan and stranger, and so on; and is prefaced by the story of the divine delivery of the Decalogue on Sinai. The Decalogue has been dulled for us by centuries of liturgical repetition. But as originally written it summarized the prophetic programme in a few short slogans, ascribed to the god who in popular belief had delivered the ancestors of Israel from Egyptian slavery. No gods but one; no graven images -- the instruments of priestcraft; no juggling with the name of Jahveh for magical purposes;[24] a weekly day of rest for all -- even for slaves; honour for parents; respect for life, property and the family; an end to the sharp practices which cozened men out of house and holding. The reasons appended to some of the commandments in our actual Decalogue are afterthoughts by later editors. The Decalogue was the notice to quit served by eighth or seventh century prophets on rulers whose cults of fertility-gods and fertility-goddesses, with human sacrifices thrown in for good measure, had signally failed to stave off calamity from their country.

In 621, a few years after the Scythian invasion, when the prestige of the priesthood must have been at its lowest, the high priest of Jerusalem sent word to king Josiah that he had found "the book of the law" in the temple. The book was produced and read to the king, who, after consulting a prophetess, convened an assembly of the people and won their assent to the execution of its provisions. As a result a radical reformation took place, idolatry was suppressed, and all "high places" except the temple of

Jerusalem were desecrated. For the first time in history monotheism was imposed by a Palestinian king. Nothing of the kind had been attempted since Akhenaton's revolution in Egypt seven centuries before.

That is the account which we read in 2 Kings xxii-xxiii. There is no reason to doubt its substantial truth. The book of Kings was almost certainly compiled within a lifetime of these events. The utterances of the prophetess Huldah have been touched up, and the extent of Josiah's iconoclasm outside Jerusalem must be exaggerated: the Scythians had probably left little for him to destroy. Otherwise the account contains nothing improbable.

The book found in the temple (and obviously put there in order to be found) is generally considered to have been part of Deuteronomy. It was not the whole existing book; for that could not have been read to the assembled people at one meeting. Deuteronomy, like other Old Testament books, has been considerably edited. But to produce the effect it did the book must have included much of the exhortations and enactments of Deut. v-xxvi, and probably the promises and threats of xxviii as a peroration. Leading off with the Decalogue, it continued with an eloquent statement of monotheism, a condemnation of the polytheism practised in Palestine, and an injunction to uproot it. Human sacrifice, temple prostitution and other barbaric rites were to be suppressed. There was to be one place of worship and one only, devoted to Jahveh alone and supported by prescribed offerings. Part of the tithes paid to the priests were to go to the widow, orphan and stranger. Every seven years all debts between Jews were to be cancelled, and all Hebrew slaves offered their freedom and a chance to start as independent producers. Justice was to be cleanly administered. The king was not to be a despot with a standing army and a harem, but a people's king bound by the law. Military service was to be voluntary; and newly married men were excluded from service. Concubinage with captive women was forbidden; but marriage with them was allowed. Fugitive slaves were not to be returned to their owners, but freed. Usury among Jews was to be forbidden; and clothing was not to be taken in pledge for debt. Wages were to be promptly paid. Weights and measures were to be true. And the code was not to be a professional secret

of the priests, but to be publicized in every possible way -- by posting in public places, by instruction of the young and by other propaganda.

This programme was more radical than anything earlier in history. The nearest ancient parallel is the legislation of Solon at Athens, enacted less than thirty years later. Solon, like the Deuteronomic reformers, provided for the manumission of citizens enslaved for debt and possibly (though this is disputed) for a cancellation of all debts; but neither he nor any ancient legislator outside Judaea up to this time went so far as to suppress usury or to forbid the return of runaway slaves. The Deuteronomists were clearly pioneers, too, in the abolition of human sacrifices. Human victims were slain in Phoenicia and its colonies down to the fall of Carthage in 146 B.C., and even occasionally in Greece and Rome until the time of the Roman Empire. Rationalists who are weak in historic sense often deplore the intolerance of the Deuteronomists towards rival cults. But would Rationalists tolerate a cult which offered children in sacrifice to idols? Civilization owes a debt to those who first fought against the burning of children in the fire to *baalim*.

How far the Deuteronomic reforms were actually enforced is disputed. The book is a programme rather than a code. Its priestly origin is betrayed by the fact that, while it provides penalties for religious offences and for certain civil offences already covered by older laws, it prescribes no penalty for infractions of its social code. Its programme on debt, slavery, usury, wage-labour and such matters consists of exhortation without sanction other than the promise of divine blessing or the threat of divine wrath. The priests who published it were mainly concerned to secure their own incomes, and threw in the social programme as a bait to attract the support of a people dangerously alienated by national disaster.

Josiah made some attempt to carry out the programme. According to Jeremiah "he judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well".[25] But he was not given much time. After the fall of Nineveh in 612 two great powers, Babylon and Egypt, fought for the former Assyrian possessions in Syria and Palestine. In 608 Pharaoh Necho defeated and

slew Josiah, made himself temporary master of Palestine and levied a heavy tribute. The new Jewish king Jehoiakim was a creature of Egypt and completely undid the reformation. We read of a revival of *baal*-cults, of forced labour, and of a prophet named Uriah who made himself obnoxious and fled to Egypt, but was extradited and put to death. This incident is confirmed by letters excavated in 1935 at Lachish, in which two military commanders confer about the case.[26]

But the Egyptian hold on Palestine was short. In 605 Necho was routed on the Euphrates by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and had to evacuate Asia. In 597 Nebuchadnezzar marched against the Egyptian puppet, Jehoiakim, took Jerusalem and carried off thousands of Jews and much treasure. The captives were not enslaved, but settled on the land in Babylonia. In 588, the new Jewish king Zedekiah having played false, Nebuchadnezzar's army again invaded Palestine. Jerusalem stood a siege of eighteen months; an Egyptian relieving force was driven off; and in 586 the city was stormed and destroyed, the temple plundered and burnt, and the remaining citizens deported to Babylonia. Some escaped to Egypt, and probably founded the colony at Elephantine mentioned earlier in this chapter. Only the poorer peasants were left on the land. So ended the kingdom of Judah.[27]

The failure of the reformation had made the prophetic party violently anti-nationalist. To Jeremiah and his younger contemporary, Ezekiel, the Jewish kingdom and its cult are an unmitigated evil and their destruction clear gain. Their main attack is on polytheism and idolatry; but Jeremiah also fiercely inveighs against the forced labour levies of Jehoiakim and the re-enslavement under Zedekiah of persons manumitted under the Deuteronomic code. Jeremiah compares the kingdom of Judah to a spoilt pot which the potter scraps to make a better; calls the exiles in Babylonia "good figs" and the Jews left behind "bad figs which cannot be eaten";[28] and urges the exiles in a letter to ignore nationalist demagogues and settle down as peaceable farmers in Babylonia. Ezekiel, a priest like Jeremiah and one of the "good figs" exiled in Babylonia, pours scorn on Jewish claims to racial purity, saying in an invective against Jerusalem: "The Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was a Hittite."[29] "The bloody

city"[30] which sacrifices children to idols and takes usury of the poor and needy is better blotted out. Jeremiah and Ezekiel see in Nebuchadnezzar, polytheist though he is, a "servant of Jahveh" (or as we should say, an instrument of history) and a better ruler than the wretched Jewish princelings whom he dethroned. Ezekiel prophesies success to him in his campaigns against Phoenicia and Egypt -- indeed more than he achieved; for though Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt, he could not conquer it.

But there were many reasons why the exiled Jews could not become contented Babylonian subjects. The Hammurabi code was based on rigid class distinctions between patricians, plebeians and slaves. Injuries to the person were punished on a scale graded according to the rank of the victim. Masters were absolute owners of their slaves; and the penalty for aiding or harbouring fugitive slaves was death. Money could be lent at interest up to 20 per cent, and corn up to 33 per cent; and in default of payment in cash or kind the debtor could be enslaved -- unless he chose to pledge his wife or child for three years to work off the debt. Now the prophets had been trying for two centuries to annul or at least humanize these features of ancient law -- to establish one law for rich and poor, to end usury and at least to mitigate slavery. The Babylonian code was an immovable obstacle in the way. Accordingly Ezekiel in his last prophecies looks forward to a day when the "dry bones"[31]of Israel will live, and when the exiles, with any aliens who may join them, will be resettled in Palestine in a new community reformed as he desires. Perhaps he believed in the possibility of home rule under Babylonian suzerainty. At any rate he nowhere betrays any hostility to Babylon.

But the Babylonian Empire was even shorter-lived than its Assyrian predecessor. In 550 a petty vassal of the neighbouring Median Empire, Cyrus the Persian, led a revolt, made himself master of Media and began a push westward. Nabonidus of Babylon was engaged in a quarrel with his priests and was ill situated to meet the new threat. He withdrew his garrisons from Palestine -- a sure sign of weakness. In a few years Cyrus overran western Asia and in 538 closed in on Babylon. After a single battle Nabonidus fled, and Cyrus entered Babylon unopposed -- acclaimed by its priests as their deliverer from Nabonidus.

The Jewish prophets also acclaimed him. Persia was not an old imperialist power like Egypt, Assyria or Babylonia. The Persians had until recently been a small and insignificant people. They are not even mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions. In all probability they had only lately migrated in the wake of their kinsmen, the Medes, from the northern steppes to their home among the mountains east of the Persian Gulf. There they lived as hardy peasants, scarcely out of the stage of barbarism, until Cyrus led them to adventure and conquest. Until they conquered Babylonia there is no evidence that they could read or write. Even when they had inherited the civilization of Babylonia and Egypt, their writings were confined to inscriptions and official documents. They left little art and no literature behind them to remind the world that they had once been lords of Asia.

To the Jewish prophets the backward Persians seemed far more likely than the civilized Babylonians to provide them with an opportunity to set up an ideal commonwealth. Their hope was the greater since the Medes and Persians professed the Zoroastrian religion, which had points of contact with that preached by the Jewish prophets. The Aryan peoples in their nomadic state had called their gods *deva* (heavenly beings) and the gods of their peasant enemies *asura* or *ahura*(demons). But when they themselves settled down as peasants, *ahura* came to mean a friendly spirit and *deva*, the nomad deity, a devil. The "wise lord", Ahura Mazda, became the patron of the peasants and their defender against the "destructive spirit", Angro Mainyush, ruler of the nomads and the cold north. Zoroastrianism was a religion of struggle, like that of the prophets. Its main influence on Judaism did not begin until after the fall of the Persian Empire; but there seems to have been some sympathy between them from the first.

The Jewish prophetic literature of this period is the work of an underground movement and naturally, therefore, anonymous. Copyists of a later age added these anonymous poems to the works of older prophets, especially Isaiah; and only the evidence of style and subject matter enables them to be sorted out. Some belong unmistakeably to the time of Cyrus' march on Babylon. One writer anticipates with savage glee the destruction

of Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms", by an uncivilized enemy -- "the Medes, who shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it".[32] More important for the history of Judaism is the great monotheistic poem contained in Isaiah xl-xlviii. This anonymous poet (whom critics for convenience call the Second Isaiah) hails the advance of Cyrus, to whom kings are "as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow".[33] He expects him to sack Babylon, to order the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple, to let the exiles go free and to inaugurate a new deal for the poor. But the chief characteristic of this writer is his freethinking derision of polytheism and of images made by goldsmiths and cunning workmen, which when put to the test cannot deliver those who cry to them. More insistently than any earlier prophet he reiterates that there is but one God, creator of heaven and earth, author of all life, the God ahke of Israel and of Cyrus -- Jahveh and Ahura Mazda in one. Other gods are not merely false gods: they do not exist, they can do neither good nor evil, they are nothing. The attack on polytheism reminds us of the philosopher-poet Xenophanes of Colophon, who at this very time was launching a similar assault on the gods of Greece, made in the image of man, and affirming "one God, greatest among gods and men, neither in shape nor in thought like unto mortals", who "without an effort ruleth all things by thought". But whereas Greek philosophers, at least at this early date, did not try to propagate their ideas among the masses, the Jewish prophet not only does so, but summons all nations -- Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia and "all the ends of the earth"[34] -- to scrap their cults and turn to the one God.

Cyrus did not sack Babylon. As we have seen, he entered it with the good will of its priests. He seems to have given permission to exiles, including the Jews, to return to their countries and rebuild their cities and temples. But there was no considerable return of Jewish exiles, and the temple of Jerusalem was not rebuilt for many years. The reasons are plain. Firstly, the exiles had lived in Babylonia for fifty or sixty years. Many were not badly off. The proposal to return and build a new community in Palestine would appeal only to enthusiasts and those with nothing to lose. Secondly, events in Palestine had not stood still. During the exile -- perhaps between the withdrawal of the Babylonian garrisons and the establishment of Persian authority -- nomads had settled in southern

Palestine, just as the Jews themselves had done centuries before. To rebuild Jerusalem and its temple amid a hostile population needed a resolution which only fanatics were likely to show. From the first the reconstruction of the Jewish community in Palestine seemed somewhat of a Utopian undertaking.

In 521 the death of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus and the conqueror of Egypt, plunged the Persian Empire into what seemed the throes of dissolution. There were revolts in Babylonia, Media, and even Persia proper. The handful of returned exiles began to nurse extravagant hopes. In 520 Haggai and Zechariah -- the last Jewish prophets to write under their own names -- called on the Jews to rebuild the temple and foretold that in "a little while" Jahveh would "shake all nations", destroy the Persian Empire and make Jerusalem the metropolis of a new world, over which Zerubbabel, a prince of the old Davidic line, would reign in peace.[35] Probably at this time, too, an anonymous poet circulated a prophecy (later copied, like so many others, into the book of Isaiah) in which "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light", the rod of the oppressor is broken, the accoutrements of war are "for burning, for fuel of fire", and a "prince of peace" of the Davidic line is to shoulder the government and bring in a golden age.[36] These prophecies are evidence of the wild hopes raised by the upheavals of the sixth century and the apparent collapse of the unsteady Persian Empire. The recovery of Persia under Darius soon shattered such dreams. The temple was completed in 516; but Jerusalem remained unfortified, and we hear no more of Haggai, Zechariah or Zerubbabel. Except for scraps of prophecy of uncertain date, the next seventy years of Jewish history are a blank. When the curtain rises again, the Utopian experiment has miserably failed. Jerusalem is still unfortified, "the people few therein, and the houses not builded".[37] Darius and his son Xerxescould not trust the Jews with a walled city. Even under Artaxerxes I an attempt to fortify Jerusalem seems to have been forcibly suppressed by royal order.[38] Naturally exiles were in no hurry to go and live in an unprotected town.

Meanwhile momentous events were happening in world politics. The Persian Empire had been successfully challenged by the Greek cities, and

after Salamis (480) and Plataea (479) was on the defensive. In 466 the Greeks carried the war into Asia and defeated the Persian army and fleet on the Eurymedon. In 460 Egypt rebelled and with Athenian aid held Persia at bay until 454. In 451 the Greeks were in Cyprus and assisted a new revolt in Egypt. To add to the troubles of Artaxerxes, Megabyzus, the Persian satrap of Syria, revolted in 448. At this juncture it was vital to Persia that Jerusalem should be defensible and in friendly hands. It was probably this which led Artaxerxes in 445 to entrust his Jewish cup-bearer, Nehemiah, with its fortification. We are fortunate in possessing Nehemiah's own account of his mission.[39] He found the city in ruins; local magnates like Sanballat the Samaritan, who had doubtless profited by the troubles of the time, determined to prevent its restoration; Jewish priests and nobles hand in glove with these men and marrying into their families; usurers exploiting the peasants and enslaving insolvent debtors as in the bad old days; the new temple-cult, like the old, becoming a family racket. Nehemiah tells us how he mobilized the people as shock-workers to rebuild the walls and to be ready to resist attack while doing so, how the wall was finished in fifty-two days, and how he convened an assembly of the people to put down usury and restore the homes and holdings seized by the usurers. It was not a one-man revolution. Nehemjah could not have overborne the nobles as he did without the support of the people. The prophetic movement of three centuries had prepared the way; and he had prophets on his side.[40]

Nevertheless the result was a compromise, very much on the old lines of Deuteronomy. The priestly nobility secured their future at the price of concessions. Priestly hands compiled the law-book of the new community. But it would have been a very different law-book but for the prophets and but for Nehemiah.

The Pentateuch, as we have it, is a product of that time, but it is in no sense an original work. The priestly compilers strung together such laws and explanatory legends as lay to hand and suited their purpose without much regard for consistency. The compilation is prefaced by pieces of folk-lore about the origin of man, of sin and death, and of civilization. These, whatever their date, are of Babylonian derivation. The scene of

man's early adventures is laid in Eden -- the Babylonian name for the alluvial plain of the lower Euphrates. Next comes the flood story, also of Babylonian origin, and then myths about the heroes of ancient Palestine. The stories of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph have an epic grandeur not incomparable to that of Homer; but we have no more reason to believe in their historicity than in that of the Greek heroes.

These stories in their present context are merely the prelude to the story of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery and the giving of the law in the desert of Sinai. As we have seen, this account cannot be fitted into the Egyptian records. The compilers of the Pentateuch use it as a peg on which to hang legislation all of which presupposes a settled agricultural society, but which is antedated to the nomadic period to give it the authority of the legendary Moses. The oldest code, that of Exodus xxi-xxii, presupposes, as we have seen, a society with fields, vineyards, cattle and slaves. A code of ritual regulations, equally presupposing an agricultural economy, is found in Exodus xxxiv. Sandwiched between the other sections of the Pentateuch and longer than any other single source is the "priests' code" (P), a compilation not much older than the Pentateuch itself. In this many provisions of older date are repeated with new explanatory myths. For example the sabbath rest-day, which in Deuteronomy is enjoined on humane grounds, is in P made to depend on the rest taken by God on the seventh day of creation;[41] and circumcision, an initiation rite which the Jews shared with the Arabs, Egyptians and many other nations, is turned into a token of the covenant between God and Israel.[42] This suggests that P was compiled in Babylonia, where circumcision was not practised and the Jews might well make the mistake of thinking it peculiar to themselves. The greater part of P is taken up with regulations for the upkeep of the cult. Deuteronomy with its social programme is put at the end of the Pentateuch, as if to conclude the whole on a note of lofty idealism and so leave a favourable impression on the listener or reader.

Thus the Pentateuch represented a compromise between the priesthood, bent mainly on conserving their dues and firstfruits, and the prophetic party, bent mainly on securing justice for the poor. The

compromise was the issue of a struggle which lasted well into the Persian period. Nehemiah's mission was a battle with priests and nobles from start to finish. His opponents, the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem and their Samaritan allies, formally accepted the Pentateuch, but enforced it only so far as their convenience or mass pressure dictated.

The memoirs of Nehemiah end with an account of his expulsion from Jerusalem of a grandson of the high priest, who had married the daughter of Nehemiah's arch-enemy, Sanballat. He fled to his wife's people at Samaria, where the arm of Nehemiah could not reach. This matter of mixed marriages was not a question of racial purity. Judaism welcomed not only Jews by blood, but all who "separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land".[43] The danger was of a reversion to the pagan way of life and a break-up of the Jewish community.

At the close of the fifth century the Persian government was forced again to take an interest in Jewish affairs. The Persian Empire was now visibly in decline. Attack from Greece was staved off by pitting Sparta against Athens and Athens against Sparta. In 404 Egypt again revolted, and this time was not reconquered for sixty years. In 401 the younger Cyrus with a force of Greek mercenaries made a bid for the Persian throne; and though Cyrus was killed, the successful retreat of the Greeks from Babylonia to the Black Sea showed how weak the Persian Empire had become. It was more necessary than ever to secure the Egyptian frontier. The fortification of Jerusalem was of little use if the Jews were torn by factions, one of which might open the gates to an enemy.

Accordingly in 397 Artaxerxes II commissioned Ezra, a Babylonian Jew, and "a ready scribe in the law of Moses",[44] to go to Jerusalem and bring order out of the chaos of faction. The compiler of our existing books of Ezra and Nehemiah is, like many Jewish historians, weak on dates, and through confusing Artaxerxes I and II makes Ezra contemporary with Nehemiah. We know, however, that he cannot have been. Ezra refers to the refortification of Jerusalem as an accomplished fact; the city is no longer a ruin, but a populous town; and the high priest in Ezra's time

appears to be a son or grandson of the high priest in Nehemiah's. But the priests and nobles had not changed their ways. Their alliance, cemented by intermarriage, with neighbouring magnates was unbroken. The Pentateuchal law was applied just as far as it suited them and no further.

Ezra, like Nehemiah, appealed to the people. Men, women and children rallied to him against the aristocrats and their foreign ladies. At the request of the assembled people he read out the "law of Moses" on successive mornings, while assistants translated the Hebrew, bit by bit, into the vernacular Aramaic, and the assembly acclaimed its charter with shouts of "Amen, amen!"[45] The people then ratified the law with a solemn oath, special emphasis being laid on the bar on mixed marriages, observance of the sabbath and the septennial cancellation of debts. Those who had married foreign wives were told to send them away. Their number was not great; about a hundred are mentioned; but important men were involved. "Princes and rulers" were "chief in this trespass."[46] We do not know that they complied. Most likely they removed to Samaria, like the priest expelled by Nehemiah. The breach between the Jewish and Samaritan communities and the erection of a rival temple on Gerizim date from this time.

Notes

1 The higher criticism of the Old Testament (unlike that of the New) is practically an agreed subject among modern scholars. For detailed examination see *The Literature of the Old Testament*, by G. F. Moore; *The Historical Background of the Bible*, by J. N. Schofield; and standard works of reference

2 2 Samuel viii, 18 (R.V.).

3 1 Samuel x, 11-12.

4 1 Kings xviii, 19.

5 Amos ii, 6.

6 Amos iv, 1.

7 viii, 5. (An ephah was about 2,300 cubic inches.)

8 v, 24.

9 ix, 7-8.

10 The analyses of the prophetic books by T. K. Cheyne, O. C. Whitehouse, W. Robertson Smith, S. R. Driver, H. W. Robinson, Nathaniel Schmidt, R. H. Charles and other scholars in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* may be consulted with profit.

11 This payment is mentioned in 2 Kings xv, 19-20. Tiglath-Pileser is there called "Pul" -- his original name before he usurped the throne. Earlier tributes are recorded on the monuments, but ignored in the Old Testament.

12 2 Kings xvi, 5 ff.

13 2 Sennacherib's own inscriptions. Cf. 2 Kings xviii, 13-16. The sequel in xviii-xix is not corroborated by the inscriptions.

14 Isaiah vii, 3.

15 viii, 1-4.

16 ii, 8.

17 iii, 14-15.

18 xxviii, 14-18.

19 Micah iii, 2.

20 iii, 12.

21 Jeremiah i, iv-v.

22 vii, 18; xliv.

23 v, 9, 29; ix, 9.

24 This seems to be the real meaning of the prohibition to take the divine name in vain. W. Robertson Smith and S. A. Cook, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. *Decalogue*.

25 Jeremiah xxii, 16.

26 That the case was the same is suggested by the name of the officer sent to arrest the fugitive. In the letters he is Achbor, son of Elnathan. In Jeremiah xxvi, 20-23, he is Elnathan, son of Achbor -- perhaps a copyist's slip.

27 2 Kings xxiv-xxv; Jeremiah xxxvii-xxxix. The book of Kings ends abruptly with the liberation of the exiled Jewish king Jehoiachin in 561. This suggests that the history was compiled soon after that event.

28 Jeremiah xxiv.

29 Ezekiel xvi, 3.

30 xxii, 2; xxiv, 6, 9.

31 xxxvii.

32 Isaiah xiii.

33 xli, xlv.

34 xlv, 22.

35 Haggai ii-iii; Zechariah ii, viii.

36 Isaiah ix, 2-7. This famous prophecy can hardly be by the historical Isaiah. The Messianic ode is incongruously interpolated between two passages of undiluted gloom (viii and ix, 8-x, 4). But it can hardly be later than the time of Zerubbabel. From that time on the Davidic family was insignificant.

37 Nehemiah vii, 4.

38 Ezra iv, 6-23. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah have come down to us in considerable confusion owing to the compiler's ignorance of Persian history. This passage, which relates to an attempt to *refortify* Jerusalem under Artaxerxes, has been interpolated in an account of the rebuilding of the temple under Darius.

39 Roughly, chapters i-vi and xiii, 4-31 of the canonical book.

40 It is interesting to compare the refortification of Jerusalem by Nehemiah with the refortification of Athens by Themistocles after the Persian invasion. Both men were democrats in the sense of siding with the people in the class struggles of the time. Both had to elude vigilant enemies. Themistocles was an exile at Susa a few years before the mission of Nehemiah. They may have met.

41 Genesis ii, 2-3. Cf. Deuteronomy v, 12-15.

42 Genesis xvii. Cf. Exodus iv, 24-26 -- an obviously much older myth of the origin of circumcision, dating from a period when Jahveh was still an anthropomorphic god of uncertain temper.

43 Ezra vi, 21.

44 vii, 6.

45 Nehemiah viii. This chapter is really part of Ezra x, but in the Hebrew text has been inserted in its present place and touched up to accord with the view that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries. In the Greek variant of Ezra (entitled I Esdras in our Apocrypha) the reading of the law by Ezra ends the book, and Nehemiah is not mentioned. Modern

scholars think this version nearer the original. See relevant articles in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* and *Britannica*.

46 Ezra ix, 2.

CHAPTER III

THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF MAN

In 334 B.C., sixty-three years after the reforms of Ezra at Jerusalem, Alexander the Great led his army of Macedonians and Greeks into Asia. In 333 he routed Darius III, the last of the Persian kings, at Issus in Cilicia. In 332, after a siege of seven months, he took Tyre, sold 30,000 of its people as slaves, served Gaza the same way, occupied Egypt and laid the foundations of Alexandria. In 331 he shattered the last Persian army at Gaugamela in Assyria and entered Babylon, Susa and Persepolis. Thence he pushed on into central Asia and India, and at his death in 323 had founded a greater empire than any conqueror before him.

It was not only in extent that the conquests of Alexander outdid those of Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian kings. Here for the first time in history we see a conscious theory of imperialism in practice. A social order is usually taken for granted until it enters a period of crisis. Then it becomes a subject of questioning and criticism; and then the ruling class begin to explain it and defend it. So it was with the Greeks.

After their victories over Persia in the fifth century B.C. the Greeks developed rapidly from a predominantly free towards a predominantly slave economy. The number of slaves was increased by successful war; and slave labour displaced free labour. In the long run this led to a corresponding displacement of the self-governing city-state by military monarchies, first Macedonian, finally Roman, which were better able than the city-state to hold down the mass of slaves and impoverished freemen. But this political development was held up in Greece by geographical factors. Greek cities were situated not, like those of Egypt and Babylonia, in a great river basin, but in mountain valleys or on arms of the sea which hindered the emergence of a unified government. The result was a respite of 150 years, from the Persian defeats at Salamis and Plataea to the time of

Alexander, during which art, science and democracy, rooted in a tradition of free craftsmanship, had time to flower before they slowly withered in the atmosphere of a great slave-empire. Slavery in particular came in for criticism. For Greek slavery was not confined to "barbarians" and poor people whose lot prosperous citizens could take for granted and ignore. In the constant wars between cities any citizen might be taken prisoner and sold into slavery in another city. Such contradictions between ideals and realities forced the defenders of the social order to think out justifications which could be somehow squared with facts. In the fourth century B.C. we find Plato, while accepting slavery, recommending that Greeks shall no longer enslave one another, but only "barbarians". We find Isocrates urging the Greek cities to join forces, loot the Persian Empire and so solve their social problem -- though he is class-conscious enough to recognize as equals those "barbarians" of the ruling class who are Greek in education and culture. We find, finally, Aristotle arguing that there are "slaves by nature" whom it is just to reduce to bondage, and identifying these with the Asiatics, who "are always conquered and the slaves of others."[1]

The conquests of Alexander therefore were more than a mere predatory adventure. They were the execution of a planned social policy. He and his successors did not indeed cease to enslave Greeks, but they opened immense new supplies in Asia. They dotted their dominions with new cities (the many Alexandrias, Seleucias, Antiochs, etc.) in which Greek settlers, enriched by the plunder of the East, formed the citizen body and lived on the labour of the Oriental masses.

Jerusalem had not resisted Alexander and was left alone for the moment. The story told by Josephus four centuries later, according to which Alexander personally visited Jerusalem and paid homage to its high priest, is unsupported by any other writer and on the face of it is an invention of Jewish priests for their own glory. At the time Alexander was too busy besieging Tyre and Gaza and securing Egypt to bother about Jerusalem. But after his death Palestine became a bone of contention between rival Macedonian generals who fought for the succession to his empire and, in the words of a Jewish historian, "multiplied evils in the earth".[2] Between 320 and 301 Palestine changed masters no less than

seven times, finally falling to Ptolemy, who had made himself king of Egypt. Large numbers of Jews were deported to Alexandria, where they were eventually allotted a separate quarter and granted a measure of self-government. For, however roughly they treated the Jews at times, the Ptolemies, like the Persian kings before them, had an interest in conciliating at least the ruling class of this frontier-community.

In this and similar ways there gradually arose in the principal cities of the Mediterranean colonies of Jews descended partly from prisoners of war, partly from settlers who migrated to better themselves. They therefore differed widely from one another in social position. Had the Jewish "dispersion" (diaspora), as it was called, consisted wholly or even mainly of fortune-seekers, they would soon have been assimilated by their Greek neighbours and lost to Judaism. Many must have been so assimilated. But most of the "dispersion" belonged to the exploited classes -- slaves, freedmen or petty traders. It was they who made history. Living in Greek cities they learnt the Greek language and used a Greek version of the Pentateuch and other Hebrew writings; and the better educated among them read Greek literature. This led to interaction between Judaism and kindred movements in the Greek-speaking world. One outcome of the revolutionary criticism of institutions in the Greek-speaking world of the fourth century B.C. was the Stoic philosophy of Zeno and Cleanthes (the one of Phoenician descent, the other a Greek of the poorer class). This, with its repudiation of temples, images and sacrifices, its affirmation of the brotherhood of man and its appeal to reason (logos -- easily identified with the "word of Jahveh" often invoked in the prophetic writings), left an unmistakeable mark on later Judaism and through it on Christianity. But it was the differences between Stoicism and the ideology of the Greek ruling class which commended it to serious Jews. With the ruling class itself they could not come to terms.

Only the more intelligent Greeks at first drew any distinction between the Jews and other conquered "barbarians" of Asia. Keen observers were struck by their monotheism and relative freedom from crude superstition. Josephus cites a dialogue written by Clearchus of Soli, a disciple of Aristotle, in which Aristotle (against all historical probability) is made to

express admiration of Judaism. And we have a singular instance of an even closer approach between Greeks and Jews. At some time during the dynastic struggles following Alexander's death (probably about 302) the Spartans, who were trying to throw off the Macedonian yoke, made overtures to the Jews and even claimed kinship with them. That Sparta, a hundred years before the mistress of Greece, should have sought an alliance with the Jews shows how hard she had been hit by the disasters of the fourth century, and how good a fight the Jews must have put up against one or other of the Macedonian war-lords.

Under the early Ptolemies Greek cities were founded at Ptolemais (Acre), Philadelphia (Amman) and other places in and around Palestine. The Jews therefore had ample opportunity in their own country to study the Greek way of life -- the wealth, leisure and culture which it provided for the few, and the toil and degradation which it exacted from the many. The Jewish priests and nobles, who a few generations before had submitted reluctantly to the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, naturally welcomed Hellenism. But to the Jewish masses the gymnasium and the theatre were luxuries of the rich, dearly bought by the abrogation of the Pentateuchal law with its guaranteed rest-day and protection against usury and enslavement. They had a means of organization against Hellenism in their local assemblies or synagogues. These organizations were of vital importance in the history of Judaism and provided a model for the first Christian churches three centuries later. Wherever there was a Jewish community of any size, its men and women met weekly for study, exhortation and devotion. The affairs of the synagogue were managed by a committee of senior members or "elders", one of whom would naturally preside at the weekly meetings. The chairman or "ruler of the synagogue", who was not necessarily a priest and in early days might even be a woman, called on any member or visitor to read and comment on passages from the law and the prophets, to offer prayer or to address the meeting. Collections were taken for the poorer members, and instruction given to the young. The synagogue, with its popular basis and freedom of discussion, was entirely independent of the priesthood of Jerusalem and in the end survived its destruction.

The issue between the Hellenized ruling class and the Jewish masses came rapidly to a head after 198 B.C., when the Seleucid king Antiochus HI succeeded in winning Palestine from the Ptolemies. The Seleucid Empire was not a compact geographical unit like Egypt, but a gigantic, ramshackle dominion reaching from the coast of the Mediterranean to the borders of India and without ethnic, economic or strategic cohesion. Throughout its history it had to fight a losing battle against revolts in India, Parthia, Armenia and elsewhere as well as against its Macedonian rivals. They too had revolts to face -- for example the revolutionary movement in Greece itself headed by Agis and Cleomenes of Sparta in the third century B.C. These difficulties of the Macedonian monarchs led in the second century B.C. to the intervention of Rome, which in 190 decisively defeated Antiochus in Asia Minor, drove him behind the Taurus range and imposed a huge indemnity. To meet this the Seleucids put the screw on their Asiatic subjects, thus adding to the internal weakness of their empire. In 187 Antiochus was killed in an attempt to loot a temple in Persia. A little later his son, SeleucusJV, sent his chancellor, Heliodorus, to plunder the temple at Jerusalem. It was probably plundered; for the Jewish legend of Heliodorus being scourged out of the temple by angels, like the earlier legend of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, is plain wishful thinking. Such acts alienated even the wealthy classes in the countries concerned and fanned the flame of nationalism among the masses to white heat.

One sign of the growing nationalist movement in Palestine was the revival of prophetic writing. Its circulation had probably never entirely ceased; but under foreign rule it was naturally anonymous, and in the absence of known historical allusions the fragments are difficult to date. Under the Seleucid Empire, however, prophecy becomes transparently topical and revolutionary. Anonymous pieces appended to the book of Zechariah denounce the Seleucid rulers and Jewish high priests who traffic in office and maltreat "the poor of the flock".[3] One fragment incites the Jews and Samaritans (Judah and Ephraim) to sink their quarrel and unite against the Greeks, and foretells the reign of a victorious people's king who will usher in an age of peace on earth.[4] Such prophecies illustrate the weak state of the Seleucid Empire after its defeat by Rome, and the wild hopes raised among the oppressed Asiatics.

In 170 Antiochus IV was at war with the reigning Ptolemy. It happened that there were two rival claimants to the Jewish high priesthood. One of these had outbidden the other by bribes at court and was enjoying the sweets of office, when he was attacked by his defeated rival, who no doubt counted on help from Egypt. The people, who detested both, rose against the ruffian in office and turned a thieves' quarrel into a popular revolution. Antiochus had to return from Egypt to deal with the Jews. He stormed Jerusalem and plundered the temple to finance his Egyptian campaign. But in 168 an ultimatum from Rome obliged him to evacuate Egypt. Antiochus was now thoroughly convinced that the Jews were a "fifth column" in his empire, and took the desperate resolution to suppress Judaism. He garrisoned Jerusalem; set up an image of Zeus in the temple; prohibited circumcision, sabbath observance and the possession of copies of the Pentateuch on pain of death; and organized pagan sacrifices in place of the Jewish cult. Samaria must have been involved in the revolt; for similar action was taken there.

If it had rested with the priestly nobility, nothing more would have been heard of Judaism. It was the Jewish masses under the leadership of the Hasmoneans. a family sprung from the lower ranks of the priesthood, who resisted Antiochus. Their resistance, however heroic, would have availed little if Antiochus had had a free hand. But he had just been threatened and humiliated by Rome; and the Parthians were attacking his eastern provinces. Consequently Judas Maccabaeus was able to hold his own against the Seleucid armies, in 165 to enter Jerusalem and restore the temple cult, and in 161 to conclude an alliance with Rome. By 142 the Tews had forced the Seleucids to recognize their complete independence.

The spearhead of the Maccabean revolution was the party known as the *Hasidim* ("pious ones" or "saints") -- active propagandists of Judaism, live wires of the local synagogues, and the forerunners of the Pharisees of a later day. Their admirers describe them as "mighty men of Israel" who offer themselves "willingly for the law",[5] their enemies as seditious trouble-makers. Many of the Psalms are the work of anonymous poets of the party and reflect the social and political conditions of the Maccabean era. The writers identify themselves with the poor and inveigh against the

Hellenizing "workers of iniquity" who "eat up" the people and "call not upon Jahveh".[6] Some write during actual persecution: the people are "killed all the day long" and "counted as sheep for the slaughter";[7] the synagogues are burnt; the temple is defiled; the blood of the "saints" is shed like water, and their bodies are given to the birds and beasts.[8] Such psalms cannot have been originally written for the formal service of the temple. They were written for secret conventicles of fugitives and outlaws without even a synagogue to gather in. Others are songs of revolution. The "saints" are fighting back. With "the high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand", they will bind "kings with chains" and "nobles with fetters of iron",[9] and by valour unite all Palestine in a new Israelite state.[10] Others celebrate victory and the return of "Jahveh strong and mighty, Jahveh mighty in battle", to his temple.[11] Others look forward to the spread of Judaism among the nations. "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God."[12] In a world new-builded the old enemies of Israel -- Babylonians, Philistines, Phoenicians -- will be counted citizens of Zion.[13]

For the *Hasidim* were no narrow nationalists. Resistance to Hellenism had brought Asiatic peoples together. Persian as well as Jewish temples had been plundered. Common adversity led to a fusion of Jewish and Zoroastrian ideas which had been hardly possible when the Jews had been vassals to Persian overlords. As we have seen, the Persians, living on the edge of the desert, pictured life as a battle between the settled peasants, servants of the "wise lord", Ahura Mazda, and the savage nomads and other pests led by the evil spirit, Angro Mainyush. Since the right side often has the worst of it, the Persians consoled themselves by hoping for a not far distant catastrophe in which the power of evil would be broken and, after a last judgment of all mankind, the righteous, alive or dead, would enjoy a new life in a new world. Under the Seleucids these Persian ideas begin to colour Jewish poetry and prophecy. Here and there a psalmist (it may be only in a poetical figure) contrasts the wicked who boast of their wealth, but yet "shall carry nothing away", with the upright whom "God will redeem from the power of Sheol".[14] Here and there an anonymous prophet (it may be in metaphor) predicts a resurrection in compensation for present failure.[15] In one prophecy, written under Persian influence and later incorporated in the apocryphal book of Enoch, we get a

fanciful picture of a regenerated world in which the righteous shall enjoy patriarchal lives and beget a thousand children before they die, while renegade Jews are tormented in Gehenna or hell. But such pious dreams were not yet orthodoxy and did not divert patriots from the struggle in hand.

The greatest literary product of the Maccabean revolt is the book of Daniel -- half novel, half prophecy -- written by an unknown pamphleteer at an early stage of the struggle. The writer is steeped in the law and the prophets of his own nation, influenced too by Persian religion, but untouched by the Hellenism of the ruling class; extremely ignorant of Babylonian, Persian and Greek history prior to Alexander, but well up in the more recent history of the Greek world. Going back four centuries to the time of the Babylonian exile, he tells fictitious stories of the persecution of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar in order to stimulate resistance to the real persecution of Antiochus. Into the mouth of his hero, Daniel, he puts three allegorical "prophecies" of Oriental history down to his own time, leading up to a divinely predestined world revolution shortly to come. The predatory empires which successively exploit Asia are likened to a series of wild beasts of which the last is the Greek Empire -- "terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it."[16] This will be shortly destroyed, and the kingdom of the earth given to "one like unto a son of man;"[17] that is to say, the bestial world-order of the military empires will give place to a human world-order ruled by "the saints of the Most High."[18] The term "son ot man" in Semitic idiom means merely "man". It does not in Daniel denote an individual Messiah, though that idea was in the air. In the closing chapters the writer drops allegory and describes in plain language (though without mentioning names) the power-politics of the Ptolemies and Seleucids, and the attempt of Antiochus to suppress Judaism. He repeatedly alludes to the profanation of the temple, but only vaguely foretells its restoration -- a circumstance which dates the book between 168 and 165. In the end, after unexampled tribulation, the Jews will be delivered, and "many" of the dead will rise, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."[19]

The book was popular. Not only did it circulate among the revolutionary party in Palestine, but it was translated into Greek for the Jews of the "dispersion" and embellished with new stories, one of which, that of Susanna and the elders, is as good as any in the original book. But Daniel was too plainly of recent origin to be included by the Jews in the canon of the prophets. We do not hear of "Daniel the prophet" until Christian times. To us this revolutionary pamphlet is mainly valuable as evidence of the light in which the empire of Alexander and his successors, so well known to us from Greek sources, appeared to the Oriental masses who carried it on their backs.

With the triumph of the Maccabean revolution it seemed to many that the "kingdom of the son of man" was at hand. Simon, the brother of Judas Maccabaeus, was high priest of the Jews.

"The yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel. . . . And they tilled their land in peace, and the land gave her increase, and the trees of the plains their fruit. The ancient men sat in the streets, they communed all of them together of good things, and the young men put on glorious and warlike apparel. He provided victuals for the cities, and furnished them with instruments of munition. . . . He made peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy: and they sat each man under his vine and his fig tree; and there was none to make them afraid."[20]

The Seleucids. had their hands full. The Parthians were driving them from the countries east of the Euphrates; and the Roman menace barred any adventure elsewhere. Rome was now the paramount power of the Mediterranean. But she had not yet annexed any part of Asia and was still an unknown quantity to most Asiatic peoples. So ignorant of Roman affairs were the Jews that not many years later, when Rome was entering the most fiercely fought class struggle of her history, a Jewish historian could write that all Romans "are obedient to one, and there is neither envy nor emulation among them."[21]The Jews felt safe. The revolutionary psalms of the *Hasidim* were incorporated with the more formal compositions of the priests in the temple hymn-book. A confident people contrasted the idols of silver and gold, the work of men's hands, worshipped by their enemies, with Jahveh, the deliverer of the poor from the spoiler, the avenger of the death of his saints.

But Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, had to face a new Seleucid invasion and temporarily to accept defeat. He only regained his independence owing to the Roman alliance and the enemy's troubles with Parthia. At first the revolutionary party, who now begin to be called Pharisees (*Perushim*, "men set apart" for a special mission) nursed extravagant hopes of Hyrcanus as the destined inaugurator of the kingdom of God on earth. But soon the breach between priests and people reopened. Hyrcanus made himself independent of the people by enlisting foreign mercenaries, lined up with the priestly nobility (the Sadducees, perhaps so called from the old priestly family of Zadok) against the masses and showed more interest in extending his dominions than in creating a Utopia. The Hasmoneans had degenerated from revolutionary leaders into Oriental princelings with a veneer of Greek culture nardly disguising their old-style ruffianism.

Under Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.), the son of Hyrcanus, matters came to a head. Military reverses led to a popular revolt and to six years of civil war, at the end of which Alexander, "the slayer of the pious," crucified eight hundred Pharisees and slew their wives and children before their eyes! Eight thousand others fled to Egypt. After Alexander's death his widow, Salome Alexandra, ended the policy of repression, and the Pharisees managed to bring to justice at least some of the highly placed oppressors and to effect some reforms in criminal procedure and in the position of women. But on her death in 69 her younger son, Aristobulus, seized the high priesthood from his elder brother, Hyrcanus, and annulled the reforms.

This wretched sequel to what had seemed a successful popular revolution left a deep mark on contemporary Jewish literature. The ideology of revolt became more and more visionary. During the Maccabean revolution the author of Daniel had pictured the new age as the kingdom of the "son of man" or, as we should say, the kingdom of man. In the book of Enoch, compiled from various sources either under Alexander Jannaeus or under his son Aristobulus, the Son of Man has become a mythical individual -- a supernatural being appointed by God from the beginning to judge the world in the last days and to create a new heaven

and a new earth. The Son of Man is also called the Elect or the Anointed (in Hebrew*Messiah*, in Greek *Christ*). The kings and the mighty of the earth who oppress God's children will be tortured in Gehenna; ordinary sinners will be annihilated; and the persecuted saints will rise from the dead and live happily ever after. Such literature is poetical and does not necessarily exclude active revolutionary struggle, but it opens the door to the ivory tower of the escapist.

A small minority of the revolutionary party, disappointed with the results of the Maccabean revolt, tried to set up a Utopian community of their own. These were the Essenes (probably the same word as *Hasidim*) of whom we read in Philo, Pliny and Josephus. They practised strict community of goods, condemned slavery as a violation of the brotherhood of man and lived mostly in small self-governing societies of workers and peasants. To the ordinary Pharisee the Essene seemed a "fool who destroyed the world". Much of what we read of the Essenes reminds us curiously of primitive Christianity. Some of the sect renounced marriage; others allowed it for the propagation of the race. Travelling Essenes carried no provisions, but relied on the hospitality of local brotherhoods. They took no oaths, except one which all took on admission and which bound them to piety towards God, justice and truth towards men, hatred of the wicked, assistance to the righteous and preservation of the secrets of the sect. They rejected animal sacrifice and explained allegorically the enactments which enjoined it; otherwise they strictly observed the Jewish law. Persian influence shows itself in their practice of prayers before dawn, "as if beseeching the sun to rise",[22] and in their doctrine of eternal reward and punishment. Although Philo and Josephus assert the loyalty of the Essenes to the temporal government, this is probably exaggerated. They never numbered more than four thousand; yet, as we shall see, it appears from recently discovered Essene documents that Aristobulus found the sect dangerous enough to be worth persecuting, and that he tortured and executed a leader whom they called "the master of justice and the elect of God". Josephus records their part in the later revolutionary war against Rome and their bravery under torture when taken by the enemy.

Thus the hope of successful revolution slowly flickered before final extinction. Jewish patriots fought on, and were to fight on for nearly two centuries more. But the prospect was getting desperate, and became more so with Roman intervention.

Notes

1 Aristotle, Politics, VII, 7.

2 I Maccabees i, 9.

3 Zechariah xi, 4-17.

4 ix-x.

5 11 Maccabees ii, 42.

6 Psalms xiv, 4.

7 xliv, 22.

8 lxxiv, lxxix.

9 cxlbc, 6-9.

10 be, 6-12.

11 xxiv, 7-10.

12 lxviii, 31.

13 lxxxvii.

14 xlix.

15 Isaiah xxvi, 19.

16 Daniel vii, 7.

17 13.

18 27.

19 xii, 2.

20 Maccabees xiii, 41; xiv, 8-12.

21 viii, 16.

22 Josephus, Jewish War, II, 8, 5.

CHAPTER IV

THE JEWS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Roman Empire was the most successful and lasting of the ancient experiments in imperialism. The Roman ruling class of wealthy nobles, who under the republic all but monopolized office and filled the senate, won their empire not by an attempt (which would have courted speedy catastrophe) to exploit whole countries to enrich a single city, but by linking their own interests (not without friction and struggle, but to a progressively greater and greater extent) with those of the ruling classes elsewhere.

This policy evolved from small beginnings by a snowball process. Rome owed her political rise in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. to her leadership of other Latin cities first against the Etruscan power, then against the hill tribes of central Italy, then against Celtic invaders from the north who threatened to submerge them all. She consolidated her power by granting citizen rights in the Roman state to her Latin allies. Since only the richer Latins could travel to Rome to vote, this involved no danger to the Roman ruling class. Far from swamping them, it reinforced them against the Roman plebs, while Rome in return protected the rich Latins against the masses in their respective cities. In the third century B.C. this strategy was repeated in the south of Italy. The wealthy Greeks of Italy needed an ally against the half-civilized tribes of the interior and against their own masses. Rome granted them her alliance and garrisoned their cities. The masses called in Pyrrhus of Epirus to help them; but Pyrrhus was only a rival empire-builder, and when it came to the point, the Greek democrats were not prepared to fight for the honour of being garrisoned by Epirots rather than Romans. The Greek cities thus became, like the Latins, subject-allies of Rome, but without even the empty compensation of voting rights. Rome became mistress of Italy, able to treat on equal terms with the Greek East and to buy from Egypt supplies of corn which fed her in future wars. By the end of the third century B.C. Rome with her

network of subject-allies, bound to her by the common interest of their ruling classes with her own, had proved that she could wear down and defeat Carthage, who relied on mercenary armies and imperial exploitation of the old, crude kind. The Punic Wars left Rome strong enough to hold down Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Cisalpine Gaul and Spain, without any pretence of alliance, as *provinces* -- sources of loot for her ruling class, tribute for her treasury, corn for her people and profit for her traders, usurers and speculators.

In the second century B.C. the process was repeated in Greece proper. The wealthy classes of the Greek homeland wanted freedom from their Macedonian overlords without the risk of social revolution, against which Macedonian occupation had insured them. Rome intervened as their ally, defeated not only Macedon, but (as we have seen) the Seleucid Empire, and became the paramount power in the Mediterranean. When the Greek democrats got out of hand, Rome sacked Corinth and turned Greece into one more province to be skinned by her proconsuls, tax-farmers and usurers.

As a result of these wars Italy was flooded with slaves, and the Italian peasants who manned the legions were ruined by the competition of big estates farmed by gang-labour. Years of savage class struggles followed between masters and slaves, between wealthy landowners and impoverished peasants, between the Roman ruling class and the Italians who bore the burden of empire-building without sharing proportionately in its proceeds. In 89 B.C. a revolt of the Italians forced the Roman ruling class to extend Roman citizenship to her allies in the peninsula. In 88 Mithridates of Pontus, a king who was not afraid of revolutionary allies, profited by Roman misrule to raise the Greek masses against the exploiters who were sucking them dry. Rome was able to reconquer Greece, but was too distracted by her own civil struggles to lay the menace of Mithridates. For twenty years he defied her, fomenting piracy in the Mediterranean, taking Italian refugees into his service, allying himself with revolutionaries in the West and holding out to the Greeks the hope of liberation from a yoke which had proved far more brutal than that of Macedon.

At last in 66 B.C. Rome was ready for a new push to the East. The Italian allies had been pacified; the democrats had been broken in civil war and cowed by proscription; the slaves who revolted under Spartacus had lined the Appian Way on crosses. It remained to finish with Mithridates. Pompey, who had done the senate good service against the democrats and against the slaves, was given the command in the East and led his legions through Pontus and Armenia to the Caucasus, amassing treasure by the million and slaves by the hundred thousand. In 64 Syria was made a Roman province. The once great house of Seleucus were allowed to reign in Commagene as puppet-kings in the Roman interest. Mithridates fled to the Crimea and ended his own life.[1]

It was at this moment that the two rival claimants to the high priesthood of Jerusalem, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, appealed to the Romans for aid against each other. The Jewish people sent a delegation to Pompey begging to be spared the rule of either brother. It was a bad time for any small nation to remind Rome of its existence. Pompey followed the time-honoured Roman policy of offering support to the ruling class in return for an admission of suzerainty. As Aristobulus was slow to agree, Pompey in 63 made him prisoner, besieged and took Jerusalem with a slaughter of twelve thousand Jews, and installed Hyrcanus as a puppet of Rome subject to tribute ancl to the supervision of the governor of Syria.

To most Romans the capture of Jerusalem was no more than a small operation taken by Pompey in his stride during his conquest of the East. But to the more informed it had a wider significance. The Jews were not merely a Palestinian people, but a propagandist sect infiltrating into every corner of the Graeco-Roman world. In every great Mediterranean city there were Jews, some of them merchants seeking their fortune, but most of them slaves, freedmen or petty traders, organized in their synagogues and propagating among their neighbours the idea of a juster social order set forth in the law and the prophets.

We have samples of this propaganda in the Sibylline Oracles circulated at various dates in the centuries immediately before and after the Christian era. These writings adapted to Greek conditions the prophetic technique evolved in Palestine centuries before. Since about the sixth century B.C., for reasons no doubt similar to those which evoked prophetic literature in Palestine, there had circulated in Greek cities oracles in hexameter verse under the name of a legendary prophetess Sibylla. No priesthood sponsored them; and the ruling class despised them as irresponsible demagogy.[2] The Roman senate took them more seriously. From the time of their first contact with the Greeks they made it their policy to withdraw Sibylline writings from public circulation and to lodge them in safe custody at Rome as part of the paraphernalia of official priestcraft. There they were kept from the people and invoked by the senate to justify any religious innovation which from time to time seemed expedient. But the circulation of unauthorized oracles continued, and from the second century B.C. provided a ready weapon for Jewish propaganda. The first Jewish Sibyllines were written at Alexandria under the Ptolemies. Their doggerel character shows that the writers were men of the people with no more than a nodding acquaintance with classical poetry. After the manner of Jewish apocalyptic they enumerate the empires which have ruled the East down to their own time, denounce the judgment of God on them all and foretell the coming of peace and plenty on earth under a Messianic king. The circulation of Jewish and later of Christian Sibyllines continued as late as the third century A.D.[3]

The Roman ruling class were aware of Jewish subversive activity. In 58 B.C. Flaccus, ex-governor of the province of Asia, was charged with extortion -- one count being that he had confiscated money subscribed by the Jews of his province towards the upkeep of the temple at Jerusalem. Cicero defended him and justified the confiscation on the ground that Judaism was "a barbarous superstition . . . very much at variance with the splendour of this empire, the dignity of our name and the institutions of our ancestors ".[4] But the Jews of Rome were numerous and well organized. Cicero moreover was hated by the people for his championship of the rich and his illegal execution of Catiline's revolutionaries five years before. Though Flaccus was eventually acquitted, the Jews helped to howl his defender down.

Meanwhile Rome ruled Palestine with the collaboration of the high priest Hyrcanus and his right-hand man, Antipater the Idumaean. In 54 Crassus, the millionaire slave-owner and slave-dealer, crusher of the revolt of Spartacus, became governor of Syria and plundered the temple at Jerusalem to finance his war with Parthia. In 53 he and his army were annihilated on the field of Carrhae, leaving Syria open to invasion. For the next two years his officer, Cassius, was busy repelling the Parthians from Syria. Some Jews made Rome's difficulty their opportunity to bid for independence; but the movement was local and easily suppressed. The insurgents were sold as slaves by Cassius to the number of thirty thousand.

In 49 civil war broke out in Italy between Pompey, backed by the senate and ruling class, and Julius Caesar, backed by the peasant-soldiers with whom he had conquered Gaul, and by all who had not a vested interest in the senatorial regime. The senate, no longer masters of the legions, crumpled up. Pompey fled from Italy. His men in the West forced their own officers to surrender. In 48 he was routed at Pharsalus in Greece and murdered as he landed in Egypt. Antipater, who virtually governed Palestine in the Roman interest, quickly came to terms with Caesar and was rewarded with Roman citizenship and the title of procurator of Judaea. Caesar further allowed Jerusalem to be refortified, remitted the tribute imposed by Pompey and guaranteed religious liberty to the Jews throughout the empire.

The Jewish people could not believe that the Roman Empire had come to stay; and in the existing revolutionary crisis their unbelief was not without plausibility. Caesar had avenged them on Pompey, but Caesar to them was only a stop-gap. Their reaction to the civil war is expressed in the *Psalms of Solomon*, composed about this time for use in the synagogues of Palestine. They dwell on the wickedness of the Hasmonean princes, whose sins brought a conqueror from the ends of the earth to batter down the walls of Jerusalem and carry its sons and daughters captive to the West. That conqueror has now met his deserts on the shores of Egypt. At the appointed time God himself will raise up his anointed, a son of David, to crush unjust rulers, rid Jerusalem of heathen masters and bring the dispersed tribes back to Palestine. Then all nations will be

converted to Judaism and go to Jerusalem to see the glory of the Messiah. The psalmists do not seem to contemplate revolutionary action to hasten this consummation; but the omission may be for reasons of prudence.

Even more striking is an Essene document discovered in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea. Under the disguise of a commentary on the prophet Habakkuk, the writer describes the tyranny of a high priest who persecuted the Essene sect and tortured and executed its leader, "the master of justice and the elect of God". As a judgment on this crime the high priest was taken prisoner and Jerusalem captured by westerners.[5] Another impious high priest now reigns and has rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. But soon the "master of justice" will reappear to judge Israel and all nations, and only those who believe in him will be saved. In this document the conquerors are plainly the Romans, and the two high priests Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. Of the "master of justice " we know no more than may be inferred from this document -- that he was executed by Aristobulus before 63 B.C., and that after 48 B.C. some Essenes still hoped for his triumphant return.[6]

Thus in Jewish literature of the last century B.C. we find three distinct ideas of the Messiah who was to inaugurate a better world-order. In the book of Enoch he is a "Son of Man " supernaturally predestined to his Messianic role from the beginning of the world. In the Psalms of Solomon he is a descendant of David, a man like other men. In the Essene document he is a particular leader recently put to death, but expected miraculously to reappear. If we take into account the poetical and figurative language usual in prophetic and apocalyptic literature, these ideas are not as incompatible with one another as they seem. In poetic diction any revolutionary leader could be hailed as chosen from the foundation of the world to put down the mighty and avenge the blood of the righteous. Among people steeped in stories of miracle and acquainted with the ancient idea of reincarnation, any revolutionary leader might pass as a dead champion come again. So in the Gospels Jesus passes as John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets.[7]

The assassination of Caesar in 44 B.C. and the renewal of civil war no doubt fanned the expectations of Jewish patriots that the Roman Empire was about to break up. We learn from Suetonius that the Jews of Rome joined the Roman *plebs* in mourning Caesar and flocked for successive nights to the scene of his cremation. Naturally so: he was the conqueror of Pompey, and the first Roman statesman of their acquaintance to treat provincials, and in particular Jews, as anything but victims to be squeezed. They soon knew what manner of men were his murderers. Cassius returned to the East to raise money and men for the senatorial cause, levied a heavy tribute on the Jews and sold four cities into slavery in default of payment. In 43 Antipater. who had collaborated with Cassius, was poisoned. His son Herod immediately succeeded him as handy-man to the Roman rulers of the moment. After Cassius and the senatorial regime had met their end in 42 on the field of Philippi, Herod got himself confirmed by Antony for cash down as tetrarch of Judaea. In 40 the Parthians profited by the Roman civil wars to occupy Syria and Palestine, but had nothing better to offer the Jews than the restoration of Antigonus, the brutal son of Aristobulus of evil memory. Herod escaped to Rome and was recognized as king in opposition to Antigonus. In 39, while the Romans attended to Syria, Herod returned to Palestine with Roman troops. By 37 Jerusalem had fallen, Antigonus was beheaded, and Herod reigned as king of Judaea in the Roman interest. As long as the civil wars continued, the Jewish masses (if we may judge from the Sibylline Oracles) cherished hopes of their own liberation. But after Antony's defeat in 31 at Actium by Octavian (the future Augustus) Herod promptly went over to the conqueror and was rewarded by the addition of the rest of Palestine to his kingdom. Palestine was at last firmly held by a client-king of the stabilized Roman Empire.

While the propertied classes hailed Augustus as a bringer of peace and order, to the peoples of the East his government was a more formidable instrument of exploitation by reason of its greater stability. The hopes of patriots who had expected Rome to break up in the civil wars were dashed to the ground.

For most of Herod's reign Palestine remained quiet. Ruffian though he was, he was at first an improvement on the Hasmoneans. He was himself as Hellenized as an Oriental king could be, and showed it by re-endowing the Olympic Games, by benefactions to various Greek cities (including Athens and Sparta), by patronizing Greek artists and authors, by rebuilding Samaria as a Greek city, and by building an amphitheatre at Jericho and another at Jerusalem itself, where quadrennial games were held in honour of Augustus. But he did not force Hellenism on his Jewish subjects, he rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem on a magnificent scale, and he used his influence at Rome to protect the Jews of the "dispersion" from molestation and from military service. The Pharisees, therefore, acquiesced in his Hellenism, accepted his rule as a "judgment" and put the kingdom of God into cold storage. But towards the end of his reign the struggle reopened. To make sure of the Jews, Herod exacted an oath of allegiance to Augustus and himself. Over six thousand Pharisees refused it and were fined. They openly denounced him and his house; and many were put to death. A band of young men hewed down a golden eagle which Herod had put over the gate of the temple. He had them burnt alive. Soon afterwards in 4 B.C. he died.

While Herod's sons were at Rome wrangling over his inheritance, the Jewish people, whom he had taxed to the bone to gratify his Greek tastes, rose in revolt against the whole family and against the Roman occupation. But the risings were sporadic and had no common plan. We read of three separate leaders -- Tudas in Galilee; Simon, a former slave of Herod, in the Jordan valley; Athronges, a shepherd, in the south -- and each of the last two set up as king. The governor of Syria, Varus, put down the revolt, burnt the towns which had harboured the rebel leaders, and crucified two thousand of their followers. Augustus divided Palestine among three sons of Herod, but gave the royal title to none of them. By A.D. 6 Archelaus, the ruler of Judaea and Samaria, had made himself so hated that Jews and Samaritans united to petition for his removal. Augustus then brought Judaea and Samaria under direct rule and imposed imperial taxation.

This led to a new rising under Judas of Galilee and a Pharisee named Sadduk, who proclaimed it unlawful to pay tribute to foreigners or to call

any man master. Their rising failed; but their numerous following, under the name of Zealots, kept revolt simmering until the outbreak of the revolutionary war with Rome sixty years later.

The resistance to Rome was throughout a movement of the masses. The priestly nobility of Jerusalem and the richer Jews everywhere had no interest in revolutionary movements and every inducement to collaborate with Rome or Rome's client-rulers against them. Josephus records the contempt of the priestly Sadducees for the masses. "When they mix with their fellow-countrymen", says he, "they are as offhanded as if their fellows were aliens."[8] Judaism to them was a temple cult very profitable to themselves, not a way of life destined to transform the world. A contemporary satire on the brutality and corruption of these priestly families found its way into the Talmud centuries later.

" A plague on the house of Boethus!
A plague on their rods!
A plague on the house of Hanan!
A plague on their tricks!
A plague on the house of Cantheras!
A plague on their pens!
A plague on the house of Ishmael ben-Phabi!
A plague on their fists!
These men are high priests, their sons keep the cash,
Their sons-in-law get jobs, and their flunkeys -- can thrash ".[9]

The popular attitude to Roman rule ranged from the non-cooperation of the Pharisees to the active resistance of the Zealots. But the collaboration between Judas of Galilee and the Pharisee Sadduk suggests that there was no rigid barrier between the two parties. The assiduous prediction of the downfall of a regime leads naturally, if the situation seems favourable, to revolutionary action. To the Roman authorities most Pharisees can have appeared no better than crypto-Zealots. What above all alarmed Roman rulers was the propaganda carried on by Pharisaic Jews outside Palestine. The Jews in Palestine could hardly be called a menace to the empire: their Zealots could be dealt with by the procurator of Judaea or, if necessary, by the governor of Syria. But an empire-wide

organization with synagogues in every great Mediterranean city, preaching to the dispossessed classes the nullity of all gods and all cults but one, the abolition of usury, the liberation of runaway slaves, a weekly day of rest for slaves equally with freemen, and the imminence of a day when the kingdoms of the earth should be broken and dominion given to the saints of the Most High -- that was an altogether different thing.

The Roman government was not yet prepared to undertake the suppression of Jewish propaganda throughout the empire; but an attempt was made to banish it from Rome and Italy. In A.D. 19, under the emperor Tiberius, the senate had four thousand freedmen, converts either to Judaism or to Isis-worship, rounded up and sent to Sardinia to fight brigands or die of the unhealthy climate. Other Jews in Italy were to recant or quit the country. The ban proved ineffective; for thirty years later it had to be renewed. During the interval the Jews of Palestine had been goaded to the point of rebellion, first by the severities of Pontius Pilate in Judaea, and then by the mad attempt of the emperor Caligula to have his statue erected in the temple. The result was a rise in revolutionary temperature throughout Mediterranean Jewry, and a second expulsion of the Jews from Rome by the emperor Claudius on the ground, we are told, that they "constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus."[10]

With this statement the name of Christ first appears in Roman history.

Notes

1 By an accident of history Mithridates is commemorated in the modern Soviet town of Eupatoria -- originally named from his surname Eupator.

2 In the *Peace* of Aristophanes a repeater of demagogic oracles is derisively told to " eat your Sibylla".

3 The pagan prophetess is actually invoked in the Catholic Dies Irae.

"Day of wrath and doom impending,
David's word with Sibyl's blending!
Heaven and earth in ashes ending!"

4 Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28.

5 *Kittim*. In Hebrew this denoted originally the city of Citium in Cyprus, then by extension the island of Cyprus, and in late writings (such as this) the West in general.

6 See *The Dead Sea Scrolls*: *A Preliminary Survey*, by Professor Andre Dupont-Sommer of the Sorbonne. The date of the Dead Sea scrolls has been disputed. Professor G. R. Driver would put them as late as A.D. 500-600. But most scholars who have examined them date this one (or at least its original) before the Christian era, and the references to Jewish high priests seem incompatible with a late date.

7 Matthew xvi, 13-14; Mark viii, 27-28; Luke ix, 18-19.

8 *Jewish War*, II, 8, 14.

9 *Tosephta* and *Babylonian Talmud*, cited by Renan, *Antichrist*, chap. III. *Tosephta* is a compilation ascribed to rabbis of the second century a.d. The *Babylonian Talmud* was compiled in the fifth century a.d.

10 Suetonius, *Claudius*, xxv.

CHAPTER V

THE LEGEND OF JESUS CHRIST

i. *Traditional Christianity*

How did Christianity begin?

According to the official teaching of the Christian Churches it originated in certain unique events which occurred in Palestine under the Roman emperors Augustus and Tiberius. In the reign of Augustus, the God by whom all things were made became man by miraculous birth from a virgin mother. In the reign of Tiberius the God-man, Jesus Christ, was crucified by Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judaea. After suffering death he rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven, leaving behind him a Church divinely empowered to interpret his teaching until he comes again to judge the living and the dead and to inaugurate the life of the world to come.

These dogmas, contained in the Nicene Creed, were enforced on Europe during the Middle Ages. To deny them is still an offence against the common law of this country. They are taught to children at the public expense in our nationally provided schools and sedulously propagated by the radio. The law against blasphemy is now enforced only against poor people who attack Christianity in unguarded language. But a public denial of its truth is a risk which few politicians, whatever their private beliefs, are prepared to take, and the "defence of Christian civilization" is used along with other pretexts to justify present-day warmongering.

2. *The New Testament*

The Nicene Creed dates from the fourth century of our era. No creed remotely resembling it can be traced further back than the third century. When we turn from the creeds to the New Testament, on which they are said to be based, we are confronted by writings of disputed dates and contradictory tendencies. Before proceeding to the problem of Christian origins it is necessary to consider briefly the nature of these writings.

First there are the four Gospels. As these stand first in the New Testament, the reader may be led to suppose that they were written first. This is far from being the case. Christian writers of the first and early second centuries nowhere refer to the Gospels, though they sometimes quote "words of the Lord Jesus" in terms which suggest that they drew on a tradition other than the Gospels we know.

The first writer to mention any Gospel is Papias, who lived at Hierapolis in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century. His work, *An Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord,* is entirely lost except for passages quoted by later Christian writers. Eusebius in the fourth century quotes a fragment in which Papias says that he prefers oral tradition to books. Irenaeus, late in the second century, preserves one of the oral traditions collected by Papias. In it Jesus paints a highly materialistic picture of the good time coming in the Messianic kingdom, when vineyards will yield wine to overflowing and wheat will yield flour in fabulous abundance. Such a prophecy is nowhere recorded in the Gospels; but one very like it is found in a Jewish work, the *Apocalypse of Baruch,* written shortly before A.D. 70. Doubtless such prophecies were appreciatively passed from mouth to mouth among the disinherited class of the first and second centuries, and attributed by different people to different prophets.

Coming to the Gospels, Papias (according to Eusebius) quotes an unnamed "elder" as saying that Mark, a disciple of Peter, but not of Jesus, wrote "accurately, but not in order" what Peter remembered of the sayings and doings of Jesus. Papias further says that Matthew. collected the "oracles" of Jesus in "Hebrew" and that others translated them into Greek

as best they could.[1] No mention by Papias of Luke's or John's Gospel has come down to us. It does not follow that he did not know them; but as Eusebius is silent, the presumption is that Papias said nothing about those Gospels which a fourth-century Christian historian found fit to quote.

Plainly in the time of Papias there was no canon of the New Testament. He knew of a Gospel attributed to Mark, competing versions of another Gospel attributed to Matthew, and possibly others, but nothing superior in his opinion to oral traditions such as the prophecy cited above.

The next writer to mention any Gospel is Justin, who wrote at Rome in the middle years of the second century. He refers to no Gospel by name, but says that "memoirs of the apostles" were read at Christian meetings along with the Jewish prophets, and often cites these "memoirs" on points of fact or doctrine. His quotations are from Matthew, Mark, Luke and other sources unknown to us, but not from John -- though John would have been useful in proving some of Justin's points. Evidently the Fourth Gospel was not yet accepted, as authoritative, and the Gospels were not yet reduced to a canon of four.

In the second half of the second century our four Gospels emerge as authoritative or, as we now say, canonical. Tatian, a pupil of Justin, about 170-180 composed a harmony of the four *(Diatessaron)* which was read in the Syrian churches until the fifth century. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons about 180, is the first extant author to name the traditional writers of all four gospels, and gives mystical reasons why there must be no more or less than four. His account of Matthew and Mark is a variant of that given by Papias. He is the earliest writer to attribute the Third Gospel to Luke, the companion of Paul, and the Fourth to "John, the disciple of the Lord". Thenceforth the authority of the four was generally accepted; but there were Christians of note who rejected the Fourth Gospel even in the third century.

Of the dogmas of the traditional Creed, that of the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ is found only in the Fourth Gospel, the latest of the four to be accepted as authoritative. The first three Gospels -- usually called the Synoptics, since they embody a common tradition -- call Jesus the Christ, the Son of Man, even the Son of God, but never God. Two, Matthew and Luke, relate the virgin birth: but after the nativity it is never mentioned again, and as Luke repeatedly calls Joseph and Mary the parents of Jesus, the virgin birth cannot have been in his Gospel as originally written. Mark and even John ignore it. In describing the teaching of Jesus both Matthew and Luke reproduce, evidently from a common source, discourses exalting the poor and persecuted, denouncing riches, calling his followers to face struggle and danger, and predicting the speedy coming of the kingdom of God, which is to follow the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Mark compresses this teaching and omits much of it. John omits it altogether and substitutes arguments about the divine nature of Jesus. All Gospels relate the crucifixion and the resurrection; but the accounts of the resurrection differ so much that to reconcile them is past the wit of commentators. We clearly cannot go to these anonymous and contradictory documents for a true account of the origin of Christianity. All that we can gather from them is the teaching current in different Christian churches during the period from A.D. 70 to 150, when the Gospels were taking shape.

After the Gospels in the New Testament stand the Acts of the Apostles, which will be dealt with later. After the Acts stand the Pauline Epistles. Tradition credits Paul with fourteen; but of these the Epistle to the Hebrews does not pretend to be his, and those to Timothy and Titus are regarded even by professional theologians as second-century concoctions. How much of the remaining ten is really Paul's we must for the present leave an open question. They contain many internal contradictions.

Taking the Epistles for the present at their face value, we are struck by an amazing contrast between them and the Synoptic Gospels. The Jesus of the Synoptics, with his denunciations of the rich, exaltations of the poor and proclamations of the coming kingdom of God, is nowhere to be found.

There is only the meagrest mention of any historical Jesus at all. In a few short, scattered passages we learn that the Son of God was "born of the seed of David",[2] that Paul has met "brethren of the Lord",[3] that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, that he was killed by the Jews and that after rising from the dead he appeared to a number of people, including Paul himself. But the list of witnesses to the resurrection does not tally with the Gospels. Moreover all these passages stand out incongruously against a very different background. In the main the Epistles are not concerned with historical events, but with a divine being called Jesus Christ, "the image of God",[4] the "firstborn of all creation",[5] "through whom are all things",[6] who was crucified by the demonic rulers of this world, but by his death brings them to nought, and lives again to die no more. This divine being has commissioned Paul to preach his death and resurrection to all mankind that they may be united to Christ in baptism and live for ever.

This teaching is closely akin to that of certain cults widely diffused in the Graeco-Roman world and commonly called "mystery religions". In fact Paul himself calls his teaching a "mystery" and his converts "initiates", though our translators prefer to render the latter word "perfect" or "full-grown".[7]

It may be thought that the reason for Paul's all but total silence about the career and teaching of Jesus is that the Gospel story was already familiar to his readers. No such explanation is possible. Were it so, we should expect to find in the Epistles "words of the Lord" such as later Christian writers are fond of quoting. With one exception -- the words of institution of the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians xi, 23-25 -- we do not find any. On the few other occasions when the Epistles urge the Lord's commands, they do so indirectly and do not quote. Moreover Paul, even when dealing with the institution of the Lord's Supper, claims that his teaching is derived by direct revelation from Jesus Christ himself and from no human source. Plainly this excludes the use of any oral or written tradition of the teaching of Jesus.

To sum up, the Pauline Epistles are not written to propagate the teaching of a human founder. They are written to propagate the cult of a god crucified for the salvation of man. To Paul the crucifixion and resurrection are everything. And as this world is nothing and the next world everything, the Epistles are socially and politically conservative. "The powers that be are ordained of God."[8] Later editors tried to bring the Epistles into relation with the Gospel story by interpolation, but only threw into relief their essentially mystical outlook. We shall find further evidence of this when we examine the Epistles in detail.[9]

The Pauline Epistles are followed by seven Epistles ascribed to four personal followers of Jesus -- James, Peter, John and Jude. None of these reads like the work of a personal disciple. Those attributed to John are akin to the Fourth Gospel in style and outlook, and won slow acceptance from about the middle of the second century. 1 Peter is merely a weakened version of Paul. 2 Peter is not heard of until the third century and was rejected by many Christians even in the fourth. It is without doubt the latest writing in the New Testament.

The Apocalypse or Revelation of John, which closes the canon, is in many ways the most interesting book of all. Its detailed examination must be deferred for the present. Meanwhile we may note that like the Pauline Epistles, to which it is otherwise diametrically opposed, the Apocalypse contains next to no reference to the career of Jesus. The Christ of the Apocalypse is "the first and the last", the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world", whose blood has purchased a kingdom on earth for people of every tribe and tongue, and who will feed the vultures with the flesh of the kings of the earth and their armies.[10]There is very little to connect this Christ with an historical individual. Only once, in a way so offhand that we suspect interpolation, does the book refer to the crucifixion. This submersion of the career and teaching of Jesus, in the Pauline Epistles by a mystery cult, in the Apocalypse by a vision of vengeance on Rome, creates a problem which no student of Christian origins can ignore.

Another point to be noted about the books of the New Testament is their poetical form. Great portions of them are written in rhythmical diction reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets. The rhythm is often perceptible even in a translation. This rhythmical form, which will be apparent when we have occasion to quote them, would be out of place in straightforward biography, history or letters. Real lives and letters are not written in rhythm; but simulated lives and letters may very well be. There is only one reason why these writings should have taken this form. They must have been deliberately put into a form in which they could be memorized and recited by illiterate people. To this end the writers resort to rhythm, and occasionally even to rhyme. The New Testament is certainly in parts based on real history and real letters. But we have no guarantee that the history or the letters have come down to us as they were originally written, and every reason to think that they have not. For once they were rehandled to enable them to be memorized, there would be no limit to alteration and interpolation to meet the views of this or that church or the needs of this or that situation.

3. *The Mystery Religions*

The mystery religions of the ancient world sprang from the rituals and myths of the prehistoric past. As we saw in Chapter I, a stock feature of early religion was the killing of the tribal chief after a certain time in order that his power, before it failed, might pass into the earth and renew the tribal food supply. With the development of class society the chief tended to dodge his liabilities and to have a substitute sacrificed in his place. The fiction of sacrificing the chief was kept up by treating the substitute as a chief for the time being. This ancient ritual was reflected in the myth of a beneficent god-king of the remote past who had been killed and buried, whose flesh his people ate in the ripening corn and whose blood they drank in the teeming vintage. These myths lived on among the peasantry long after the ruling classes had explained them away to their own satisfaction by a more or less monotheistic theology or metaphysic.

But with the further development of class society a change took place. Though it can be traced farther back, this was especially so after the conquests of Alexander the Great, and above all under the Roman Empire,

when the peasant societies of the ancient East were dominated and exploited by the urban civilization of their Greek and Roman conquerors. Large masses of Orientals and of Greeks too (for imperialism, except for ideological purposes, is no respecter of race) were reduced to slavery or to menial occupations in such cities as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Pergamum and Rome itself. These uprooted people carried into their new surroundings the tradition of their ancient rites and myths. But the myths could no longer have their original significance. The murder and resuscitation of Osiris, the slaughter and return to life of the Lord Tammuz (Adonis), the death of Attis and his resurrection after three days, the tearing to pieces and rebirth of Dionysus could not for the uprooted and urbanized masses -- slaves, freedmen and poor freemen -- as for their peasant ancestors, represent the annual death and revival of tilth and vineyard, ensuring continued life to the community. The urban masses did not live among cornfields and vineyards, and they had been torn from their community. As Engels puts it, they "had their paradise, their golden age, behind them".[11] To them henceforward these myths of death and resurrection represented the hope of continued life not in the degrading environment of a great slave-empire, but in a happier world which wishful thinking located beyond the grave. Ancient ritual formulae referring to the life derived by the community from the annual resurrection of the corn-god were adapted to the new belief.

Thus Osiris, whose cult had spread from Egypt to Greece and Rome before the Christian era, was believed by his worshippers to ensure to them by his resurrection eternal life in a better world. Even before the age of Alexander this significance had been read into his rites. "As surely as Osiris lives", ran the incantation pronounced over the dead in Egypt, "he shall live; as surely as Osiris cannot die, he also shall not die; as surely as Osiris shall not be annihilated, he also shall not be annihilated."[12] Attis, whose rites spread from Asia Minor to the West during the same period, was each year at the vernal equinox bound in effigy to a pine tree, wildly lamented, and buried until the third day, when his joyful resurrection was hailed as a promise that his devotees too would rise triumphant over death. In token of this they were baptized in the blood of a bull and "born again to eternal life". "Be comforted, ye pious," said the priest of Attis to his worshippers at their annual festival; "as the god is saved, so will ye be

saved."[13] Dionysus, who had been put to death by the Titans and whose grave was shown at Delphi and at Thebes in Boeotia, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven; and those initiated into his mysteries, in which his death and resurrection were enacted, were made partakers of his immortality. The Orphic brotherhoods in the Greek world, closely associated with the cult of Dionysus, preached from the sixth century B.C. onward, to freemen and slaves alike, the doctrine that the soul of man was entombed in the body on account of sin, but might after many incarnations be freed from the "wheel of birth" by ascetic living and regain its original divinity.

Yet the mystery cults never lost the mark of their peasant origin. Attis was addressed by his worshippers as the "reaped corn." In the mysteries at Eleusis an ear of corn was solemnly shown to the congregation as a token of the renewal of life.

4. *The Suffering Messiah*

Competing with the mystery cults in the Mediterranean cities towards the time of the Christian era were the Jewish synagogues of the "dispersion". It is too often assumed that relations between the Jews and their Gentile neighbours were uncompromisingly hostile and that no mutual influence was possible. This is to ignore the active propaganda which distinguished post-exilic Judaism. The Pharisees, who inherited the tradition of the prophets, regarded Judaism as a way of life to be preached among the peoples until the whole world adopted it, and for the purpose of propaganda never hesitated to appropriate such Gentile ideas as were not flagrantly incompatible with Judaism. In the exchange of ideas between subject peoples which took place under the successors of Alexander, the Jewish masses, as we have seen, took over from the Persians the conception of life as an age-long war between good and evil powers, at the end of which in the not distant future the dead would be raised and rewarded according to their works, the good and true living happily ever after in a kingdom of God on earth. The Essenes, the Utopian "left wing" of the Pharisees, seem to have taken over, perhaps throughy channels, the Orphic idea of the imprisonment "of the soul in the body and its release from bondage by ascetic living. And as we have seen, for propagandist

purposes Jews of the "dispersion" circulated oracles in the borrowed name of the Greek prophetess Sibylla.

It is therefore not surprising that, in the day-to-day exchange of ideas with their Gentile neighbours, some Jews should have taken up the idea that the Messiah, the representative of God on earth in the new order about to be, must like an ancient king have suffered death and risen again that his people might live. There were many factors to contribute to such a belief. The last centuries before the Christian era were a period of continual struggle against oppression not only on the part of conquered Asiatics, but on the part of the exploited classes in Greece and Italy too. Many rebel leaders met violent ends and were remembered as martyrs.

Late in the third century B.C. Cleomenes, king of Sparta, embarked on a revolutionary policy of cancellation of debts, redistribution of land and emancipation of the helots. He was driven out of Sparta by a Macedonian army and fled to Alexandria. There he tried to raise a revolt against Ptolemy IV, but failed and put an end to his life. In the story preserved by Plutarch, Cleomenes and twelve friend have a last supper together on the night before his death. He is betrayed to his enemies and bids his friends to cease their hopeless fight. His dead body is crucified. A prodigy occurs after the crucifixion; and the people of Alexandria call him a "hero and son of the gods". The parallels with the Gospel story are too many to be accidental. From the apotheosis of a dead leader it is a short step to the expectation of a miraculous return. Under the successors of Alexander, as we have seen, there were friendly relations and at one time negotiations for an alliance between Sparta and Jerusalem. The story of Cleomenes must have been known to the Jews, of whom there were plenty in Alexandria. His policy had much in common with their own Deuteronomic legislation. Legends of his end may well have been told among the exploited classes, Jewish and Gentile, as an example of what befell the people's friends. They were betrayed, they died, they were crucified; and then? The people did not believe that that was the end.

Fifty years after the death of Cleomenes at Alexandria came the Jewish people's struggle against the Seleucid Empire, in the course of which Jewish blood was shed like water by the Greek conquerors and their priestly and aristocratic collaborators. We have already seen the mark made by those events on contemporary Jewish literature. It was just at that time that the Persian belief in the resurrection first found articulate expression in the books of Daniel and Enoch. To those who expected martyred patriots to return and share in the good time coming, nothing could be more natural than to suppose that such martyrs, or one such martyr, would preside over the regenerated world.

In the next century this idea comes into the open. The Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus in his repression of the Pharisees about 88 B.C. crucified eight hundred rebels, slew their wives and children before their eyes and forced thousands of refugees to fly to Egypt. Not long after that time an Alexandrian Jew wrote the apocryphal book called the *Wisdom of Solomon.* He may have Alexander Jannaeus in mind when he speaks of ungodly rulers putting the righteous to torture and shameful death. He comforts his readers with the assurance that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God", and that though "in the eyes of the foolish" they seem to die, "they are in peace" and will receive their reward.

They shall judge nations, and have dominion over peoples; And the Lord shall reign over them for evermore."[14]

Here the martyrs are to rule the earth, but no individual is singled out. That step is taken in the Essene scroll already mentioned, written between 48 and 41 B.C. and recently discovered near the Dead Sea. In it a martyred leader of the Essenes is himself to reappear and judge the world. From that time on the idea of a suffering Messiah was in the air.

5. *The Myth Theory*

For over fifty years Freethinkers have wrangled over the question whether "the Gospel Jesus" ever lived or not. Much of the Gospel story can undoubtedly be accounted for as myth. The name "Jesus " is a Greek transliteration of "Joshua" and means "Jah is deliverance". In the Old

Testament Joshua is the leader of Israel in the conquest of Canaan. It would be natural to give the name in anticipation to the predestined deliverer of Israel from the Roman yoke. In fact we have evidence that it was so given. In an anti-Roman Sibylline Oracle circulated about A.D. 80 and containing no other evidence of Christian authorship we find the lines.

Then shall one come again from heaven, an excellent hero,
He who spread his hands on a tree of beautiful fruitage --
Best of the Hebrews all, who stayed the sun in his course once."[15]

Here a crucified Messiah is explicitly identified with the legendary Joshua who made the sun stand still. In the *Apocalypse of Ezra,* another anti-Roman work put together towards the end of the first century, the coming Messiah is explicitly called Jesus, though the work is not otherwise noticeably Christian. Evidently many Jewish patriots in the first century hoped for the return of Joshua to inaugurate a new world-order on the ruins of the Roman Empire. The phrase "Messiah Joshua" or (in Greek) "Christ Jesus" was doubtless a revolutionary slogan before it became associated with any historical individual. To any actual claimant to Messiahship the name "Jesus", a common enough Jewish name, would undoubtedly be an asset.

In the Gospels and Acts (but not, it is to be noted, in the Epistles or the Apocalypse) Jesus is called a "Nazarene" or "Nazoraean"; and in the Talmud he and his followers are regularly called *Notzrim.* This name is usually derived from Nazareth, called in Matthew and Luke a "city" of Galilee.[16] But though Nazareth is today a well-known town and has been so since the fourth century, when pilgrimages to the "holy places" began, it is curious that neither the Old Testament, Josephus nor the Talmud mention such a place. If it existed in the first century, it must have been an insignificant village; and it is as a village that Julius Africanus, who lived in Palestine in the third century, refers to it. It is, on the face of it, odd that a sect should be named after a small village in which its founder lived rather than after the founder himself.

Now Epiphanius, a bishop of the fourth century and a native of Palestine, tells us that a sect of " Nasaraeans ",[17] existing in Syria and Palestine in his day, had existed beforelhe Christian era; that they were Jews who recognized a Messiah: and that they used the same sacred book as the " Ossaeans . These are our old friends the Essenes, whose part in revolutionary Judaism we have already noted and who hoped, as we have seen, for the return of a martyred leader of their own. Another odd fact is that a sect called the Mandaeans, a few hundred of whom survive today like a historical fossil in Iraq, revere John the Baptist as the true prophet and denounce Jesus as a liar and impostor, but none the less call their chief members*Nasoraye* (Nazoraeans). All this does not look as if" Nazoraean " were derived from Nazareth. The name is more likely connected with a Hebrew word *natzar,* meaning to watch, guard or keep. *Notzrim* or " Nazoraeans " would mean " keepers " of secrets or of some special rules or usages. A pre-Christian sect cannot have been called after Jesus the Nazoraean; but he, if he existed, may well have been so called as a member of the sect. The Nazareth story may have been invented to explain the name " Nazoraean " by people ignorant of Hebrew and hazy enough about geography to make a city of an insignificant village.

There is nothing improbable in the statement that Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judaea under Tiberius from A.D. 26 to 36, crucified Jesus the Nazoraean as a would-be Messiah or king of the Jews. But mythical material has certainly contributed to the Gospel story, which in its earliest shape was not written down before A.D. 70.

We saw in Chapter I that in ancient Babylon it was an annual custom to dress a condemned prisoner in the king's robes, seat him on the king's throne and allow him to enjoy himself for five days, after which he was stripped, scourged and hanged or impaled. This points back to the prehistoric sacrifice of the chief, but it also points forward to the Gospel story, where Pilate's soldiers robe Jesus in purple, crown him with thorns and salute him as king of the Jews before leading him to crucifixion. No followers of Jesus can have been at the Roman headquarters to witness the mockery. In the oldest Gospel source they have " all left him and fled."[18] Not until Luke do we read of any disciples staying to see the

crucifixion*even* "afar off".[19] Not until John do we read of any standing by the cross. The mock robing and crowning, therefore, will not bear examination as history. But we can see how the story came to be told. Human sacrifice was widespread in ancient society -- in Babylonia, in Egypt, even in Greece. Until the second century A.D. human victims were offered on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia, at Alos in Thessaly, at Salamis in Cyprus. These barbarities must have bitten deep into the consciousness ofthe exploited classes from whom victims were invariably drawn. Nothing afforded a readier handle to Jewish propaganda. On nothing did the Jewish people more justly pride themselves than on their abolition of the human sacrifices still sanctioned by pagan religion. When the story of a crucified Messiah came to be told, nothing would be more natural than for details to be supplied from those sacrificial rites which were practised in the pagan world at the expense of helpless social outcasts.

The expectation that a martyred Messiah would return victorious over death assimilated the Messianic idea to those of the mystery cults. It is not surprising that those who told the story should have depicted him as crucified, dead and buried, and as raised on the third day -- " the first fruits of them that sleep."[20] There is probably a conscious echo of the mystery cults in the analogy drawn in i Corinthians between the growth of a grain of corn and the putting on of immortality by mortal men.

If the earliest features of the Gospel legend have many parallels in pagan cults, still more is this the case with later features. The virgin birth, related only in one dubious paragraph of Matthew and two palpably interpolated verses of Luke, is typical of such accretions. It is a pagan myth ultimately traceable to the prehistoric age when the nature of paternity was unknown and every child, therefore, was reputed to be virgin-born. Hence the gods, made in the image of man, were originally virgin-born too. In one Egyptian myth Isis conceives Horus after her husband, Osiris, is dead. The Babylonian mother-goddess, Ishtar,had originally no male counterpart. A Phrygian variant of Ishtar, Nana. was the virgin-mother of Attis. In the Hesiodic*Theogony* Hera bears Hephaestus, the fire-god, without sexual union. In such myths the mother-goddess was originally earth, the mother of mankind and of all things needful to

mankind. Until paternity was understood, she had no need of a consort. Later a father-god was associated with her and, as patriarchal and class society developed, might come to dominate her, as Zeus dominates Hera in Greek mythology. But although the Graeco-Roman pantheon conformed to the pattern of patriarchal society, the tradition of virgin goddesses and virgin births lingered among the masses. Even in the time of Plutarch (about A.D. 100) such births were believed in Egypt to be not impossible. When, therefore, Christianity spread to people holding these beliefs, a story that Jesus had been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary was inserted in Matthew and Luke. That the Fourth Gospel deliberately ignores the story shows that it was not received with unanimity. The words put into the mouth of Jesus, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"[21] are the evangelist's reproof to those who would attribute to a mere Jewess a part in the salvation of the world.

Similarly the story in Luke of the infant Jesus lying in a manger is traceable to the legend of the pastoral god Hermes, who is represented on an ancient Greek vase and in a Homeric hymn as cradled in a basket and surrounded by oxen.[22] The miracle of turning water into wine, related in the Fourth Gospel, is traceable to a rite performed in more than one Greek city at the winter festival of Dionysus. In the isle of Andros -- a short sail across the Aegean from Ephesus, where the Fourth Gospel was written -- a fountain in the temple of Dionysus was believed to run with wine every year on January 5. It can hardly be accidental that the Catholic Church commemorates the miracle of Cana on January 6.

Such was the sort of floating legend which went to the building up of the story of Jesus. In part this material was older than history, like the myths of Osiris, Tammuz, Attis and Dionysus. In part it had already been attached to historical figures like Cleomenes and the victims of Alexander Jannaeus and Aristobulus. The exponents of the myth theory could have made their case stronger than it is by paying more attention to the class struggles in the ancient world. Being, with a few honourable exceptions, imbued with a bourgeois contempt for mass movements, they have contented themselves mostly with cataloguing similarities between stories told of pagan gods and stories told of Jesus, and with searching the

heavens for astral explanations of both, leaving unanswered the question why people who needed a mystery cult should have gone to the trouble of manufacturing a new one at great inconvenience and danger to themselves instead of availing themselves of the abundant existing facilities.

If we consider that ancient society was the scene of fierce struggles between masters and slaves, rich and poor, imperialists and subject peoples, in which every rebel took his life in his hand; if we consider that one revolutionary leader after another, with his followers, met a violent end, often by the horrible punishment of crucifixion inflicted on rebels in slave societies (eight hundred Pharisees crucified at Jerusalem by Alexander Tannaeus, six thousand slave soldiers of Spartacus crucified along the Appian Way, two thousand Jewish rebels crucified by Varus); if we consider that Jews and Gentiles were not mutually isolated, but mingled daily in the Mediterranean cities, the poorer Jews propagating their vision of a coming Messiah and in the process assimilating it to the poorer Gentiles' dream of a redeeming god triumphant over death -- we shall not need to go to the signs of the zodiac for an explanation of the crucifixion and resurrection stories.[23]

We shall understand too why Judaism, rather than any existing mystery cult, had to provide the new movement with its ideology. The existing mystery cults, however popular in their origin, had one by one become part and parcel of Roman State religion. The cult of Dionysus, after a short attempt at suppression in the second century B.C., had been found politically innocuous and amalgamated with that of the Italian fertility-god Liber. The cult of Attis. which the Roman republic had tolerated among aliens and slaves, but banned to Roman citizens, was by Claudius opened to all and incorporated with the State religion. That of Isis, which the republic had suppressed again and again and which even Tiberius forbade in Italy, was soon afterwards freed from restrictions and established throughout the Roman world. All these cults could easily be fitted into the State religion, since all, however transformed to meet the needs of the urban masses, bore unmistakeable marks of their prehistoric peasant origin. Judaism alone had been deliberately expurgated and turned into an ideology aiming at a reign of righteousness on earth. For that

reason it could not be fitted into the religion of the Graeco-Roman ruling class, which deliberately exploited ancient ritual and myth as engines of government. For the same reason Judaism, with a little adaptation, was eminently capable of providing an ideology for the uprooted and disaffected masses of the Mediterranean cities. Much of the Gospel story can be explained as a fusion of the Jewish hope of a Messiah with legends of a redeeming god or of some martyred leader which were current among the masses towards the time of the Christian era.[24]

6. *The Historical Nucleus*

But when all this has been said (and mythicists have rendered a lasting service to history by saying it) there remain traces of history in the Gospel story. Take, for example, this passage from a source used by both Matthew and Luke:

" From the days of John the Baptist until now
The kingdom of God is taken by violence,
And violent men take it by force."[25]

Matthew here, as elsewhere, alters " kingdom of God " to " kingdom of heaven ". Luke softens down " is taken by violence " to " is preached ", and otherwise weakens the force of the passage. But Matthew is obviously nearer the original. We can imagine a second-century adapter softening the violence of the passage, but not putting it in where it had not existed.

Now John the Baptist is an historical individual. Josephus says that Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and tetrarch of Galilee and Transjordan from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, executed John without trial in order to prevent a revolt, since the people ' seemed ready to do anything " on John's advice;[26] and that the utter defeat of Antipas in 36 by the Arab king Aretas seemed to some a punishment for John's martyrdom. The authenticity of this passage has been denied, but on inadequate grounds. It was known to Origen in the third century. If a Christian had forged it in the period between Josephus and Origen, he would have followed the Gospels more closely than the passage in fact does. Josephus gives no date for the death of John; but it must have been before 36.

Though not an interpolation, the account of the Baptist in Josephus is undoubtedly doctored. We are told that John was a good man, a preacher of virtue, justice and piety, and that he bade the Jews " come together through baptism; for baptism would be acceptable to God if they made use of it not as an expiation of any sins, but as a purification of the body, the soul having been first purified by righteousness ".[27] This, as it stands, is unintelligible. Inculcation of cleanliness and godliness would not have led Antipas to fear revolution, unless that Roman puppet-prince was a maniac for dirt, which there is no reason to suppose. Something has been cut out. The Synoptic Gospels fill the gap. John proclaimed that the kingdom of God -- the revolutionary kingdom foretold by Daniel, which was to break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of the earth -- was at hand; that the Messiah would soon winnow the earth, garner the wheat and burn up the chaff in unquenchable fire. Baptism by total immersion in water -- a rite practised on the admission of proselytes to Judaism, a symbolic drowning, signifying death to paganism and resurrection to a new way of life -- was to be undergone by all John's recruits as a token of national purification from the pollution of Roman rule. It was also an occasion for mass rallies. The people were to " come together through baptism ". This could easily turn into a revolt. Antipag did no more than a client-prince would naturally do in executing the agitator.

The Gospels minimize the revolutionary significance of John by a romantic story in which he reproves Antipas for marrying his sister-in-law Herodias and incurs her deadly hate. The incestuous union is historical. But the rest of the story is made up. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, at the time when she is said to have danced John's head off, was the wife of her uncle Philip, tetrarch of north-eastern Palestine -- if indeed she was not his widow; for he died in 34. The Herods had more serious reasons for killing: Tohn than his censure of their tangled domestic relations.

The Gospel passage quoted earlier proves that the primitive Christians who repeated it regarded John's movement as revolutionary and their own movement as a continuation of John's. In both Matthew and Mark the preaching of Jesus too is summed up in the slogan: " The kingdom of God is at hand."[28] In the source from which Luke took his stories of the births

of John and Jesus, the destiny of both is foretold in frankly revolutionary language -- to " put down princes from thrones ", to " exalt them of low degree ", and to win for Israel " salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us ".[29]

Further evidence of the nature of the earliest Christianity is to be found in a source used by all three Synoptics. After encountering a rich man who refuses to abandon his possessions, Jesus says:

"'How hardly shall they that have riches
Enter into the kingdom of God? . . .
It is easier for a camel
To go through the eye of a needle,
Than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'
And they were exceedingly astonished,
Saying to him,
'Then who can be saved?'
Looking upon them, Jesus says,
'With men it is impossible,
But not with God:
For all things are possible with God.'
Peter began to say to him,
'Lo, we have left all,
And have followed thee.'
Said Jesus,
'Verily I say to you,
There is no man that has left
House, or brothers, or sisters,
Or mother, or father, or children, or lands,
For my sake, and for the gospel's sake,
But he shall receive a hundredfold,
Now in this time,
Houses, and brothers, and sisters,
And mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions,
And in the age to come eternal life.
But many that are first shall be last;
And the last first.'"[30]

It is instructive to see how the different Synoptics handle this passage. The above is the version of Mark. A source used by Matthew and Luke -- probably emanating from Palestine, where the twelve Apostles were held in honour and Paul was not -- contains a special promise to the twelve:

"You shall sit on twelve thrones,
Judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

But Matthew omits the promise of rewards "now in this time". Luke promises to those who leave house and home for the kingdom of God "manifold more in this time", but omits details.

It is inconceivable that the materialist promise of "houses and lands now" should have been inserted in the second century in a Gospel originally spiritual; but it is quite natural that an originally materialist promise should have been deleted. We see here an evolution from a material kingdom of God on earth to a spiritual kingdom beyond the grave. In Mark, Jesus promises his followers, at the cost of persecution for a time, houses, lands and human comradeship now, and eternal life hereafter. Luke deletes the details. Matthew deletes earthly rewards altogether and leaves only the promise of eternal life. John takes the final step by making Jesus say explicitly: "My kingdom is not of this world."[31] This evolution points to a movement originally more this-worldly and revolutionary than our much-edited Gospels describe.

Confirmation is to be found in the accounts of the Barabbas episode. This episode is itself incredible: no Roman governor in a disturbed province, and least of all such a one as Pilate, could have countenanced such a custom as the release of a political prisoner selected by the people. But the way in which this incredible story is told is nevertheless instructive. In Mark we read:

"There was one called Barabbas lying bound with the insurgents,
Men who in the insurrection had committed murder."[32]

Mark has previously mentioned no insurrection; yet he uses the definite article twice -- "*the* insurgents, *the* insurrection". It is inconceivable that the definite article should be used unless an insurrection

was mentioned at an earlier point in the original source. Mark has cut out the insurrection, but has forgotten to cut out the definite article. The other Synoptics correct his error. Matthew deletes all mention of the insurrection and says briefly: "They had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas." Luke explains that Barabbas was in prison "for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder". John merely remarks that Barabbas was a bandit. Here we see an evolution from a version in which an insurrection had been related to a version in which there is no insurrection -- or at any rate none involving Jesus. A curious passage in Luke, in which Jesus tells his disciples on the eve of the final tragedy to sell their cloaks and buy swords, may be a fragment left over from the original version. If we consider that in all the gospels Jesus rides into Jerusalem as Messianic king a few days before his death, that in three of the four he is welcomed with the seditious cry of *Hosanna* -- "Deliver us!" -- and that in all four the cross bears the superscription "King of the Jews", we can infer for ourselves the events which the original narrative related and which the Gospels suppressed.

Another sort of rehandling may be observed in passages which relate the miraculous. In describing the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, Mark says:

"Straightway coming up out of the water,
He saw the heavens rent asunder,
And the Spirit as a dove descending on him:
And a voice came out of the heavens,
'Thou art my beloved Son,
In thee I am well pleased.'"[33]

To prove that this was not a subjective experience of Jesus, but a real miracle, Matthew makes the divine voice address the bystanders and say: "This is my beloved Son."

In relating miraculous cures at Capernaum, Mark says:

"They brought to him all that were sick,
And that were possessed by demons . . .
And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases,
And cast out many demons."[34]

This suggests that not everyone brought to Jesus was cured. In Matthew the fault is corrected: "many" demoniacs and sick are brought, and Jesus heals "all". Luke goes one better: "all" the sick at Capernaum are brought, and "every one" is healed. Later, Mark makes a great multitude by the lake of Gennesareth follow Jesus, who heals "many"; in Matthew he heals "all".[35] In his native place, according to Mark, Jesus could work few cures owing to unbelief, and "marvelled".[36] In Matthew this is amended: "he did not many mighty works" in that faithless place, and he does not marvel. In Mark, Jesus cries on the cross that God has forsaken him. Matthew lets this stand; but Luke instead makes Jesus die commending his spirit to his Father.

In such passages Mark evidently preserves an older version, which Matthew often amends and Luke nearly always. It is inconceivable that Mark should have limited the power of an originally omnipotent Jesus. We are witnessing the progressive growth of a legend. Some miracles a Messiah had to perform. Miracles were in the air; Tacitus relates them of Vespasian. But in the earlier version the powers of the prophet are limited and fail him as he dies. Later the limitations are swept away to suit the taste of Christian congregations bent on refashioning Jesus in the likeness of a god.

Yet no Synoptic goes so far as formally to deify Jesus. That step is taken in the Fourth Gospel, where Jesus is God from the beginning, wearing only the outer form of a man, never tempted (the temptation story is suppressed), never marvelling, omnipotent and omniscient from first to last, and at length lays down his life after announcing his power to take it again. Thus the legend evolves from the less to the more marvellous, from a divine voice audible to Jesus only to a divine voice audible to all, from the cure of many patients to the cure of all, from surprised inability to cure unbelievers to a serene refusal to do so -- in short, from a man "approved of God"[37] to God who "became flesh and dwelt among us".[38] We may consequently, by a process analogous to mathematical extrapolation, infer at the beginning of this evolution a man round whom mythical matter gathered rather than a myth pure and simple.

The source of the Synoptic tradition seems to have been written down about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The references to that event in all the Synoptics are too specific to allow of an earlier date; and internal evidence shows that it must have been written down soon afterwards. This will appear if we scrutinize the passages where Jesus is made to prophesy the Jewish tragedy.

First, we have a passage all but identical in Matthew and Luke:

"Woe to thee, Chorazin!
Woe to thee, Bethsaida!
For if in Tyre and Sidon had been done
The mighty works which were done in you,
Long ago in sackcloth and ashes
They would have sat and repented.
Howbeit I say to you,
It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon
In the day of judgment than for you.
And thou, Capernaum,
Shalt thou be exalted to heaven?
Thou shalt be brought down to Hades."[39]

Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum are places along the shore of the lake of Gennesareth -- the scene of savage fighting between Jews and Romans in A.D. 67. In this passage their sufferings are treated as a punishment for their rejection of the Messiah of a generation before. The passage is absent in Mark. The fate of a few Galilean towns would not make the same impression at Rome, where that Gospel took shape, as in Palestine, where this passage was probably first written.

Next, we have a piece of invective varying somewhat in Matthew and Luke, but evidently based on a common source:

"Therefore I send to you
Prophets and wise men and scribes:
Some of them shall you kill and crucify;
And some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues,
And persecute from city to city:

That on you may come all the righteous blood
Shed on the earth
From the blood of Abel the righteous
To the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah,
Whom you slew between the sanctuary and the altar . . .
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Who kills the prophets,
And stones them that are sent to her!
How often would I have gathered thy children together,
Even as a hen gathers
Her chickens under her wings,
And you would not!
Behold, your house is left to you desolate.
For I say to you, you shall not see me
Henceforth, till you shall say,
'Blessed is he that comes
In the name of the Lord.'"[40]

This is not a discourse of Jesus; indeed it is not a discourse at all, but a prophecy written, like other prophecies, in rhythmical form. Near the end, in fact, the Greek drops into rhyme. The passage bears the imprint of the events of 66-70. " Zachariah son of Barachiah" has puzzled commentator after commentator. The Old Testament mentions a Zechariah who was stoned; but he was not the son of Barachiah; and as he died about 800 B.C., it is hard to see why he should be singled out as the last of a series of martyrs. The prophet Zechariah is called son of Berechiah; but we have no evidence that he was murdered. Josephus, however, mentions a Zacharias, son of Baruch, a rich citizen of Jerusalem, who was lynched in 68 "in the middle of the temple" as a suspected traitor. "Baruch" and "Barachiah" are variants of the same name. There can hardly be a doubt that this invective, put by an anachronism into the mouth of Jesus, links Zacharias as the latest innocent victim with Abel as the first. Luke, who edits his sources more freely than the other Synoptics, conceals the obvious anachronism by deleting "son of Barachiah", and in minor ways adapts the passage to the taste of Greek churches.

Lastly, we have a passage common to all three Synoptics, though Luke diverges in important particulars from the other two:

"'There shall not be left here Stone on stone,
Which shall not be thrown down. . . .'
And they asked him privately,
'Tell us, when shall these things be?
And what shall be the sign of thy coming,
And of the end of the age?'
And Jesus answering said to them,
'Take heed that none lead you astray.
Many shall come in my name,
Saying, "I am the Christ";
And shall lead many astray.
And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:
See that you are not troubled:
For it must needs come to pass;
But the end is not yet.
For nation shall rise against nation,
And kingdom against kingdom:
Then shall be famines and earthquakes in places;
But all these things are the beginning of travail . . .
But when you see the abomination of desolation
Standing where he ought not
(Let him that reads understand)
Then let them that are in Judaea flee_tajthe mountains . . .
But woe to them that are with child
And to them that give suck in those days!
And pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on a sabbath:
For then shall be great tribulation,
Such as has not been from the beginning of the world
Until now, nor ever shall be.
And except those days had been shortened,
No flesh would have been saved:
But for the elect's sake
Those days shall be shortened . . .
But immediately after the tribulation of those days,
The sun shall be darkened,

And the moon shall not give her light,
And the stars shall fall from heaven,
And the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.
. . . And they shall see the Son of Man
Coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory . . .
Now from the fig tree learn her parable:
When her branch is now become tender and puts forth leaves,
You know that the summer is nigh;
Even so also, when you see all these things,
Know that he is nigh at the doors.
Verily I say unto you,
This generation shall not pass away,
Until all these things are accomplished.
Heaven and earth shall pass away:
But my words shall not pass away.'"[41]

This, again, is not a discourse of Jesus, nor a discourse at all, but (as the parenthesis, "Let him that reads understand", shows) a written prophecy. We are reading the outpourings of a prophet carried away by the last agony of Jerusalem. We watch with him the closing scenes of the tragedy -- one fanatic after another setting up as Messiah and winning a following: wars and rumours of wars from end to end of the Roman world in the "year of four emperors" which followed the death of Nero; famine, the accompaniment of a disordered society; earthquakes, such as that of 60, which overthrew Laodicea in Asia Minor, or that of 63 which demolished much of Pompeii and heralded the fatal eruption of 79; the Roman eagles storming Jerusalem; men, women and children fleeing to the mountains from the Roman scourge; the temple burnt to the ground; a nation foundering in misery. The prophet looks for divine intervention, all other hope having sunk below the horizon.

In the main Matthew is closest to the original source. Mark does not diverge very far; but Luke's variations are striking. In the original source the upheavals of 66-70 are called "the beginning of travail" -- the pangs which are to issue in the birth of a new world. By the time when Luke wrote (at the beginning of the second century) it was clear that the Jewish

revolt had been nothing of the kind. Luke, therefore, a less careless editor than Matthew or Mark, deletes these words.

In describing the Roman invasion of Judaea Mark preserves an older wording than Matthew. The "abomination of desolation" stands "where he ought not": the Roman eagles are around Jerusalem. In Matthew the "abomination" stands "in the holy place": the city has already fallen. Or the more precise wording may have been substituted in the second century after Hadrian had rebuilt Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina and erected a temple of Jupiter on the site of the demolished temple of Jahveh.

In the original source the fall of Jerusalem is to be followed "immediately" by the signs which portend the coming of the Son of Man. A very few years were enough to falsify this prediction; and that fact helps to date it. Matthew nevertheless lets it pass. Mark deletes "immediately"; but retains the vaguer phrase "in those days". Luke rewrites the whole passage and says that Jerusalem will be "trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" -- implying a much longer interval. Yet all three Synoptics, even the relatively careful Luke, retain the flagrantly falsified prophecy that "this generation shall not pass away until all these things are accomplished". All three in another part of the Gospel retain (with inessential variations) a no less falsified prophecy in which Jesus is made to say:

"There are some of them that stand here.
Who shall in no wise taste of death.
Till they see the Son ot Man
Coming in his kingdom."[42]

So strong was the hold of traditional phrases on Christian congregations, and so careless of contradictions were those who edited their literature!

Passages like this, common to all three Synoptics, appear to be based on a source dating from about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If they put prophecies such as the above into the mouth of a man said to have lived some forty years earlier, the inference that such a man

existed is very strong. This does not mean that the utterances attributed to him are authentic. Forty years are ample time for the growth of a legend. But it means that the legend had roots not only in prehistoric myth, but in history as well.

7. *Jewish Evidence*

We naturally look to non-Christian sources for confirmation of this conclusion. And immediately we encounter a difficulty. The extant writings of Josephus, the only first-century historian of Palestine who has come down to us, contain only two references to Jesus. One is a flagrant forgery. It refers to Jesus in terms which only a Christian could have used. Jesus is "a wise man, if indeed it be lawful to call him a man". He is "a worker of marvels, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure". He is "the Christ". He rose from death on the third day; and "this and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him" had been predicted by the prophets.[43] Origen in the third century knows the paragraph of Josephus on John the Baptist, but not this paragraph on Jesus, for he writes of Josephus as "not believing in Jesus as the Christ".[44] The first writer to cite the passage is Eusebius in the fourth century -- which dates the interpolation.

The other reference to Jesus in Josephus is a short statement that in A.D. 62 the Jewish high priest, Ananus, executed "James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ, and certain others".[45] This is cited three times by Origen and may be genuine. The only objection to it is that it would be odd if Josephus referred to Jesus here and nowhere else. Mythicists accordingly reject both passages; and the resultant "silence of Josephus" is one of their trump cards.

But the argument proves too much. Josephus, apart from these two passages, is silent not only on Jesus, but on the whole Christian movement. If this proves that Jesus never existed, it equally proves that no Christians existed in the time of Josephus. Yet we know that they did. We have not only the New Testament, not only the statements of Tacitus and Suetonius that Christians were executed under Nero, but the evidence of

the younger Pliny, who as governor of Bithynia in 111-113 came across people who "had once been Christians, but had now (some above three years, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced the profession"[46] Twenty years from 111-113 take us back to 91-93, the very date at which Josephus wrote his *Antiquities* and is supposed not to have known of any Christians! The more rigorous and vigorous mythicists get over the difficulty by denouncing not only the whole of the New Testament, but the *Annals* of Tacitus, the reference to the Christians in Suetonius and the despatch of Pliny to Trajan as one and all forgeries. Such methods are a caricature of Rationalism. It is a pity that they should be used to support a theory which, as we have seen, contains important elements of truth.

We shall understand the silence of Josephus on Christianity if we consider his background and the purpose with which he wrote. Josephus was a wealthy Jewish priest who in the national revolt of 66-70 collaborated with the Romans and was rewarded with Roman citizenship, a pension and a considerable estate. He wrote his *Jewish War* with the express object of conveying to the Jews and other subjects of the Empire the futility of resistance to Rome. His work was duly approved by Vespasian and Titus; and he continued in imperial favour under Domitian, in whose reign he wrote the *Antiquities.* To influence his countrymen Josephus stresses his Jewish orthodoxy. But to retain the favour or his Roman patrons he has to insist that Jewish orthodoxy is politically innocuous. He therefore omits as far as possible any reference to the Messianic movement. Only once does he allude to it. Towards the end of the *Jewish War* he mentions as one motive for the revolt of the Jews "an ambiguous oracle found in their sacred writings, that about that time one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth", and says that it was fulfilled by the accession of Vespasian.[47] And that is all. Josephus suppresses the fact, known to us from the Dead Sea scrolls, that the Essenes were Messianists. Though inference from the obviously doctored text is hazardous, it seems that he suppresses John the Baptist's preaching of the kingdom of God. And, so far as we can say with certainty, he suppresses the fact of the existence of the Christian movement.

So far as we can say with certainty! But it is rash to dogmatize. The works of Josephus have come down to us through Christian hands. Those who interpolate can also delete. After Christianity became the religion of the Empire, anti-Christian writings were drastically censored. To this censorship we owe the loss of all but fragments of the anti-Christian works of Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles and Julian. If Josephus wrote a hostile account of the Christian movement, either the censorship destroyed it, or Christian copyists, anticipating the censorship, substituted something more agreeable to the new regime. The extant text of the *Antiquities* looks as if something of this sort had occurred.

Josephus relates a series of troubles which befell the Jews under the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Pilate belonged to the well-to-do Italian middle class which had risen to power under the early emperors in place of the old Roman aristocracy. He was an unimaginative imperialist of an only too familiar type -- the type that tells us even today that Asiatics understand only force and mistake conciliation for weakness. His first act was to insult Jewish feeling by sending a detachment of troops to Jerusalem with standards bearing the image of the emperor. After a five days' demonstration by the people before Pilate's headquarters at Caesarea, the standards were withdrawn. Having thus set the Jews on edge, Pilate proceeded to apply part of the temple treasure to the construction of an aqueduct. This led to a noisy demonstration which Pilate dispersed by means of soldiers in mufti armed with bludgeons, many Jews being killed. Here in the text of Josephus follows the interpolated paragraph on Jesus. Then, continues Josephus, more trouble befell the Jews. Before relating it he tells a story, with no apparent bearing on Jewish history, of the seduction of a lady named Paulina in the temple of Isis at Rome, which led to the suppression of the Isis cult by Tiberius. It is hard to see why this story is inserted. It has been suggested that at this point there was originally a hostile account of Jesus, in which Josephus ridiculed the rumour of his supernatural birth by showing how divine conceptions were fraudulently counterfeited. After the victory of Christianity somebody deleted the account and interpolated the present paragraph on Jesus, but omitted to delete the Paulina story. If so, the later reference to Jesus, which is attested by Origen, can be accepted as genuine. Whether this be

so or not, the " silence of Josephus" is not a conclusive argument for the myth theory.

Later Jewish evidence is mainly contained in the Talmud, a collection of rabbinical teaching compiled at dates ranging from the second to the fifth century. As the Talmud is not history, but a commentary on Jewish law and ritual intended exclusively for Jews, none but incidental references to Christianity can be expected. The Mishnah, or portion of the Talmud completed in the second or early in the third century, nowhere explicitly mentions Christianity. The Gemara, or supplementary matter added from the third to the fifth century, contains an anonymous account of a certain Jesus called the Nazoraean *(Notzri)*who was executed under Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.) for witchcraft and rebellion. This is merely the answer of the rabbis to the odious charge of judicial murder flung at them by Christians. Yet it is singular that they do not deny the execution of Jesus, and even more singular that they date it so early. Something of the kind may really have happened then. Alexander Jannaeus executed many rebels; and we know from Josephus that he was fond of crucifying his victims. Or the rabbis, who were never good at dates, may have confused Alexander with his son Aristobulus, who, as we saw, executed an Essene leader shortly before 63 B.C. The Essenes and the Nazoraeans were kindred sects and probably had a common origin.

But the Talmud contains a more important piece of evidence, not anonymous and referring to the first century. We read in it that Eliezer ben-Hyrcanus, a well-known rabbi who flourished between A.D. 90 and 130, told his contemporary, the famous rabbi Akiba, this story:

"I once went on the upper street of Sepphoris; there I met one of the disciples of Jesus the Nazoraean, named Jacob of Kephar Sechaniah, who said to me: 'In your law it is written: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore into the house of thy God." Is it permissible to use such hire to make a privy for the high priest?' I did not know what to answer him. Then he said to me: 'This is what Jesus the Nazoraean taught me: "Of the hire of a harlot hath she gathered it, and unto the hire of a harlot shall they return it: it has come from dirt, and to the place of dirt it shall go." ' "[48]

Here, if we may credit the Talmud, we have evidence dating from the first century. Eliezer relates an encounter with an actual follower of Jesus, who quotes a sarcastic attack on the priesthood of Jerusalem made long ago by Jesus himself. But can we credit the Talmud? In this case perhaps we can. It is hard to assign any motive for the invention of this story by a Jew. The Jewish people had reason enough to hate the priesthood of the first century; but if later rabbis wanted to attack it, they would hardly have put the attack into the mouth of Jesus, whose following by that time they hated far more. Probably, therefore, Eliezer's story is authentic. If so, this is evidence that Jesus the Nazoraean lived and attacked the Jewish priesthood at some date in the first century not far removed from the traditional date.

Some indirect evidence may be added here. In Matthew there is a story (told in no other Gospel) of the posting of a guard at the sepulchre of Jesus to prevent the theft of the body. After the resurrection the priests bribe the soldiers to say that the disciples stole the body while they slept. This story, says the evangelist, was current among the Jews in his own day. Here we have fiction met by counter-fiction. The Christian story of the empty tomb is countered by a Jewish story of the stolen body, and that by a Christian story of the guard. The fact that such fiction and counter-fiction were exchanged early in the second century, when Matthew was compiled, shows at least that the existence of Jesus was common ground to Jews and Christians. If his very existence could be denied, why did not the Jews deny it?

So incommoded are some mythicists by this fact that in trying to rebut it they fall, one after another, into the simplest booby-trap ever set for the unwary. About the middle of the second century the Christian apologist Justin wrote an imaginary dialogue between a Jewish rabbi named Trypho and himself, in which Trypho attacks and Justin defends Christianity. In the dialogue Trypho, arguing that Jesus cannot be the Messiah, says:

"The Christ, if he is born and exists anywhere, is unknown to others and even to himself, and has no power until Elijah comes and anoints him and makes him manifest to all. You have accepted an idle report and

fashioned a sort of Christ for yourselves, and for his sake inconsiderately throw away your lives."[49]

The meaning is plain. According to a Jewish belief the prophet Elijah will miraculously return to earth in order to anoint and proclaim the Messiah. Till then the Messiah, whoever he may be, is unknown. Jesus was not proclaimed by Elijah; therefore he is not the Messiah, and his followers are fools for their pains. Straight enough, one would have thought! But not straight enough for some mythicists. By omitting the words after "unknown" to the end of the first sentence, the passage may be garbled so as to read: "The Christ, if he is born and exists anywhere, is unknown." By stretching a further point and supposing that Trypho, a Jew, could call Jesus "the Christ", he may be made into a good mythicist. Incredible as it must seem, some otherwise reputable scholars play this trick with the text to prove their point. It is dangerous to be wedded to a theory -- even to a theory which has played a progressive part in its day.

8. *Pagan Evidence*

Tacitus, relating Nero's persecution of the Christians, states that Christ, after whom the sect was named, "suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate".[50] Some mythicists try to dispose of this evidence by reviving the theory of a nineteenth-century crank that the *Annals* of Tacitus were forged by a Florentine scholar of the fifteenth century, Poggio Bracciolini. This theory was exploded by the subsequent discovery of coins and inscriptions confirming facts previously known only from the *Annals.*

Other mythicists, admitting the bulk of the *Annals* to be genuine, pronounce the account of the Neronian persecution a Christian interpolation. But it is hard to see why any Christian should have written it. It is violently hostile to Christianity, calling it a "mischievous superstition" and its devotees "criminals" who deserve "extreme and exemplary punishment" for their "abominations" and their "hatred against mankind".[51] Those are not the sentiments of a Christian interpolator, but of a conservative Roman senator.

Others, accepting the passage as genuine, urge that Tacitus only repeated what he heard from Christians -- either at Rome or as proconsul of Asia in 114. But why should Tacitus rely on Christian evidence? He was born under Nero, entered public life under Vespasian and held high office under Domitian, Nerva and Trajan. He had ample opportunities in the last quarter of the first century of hearing the official view of the origin of Christianity without going for information to the adherents of what to him was a criminally subversive movement. The statement in the *Annals* is exactly the sort of information which we should expect him to pick up from his colleagues in office and in the senate.

The fact is that no ancient author whose opinion is known to us questions the historicity of Jesus. The statement of the younger Pliny, governor of Bithynia and Pontus from 111 to 113, that Christians in his province sang hymns "to Christ as to a god" tells us what they thought of Jesus, not what Pliny thought. Half a century later the satirist Lucian refers to Jesus as a "crucified sophist".[52] Celsus, a Platonic philosopher who about 178 wrote against the Christians a work known only from Origen's reply, calls Jesus a "ringleader of sedition".[53] Hierocles, an imperial governor who attacked Christianity at the end of the third century in a work quoted by Lactantius, describes Jesus as a bandit leader with nine hundred followers. It is arguable that Lucian, Celsus and Hierocles had no independent information, but merely drew their own conclusions from the Gospels. This is consistent with Lucian's brief allusion. But Celsus, from the fragments quoted by Origen, stands out as an able and careful writer, and Hierocles had access to official sources. The epithet "bandit", invariably applied by imperialists to revolutionaries, suggests that these writers had access to accounts independent of the New Testament.

Pagan and Jewish evidence, so far as it survives, as well as the internal evidence of the Synoptic Gospels, is against the undiluted myth theory, though it does not affect the important contribution which mythicism must make to any true solution.

9. *Conclusion*

The earliest strata of the Gospels -- proved to be such by internal evidence and by a comparative study of the Synoptics -- point back to a revolutionary movement led first by John the Baptist and then by Jesus the Nazoraean, and aimed at the overthrow of Roman and Herodian rule in Palestine and the establishment of an earthly "kingdom of God" in which the first would be last and the last first, the rich sent empty away and the poor filled with good things and given houses and land. The followers of John and Jesus were called *Notzrim*or Nazoraeans, not from the village of Nazareth, but from the Hebrew word *natzar*, "to keep" -- either as keepers of secrets or as strict keepers of the Jewish law. This last is rather suggested by the saying preserved in Matthew v, 20:

"Except your righteousness shall exceed
That of the scribes and Pharisees,
You shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Nazoraeans were probably an offshoot of the Essenes. This appears from the close similarity between many of their rules. We have already seen that according to Epiphanius the "Nasaraeans" used the same sacred book as the "Ossaeans". The Essenes, says Josephus, "are despisers of riches. . . . Nor is there anyone to be found among them who has more than another; for it is a law among them that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order. ... So there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren".[54] Similarly in the Synoptic Gospels:

"Where your treasure is,
There will your heart be also . . .
No man can serve two masters . . .
You cannot serve God and mammon . . .
Seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness,
And all these things shall be added to you . . .
Whatsoever thou hast, sell,
And give to the poor,
And thou shalt have treasure in heaven:
And come, follow me."[55]

The Essenes, says Josephus, "carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though they take their weapons with them for fear of thieves. Accordingly there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers and to provide garments and other necessaries for them. . . . Nor do they allow the change of garments or of shoes till they are first entirely torn to pieces or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell anything among themselves, but everyone of them gives what he has to him that wants it, and receives from him again in lieu what may be convenient for himself".[56] Similarly in the Synoptics we read:

"Get you no gold, nor silver,
Nor brass in your girdles;
No wallet for the journey,
Nor two coats,
Nor shoes, nor staff:
For the labourer is worthy of his food.
And into whatsoever city or village you shall enter,
Search out who in it is worthy;
And there abide till you go forth."[57]

The Essenes, says Josephus, "dispense their anger after a just manner and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity and are ministers of peace; whatsoever they say is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say that he who cannot be believed without swearing by God is already condemned".[58]Similarly in the Synoptics anger and oaths are forbidden.

Josephus, it will be noted, says that the Essenes carry weapons to defend themselves from thieves. From the part which he assigns to them in the struggle with Rome, it seems that they could put their weapons to other uses too and were less absolute pacifists than is usually made out. Similarly in the Synoptics, in spite of the injunctions to turn the other cheek and love our enemies, we see a movement of which the revolutionary character has been almost obliterated in the extant records. "From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of God is taken by violence." It is significant that the Gospels, while they often attack the

Pharisees and Sadducees, never attack the Zealots, and that a Zealot is included in the lists of the twelve apostles. It is possible for a movement to impose a rigid discipline on its members in the matter of private quarrels without renouncing the use of force in the common cause.

The movement of John the Baptist was nipped in the bud by Antipas. A Nazoraean attempt to seize Jerusalem led to the crucifixion of Jesus by Pilate. The date of these events is unknown; but they must have taken place before 36, in which year Antipas was defeated by Aretas, and Pilate was recalled to Rome. The Essenes, as we have seen, even before the Christian era believed in a Messiah who would return from the dead; and so did the Nazoraeans. According to the Synoptics Jesus was believed by some to be John the Baptist risen from death, and by others to be Elijah or one of the ancient prophets. The whole history of the Messianic idea from Daniel onwards shows that it was the projection of the hopes of a revolutionary movement which had taken root among simple and ignorant people, attaching itself to leader after leader and able to survive the death of many such. We need not wonder that it survived the death of Jesus. In the words of the bitterly conservative and hostile Tacitus, "a most mischievous superstitition, checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular".[59]

This reconstruction in no way diminishes the importance of the mythicist contribution to the history of Christianity. Traditional Christianity, and any attempt to trace traditional Christianity to a unique personal founder, alike break down on the evidence. The religion officially established in the fourth century, for which history has to account, was not the cult of a dead Jewish Messiah, but the cult of a redeemer-god who differed from others only in having a local habitation in first-century Palestine and a Jewish name with Messianic associations. In formulating the creeds of the Church the Pauline Epistles and the discourses of the Fourth Gospel were to play a far greater part than the revolutionary and apocalyptic propaganda of the Synoptics. The Synoptic Gospels themselves were edited and re-edited ("three times, four times and many

times", says the acute critic Celsus[60]) into a ragged conformity with Pauline theology. Somehow a historical individual of whom we know very little, but whose existence we infer from the evidence of Tacitus and the Talmud and from an analysis of the Synoptic documents, became the subject of demonstrably mythical stories -- stories of an incarnate God; a virgin birth; a mystical death, burial and resurrection reminiscent of slain gods of prehistoric origin; a mystical feeding of his people on his flesh, turned to bread, and his blood, turned to wine, by which they became partakers in his eternal life. Not only so, but in centres remote from Palestine, such as the Aegean cities where the Pauline Epistles took shape, the myth of the incarnate God, and not the career of a historic Jesus, was the basis of the cult from the first. Paul knows no more of the Nazoraean Jesus than the Synoptics know of the pre-existent Christ. The social genesis of these contradictory factors and the history of their fusion into traditional Christianity constitute the problem to be solved.

Notes

1 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* III, 39. By "Hebrew" Papias probably meant Aramaic, the vernacular language of Palestine at that time. A Greek would need to be very erudite to know the difference.

2 Romans i, 3.

3 I Corinthians ix, 5; Galatians i, 19.

4 2 Corinthians iv, 4.

5 Colossians i, 15.

6 1 Cor. viii, 6.

7 I Corinthians ii, 6-8.

8 Romans xiii, I.

9 See next chapter.

10 Revelation i, 17; ii, 8; xiii, 8; xix, 19-21; xxii, 13.

11 *Neue Zeit,* No. XIII, 36.

12 L. Gordon Rylands, *The Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity,* chap. VI. Compare the Pauline formula: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

13 See note 12.

14 Wisdom ii-iii.

15 *Sibylline Oracles*, V, 256-258.

16 Matthew ii, 23; Luke i, 26; ii, 39; iv, 29.

17 The difference in spelling is unimportant. The Hebrew letter *tzade* had no Greek equivalent and could be represented by both "s" and "z".

18 Matthew xxvi, 56; Mark xiv, 50.

19 Luke, xxiii, 49.

20 I Corinthians xv, 20.

21 John ii, 4.

22 In the Homeric hymn the infant Hermes steals the oxen from Apollo -- a touch of Homeric humour dating from an age of border war and cattle-lifting.

23 "We still bow the knee before the Cross, which, like the Orphic Wheel, was once the symbol of a contemporary reality." Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens,* chap. IX.

24 I have omitted reference to Mithraism for two reasons, (1) The vogue of Mithraism came later. (2) Mithra, though in many ways a passable "pagan Christ", did *not* die or rise again.

25 Matthew xi, 12. Cf. Luke xvi, 16.

26 Josephus, *Antiquities,* XVIII, 5, 2.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Matthew iv, 17; Mark i, 14-15.

29 Luke i, 52, 71.

30 Mark x, 23, 25-31. Cf. Matthew xix, 23-30; Luke xviii, 24-30; xxii, 28-30.

31 John xviii, 36.

32 Mark xv, 7. Cf. Matthew xxvii, 16; Luke xxiii, 19.

33 Mark i, 10-11. Cf. Matthew iii, 17.

34 Mark i, 32, 34. Cf. Matthew viii, 16; Luke iv, 40.

35 Mark iii, 10. Cf. Matthew xii, 15.

36 Mark vi, 5-6. Cf. Matthew xiii, 58.

37 Acts ii, 22.

38 John i, 14.

39 Matthew xi, 21-23; Luke x, 13-15.

40 Matthew xxiii, 34-39. Cf. Luke xi, 49-51; xiii, 34-35.

41 Matthew xxiv, 2-8, 15-16, 19-22, 29-30, 32-35; Mark xiii, 2-8, 14, 17-20, 24-26, 28-31. Cf. Luke xxi, 6-11, 21, 23, 25-27, 29-33.

42 Matthew xvi, 28; Mark ix, I; Luke ix, 27.

43 Josephus, *Antiquities,* XVIII, 3, 3.

44 Origen, *Against Celsus*, I, 47.

45 Josephus, *Antiquities,* XX, 9, 1.

46 Pliny, *Letters,* X, 97.

47 Josephus, *Jewish War,* VI, 5, 4.

48 *Aboda Zara,* 16b-17a, quoted by Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist,* Appendix III.

49 Justin, *Dialogue,* 8.

50 Tacitus, *Annals,* XV, 44.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Lucian, *The Death of Peregrinus,* XIII.

53 Origen, *Against Celsus,* VIII, 14. Sec chapter VIII, §8.

54 Josephus, *Jewish War,* II, 8, 3.

55 Matthew vi, 21, 24, 33; xix, 21. Cf. Mark x, 21; Luke xii, 31, 34; xvi, 13; xviii, 22.

56 Josephus, *Jewish War,* II, 8, 4.

57 Matthew x, 9-11. Cf. Mark vi, 8-10; Luke ix, 3-4; x, 4-7.

58 Josephus, *Jewish War,* II, 8, 6.

59 Tacitus, *Annals,* XV, 44.

60 Origen, *Against Celsus,* II, 27.

CHAPTER VI

PAUL

1. Prelude to Paul

We have seen that the Jewish synagogues of the "dispersion" both influenced and were influenced by the pagan world in which they had grown up. The main effect of this interaction was the diffusion among the slaves, freedmen and poorer freemen of the Mediterranean cities of the hope of a catastrophic overthrow of the Roman Empire, to be followed by the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, such as we find in the Sibylline Oracles, and such as led to the expulsion of the Jews from Italy as a menace to the Roman peace under the emperors Tiberius and Claudius.

But in the complex society of the ancient world Jewish propaganda had other reactions of a different kind. Middle-class Jews could not be expected to welcome the gospel of revolution. They and such Gentiles as they could influence, however much they deplored the cruelty and corruption of slave civilization and however much they themselves were exploited by its organ, the Roman State, had still something to lose and nothing to gain by its violent overthrow and sought a solution short of catastrophe. As Graeco-Roman society, like all class societies, carried within it the seeds of its own destruction, no such solution was in fact possible, and these aspirations therefore took a mystical and escapist form.

The result was a movement which eventually came to be known as Gnosticism from the Greek word *gnosis*, "knowledge". Though the name "Gnostic" is not used until the second century A.D., the movement is pre-Christian. The main characteristics of the Gnostics are firstly, their claim to a knowledge of God attainable only by "spiritual" persons and not by the majority of mankind, and secondly, their ascription of the evil in the world to the nature of matter itself and their rejection, therefore, of any possibility of general betterment on this side of the grave.

Though not usually reckoned among the Gnostics, Philo is the most distinguished representative of this tendency and the oldest whose works are extant. He was a wealthy Jew of Alexandria, steeped in Greek culture, and flourished in the first half of the first century. In A.D. 40, when the emperor Caligula nearly provoked a revolt by insisting that the Jews should pay him divine honours, Philo was sent by the Jews of Alexandria at the head of a deputation to plead with the imperial lunatic, and has left us a graphic account of the interview. Most of his works are devoted to an attempt to restate Judaism in terms calculated to appeal to Greek philosophers.

For this purpose Philo treats the Pentateuch as a metaphysical allegory intelligible only to the "spiritual" minority, and all but ignores the revolutionary literature of the prophets. The God of the Jews is identified with the absolute of the metaphysicians -- with pure "being" of which no quality can be predicated. This naturally involves Philo in difficulties; for if no quality can be predicated of pure being, to call it "God" is no more justifiable than to call it "matter". Nevertheless, at the cost of a contradiction, the knowledge of God has to be vindicated.

Philo gets out of the difficulty by distinguishing between the ineffable God and the *logos* ("discourse", "reason", "thought") by which he generates the visible universe. This doctrine had a long history. As far back as the fifth century B.C. Heraclitus of Ephesus, dissatisfied with the rather naive materialism of earlier Ionian philosophers, had postulated a reason (*logos*) or law of motion and change. Heraclitus is still a materialist: his law of change is the law of matter itself. It is tempting to call him the first dialectical materialist; but that would imply too much. He was an ancient, not a modern, and had not the scientific equipment to verify his theory; but it remains a brilliant anticipation. With Plato in the fourth century B.C., writing for a ruling class long divorced from all productive activity, philosophy becomes idealistic. Mind or reason, the supreme principle in the universe, has nothing in common with matter: its work is to impose its own pattern or form on a matter which is formless. The Stoics of the third century B.C. -- men of the people, as Plato was not -- reverted to the materialism of Heraclitus, but in an equivocal form which lent itself easily to religious interpretation. They make no bones about calling *logos* (reason, the law of nature) "God" or "Zeus". By it everything develops; by it man becomes a living soul; by it he enters into social relations which transcend the decadent city-states of antiquity and extend to all mankind, Greek and barbarian, male and female, bond and free. This idea of world-citizenship was the chief bequest of the Stoics to posterity.

It was in terms of Stoicism, strongly diluted with Plato's idealism, that Jewish intellectuals like Philo tried to allegorize the Pentateuch. The creative word by which in Genesis God calls into being day and night, sea and land, sun, moon and stars, living things and man, is a symbol of the divine reason (*logos*) which imposes form on formless matter. The breath of life breathed by

God into man is his immortal soul, imprisoned for a time in a mortal body by mortifying which he may rise again to God. The lives of the Hebrew patriarchs are moral allegories; and so on.

Philo's metaphysics are shot with a religious emotion hard to fit into any rational philosophy. The *logos* is more than a mere attribute of God. Philo personifies it as the "firstborn Son of God", a "second God", the "mediator" between God and the world, the dispenser of heavenly food to worthy souls. Holy men such as Moses are the *logos* incarnate. The rock from which Moses draws water, and the manna which the Israelites eat in the desert, are both symbols of the *logos*. It is unlikely that these ideas originated with Philo. They show that among some Jewish intellectuals of the "dispersion" the metaphysical*logos* was already taking on the characteristics of a mystery-god.

Since for Philo the Pentateuch is a metaphysical parable, and parables are not meant to be taken literally, the logical course would have been to cease to take it literally as history or law. Philo did not go that length, but he tells us that some contemporaries, whom he does not name, did. These were the people later known as Gnostics. Like Philo, they regarded matter as evil, and man as temporarily imprisoned in it and, with the help of the *logos*, working out his redemption. But unlike Philo, they rejected Judaism root and branch, regarding its myth and ritual as, at best, allegories intelligible to a "spiritual" elite, and its literal application as gross materialism. To Philo and the Gnostics alike the revolutionary propaganda of the kingdom of God on earth was alien and obnoxious.

Gnosticism in this form was neither suitable nor intended for mass propaganda. But in the second quarter of the first century events were driving the Gnostics to descend from their ivory tower and speak a language which the people could understand. After the troubles of Pilate's procuratorship came in 40 the mad order of Caligula that his statue should be placed in the temple at Jerusalem. According to Josephus this led to a mass strike of Jewish peasants; according to Tacitus, to an armed revolt. As it is unlikely that a peasant strike in the circumstances would remain passive, Tacitus is probably right. Only the assassination of Caligula early in 41 put an end to the affair.

Claudius, who was raised to power by the soldiers and people of Rome in the teeth of the senate, was one of the more liberal emperors. He reformed certain of the worst abuses of Roman slavery, and broadened the basis of imperialism by opening citizenship and the senate to many provincials and even freedmen. He reverted to indirect rule in Palestine and restored the kingdom of Herod the Great to his grandson, Herod Agrippa. But the day was past when such manoeuvres could for long conciliate the Jewish masses. Agrippa, Romanized prince though he was, had to woo the people by demagogy which his grandfather would have scorned. According to a story in the Mishnah, while reading Deuteronomy at one of the festivals Agrippa burst into tears at the text: "Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother." The people cried out: "Fear not, Agrippa! Thou art our brother." By this kind of comedy he conciliated the Pharisees and isolated the now more dangerous Nazoraean Messianists. He even played at nationalism by strengthening the defences of Jerusalem and calling a conference of Asiatic vassal-princes at Tiberias. On his death in 44 Claudius clamped down on the nationalist movement and put Palestine again under Roman procurators.

A series of famines contributed to deepen the crisis. In 42 there was a great famine in Egypt; in 46 or 47 another in Judaea; and in 51 food shortage led to demonstrations against the emperor in Rome itself. The result was mounting revolutionary excitement in every centre of organized Jewry. Soon after the death of Agrippa a fanatic named Theudas, exploiting the Joshua legend, undertook to lead a multitude dry-shod over the Jordan. They were dispersed by cavalry and Theudas taken and beheaded. A little later two sons of Judas of Galilee, the revolutionary leader of A.D. 6, were arrested and crucified. Later, probably in 49, Claudius took the step already mentioned of expelling the Jews from Rome because they "constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus".[1] If Messianic ferment simmered simultaneously in Palestine and Rome, there can hardly have been a ghetto in the Mediterranean which was unaffected.

2. *Paul -- The Documents*

These years of deepening crisis were contemporary with the early missionary activities of Paul and his associates. Our only authorities for the career of Paul are the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles. These have to be sifted with considerable care.

The Acts are a continuation of the Third Gospel and, like it, were written at the beginning of the second century, when many Gospels were already in circulation.[2] In the Acts, as in the Gospels, miracle runs riot. And the miracles exhibit a pattern. Peter and Paul perform similar miracles. Each cures a man lame from birth. Each is miraculously freed from prison. Each raises a dead person to life. Each cures a multitude of sick people and demoniacs without contact -- Peter by his shadow, Paul by handkerchiefs and aprons taken from his person. Further, in the

Acts there is not a particle of difference between the teaching of Peter and that of Paul. Both proclaim the same historical Jesus as the Christ, risen from the dead and saviour of the world.

But in certain passages of the Acts written in the first person (known as the "we" passages) and apparently based on a travel diary, we seem to be dealing with an eyewitness and are on firmer ground. Even here we have to be careful to distinguish between actual "we" passages and matter in close juxtaposition to them. Thus Paul's miraculous escape from prison at Philippi immediately follows a "we" passage. The raising of Eutychus, the escape from a snake-bite at Malta and other miracles at Malta are embedded in "we" matter. Evidently even the travel diary has been "written up" in the Acts as we have them. Nevertheless the "we" passages may be accepted in the main as historical. Much of them consists of a dry itinerary which there can have been no motive for inventing. The "we" passages contain very little indication of the content of Paul's teaching.

Our other source is the Pauline Epistles. None of these in the exact form in which we have them is likely to be wholly the work of Paul. Between Paul's day and the first collection of Epistles (made by the Gnostic Marcion about 140) there was an interval of eighty years during which they were extensively rehandled. Not only were many parts put into rhythmical form to enable simple people to memorize them, but pieces of different origin and authorship were combined under a common title. Nevertheless the Pauline Epistles (except the late concoctions to Timothy and Titus) are in the main independent of the Acts and can be used to check their statements. They differ surprisingly from the Acts in many points of history and doctrine. This will appear when we deal with the documents in their historical context.[3]

3. *Paul of Tarsus -- Acts v. Galatians*

When we have sorted out what is demonstrably early from what is demonstrably late in the Pauline Epistles, and combined the early matter in the Epistles with the "we" passages in the Acts and so much of the rest as can be fitted in, the following facts emerge. In the middle years of the first century -- years of economic crisis in various parts of the Roman Empire, and of growing political strain between, on the one hand, the imperial authorities and, on the other, the Jewish masses and the many influenced by Jewish propaganda -- certain Jewish and semi-Jewish missionaries are found propagating a new mystery-cult in Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. The best known of these missionaries is Paul, but he was not the first in the field. He himself speaks of Andronicus and Junias (or Junia) as "of note among the apostles" and "in Christ before me."[4] The travel diarist of the Acts speaks of Philip and his four "prophesying" daughters, who entertained Paul at Caesarea, and of Mnason of Cyprus, "an early disciple", with whom Paul lodged at Jerusalem just before his arrest.[5] The Acts and Epistles also mention Barnabas of Cyprus and Apollos of Alexandria, missionaries independent of Paul, sometimes his allies and sometimes his antagonists or rivals. But these others are names. We have nothing, so far as we know, from their pens, and can judge the movement only by Paul and his anonymous revisers and editors.

Paul was a tentmaker, we are told, of Tarsus in Cilicia -- no slave or wage-labourer, but a master-craftsman free to come and go, and a Roman citizen born. Tentmaking was a native Cilician industry and important to the Roman army. Possibly Paul's father had been granted Roman citizenship in recognition of his services as an army contractor. Such a man as Paul, while he might desire and work for a spiritual regeneration of society, had no interest in

revolution. He became alarmed at the propaganda for the kingdom of God on earth conducted by his fellow-Jews of the "dispersion." In the Acts and in three Epistles we read that Paul began by persecuting the Messianic propagandists. But he cannot as a young man have been the arch-persecutor depicted in Acts viii-ix; nor can the scene of his persecuting activity have been Jerusalem. Had that been so, his face would not have been "unknown to the churches of Judaea" a few years later.[6] It is remarkable that the Epistles never once refer to Stephen, whom in the Acts Saul (or Paul) takes the lead in stoning. Paul's early anti-Messianist activity is doubtless a fact. But it has been embroidered and dramatized in the Acts and falsely located at Jerusalem.

The Acts and Epistles agree in laying the scene of Paul's conversion at Damascus. But the Epistles nowhere mention the miraculous vision related three times over (with variations) in the Acts. The account in Galatians suggests an inward illumination, not necessarily sudden. "It was the good pleasure of God to reveal his Son in me."[7] We shall see later that Paul uses the term "the Son of God", as Philo did, to denote the *logos* or divine spirit which redeems men and women from matter and mortality and forms them into moral and spiritual beings capable of immortality.

Paul came to the conclusion that he should not combat popular Messianism by the arm of the law. For he found among the Messianists whom he persecuted a spirit of solidarity and comradeship of which the world had need and which, to his thinking, was divine. He could persecute them no longer. But he must at all costs save them, and the masses whom they were permeating, from false leaders and from the head-on clash with Rome which he, as a Roman citizen, knew could end only in disaster. He would preach, as others were already preaching, a

spiritualized Messianism to the masses, who might otherwise be swept into dangerous and hopeless insurrection.

So Paul went to the masses and spoke their language. He preached a mystery-religion in which the Christ-Jesus of revolutionary propaganda was transformed into a divine spirit by whom mortal men might put on immortality. He removed the kingdom of God from this world to the next.

This was to court trouble with the revolutionary Messianists. We shall see that Paul had trouble enough.

There are difficulties in regarding the Epistle to the Galatians as Paul's. The account which it gives of his early missionary activity is, as it stands, almost unintelligible, and couched in so self-important a tone that it can hardly be part of a genuine letter written (as Galatians professes to be written) to rally wavering converts. It is probably by a Pauline partisan defending Paul's memory after his death against those who attacked him as a false apostle and a false Jew.*8* But, apart from some rehandling which need not concern us here, it is at least a first-century document, and it discredits the accounts of Paul's early activities in the Acts. In Galatians God reveals his Son not to Paul, but in Paul, and the "Christ" so revealed is no man who ever lived, but a divine power in suffering believers -- "crucified" and yet alive. The Epistle says:

"I have been crucified with Christ;
And it is no longer I that live,
But Christ lives in me."[9]

In Galatians Paul (or rather his impersonator) insists vehemently on his complete independence of the Palestinian Christians. He tells his readers that on his conversion he held no communication with them.

"When it was the good pleasure of God,
Who separated me even from my mother's womb,
And called me by his grace,
To reveal his Son in me,
That I might preach him among the Gentiles,
Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood;
Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before me:
But I went away into Arabia,
And again I returned to Damascus."[10]

Contrast the account in the Acts, in which Paul on his conversion at once joins in Christian activity at Damascus. The Paul of Galatians and the Paul of the Acts are two different men.

The Acts and the Epistles agree that Paul had to escape from Damascus. In 2 Corinthians xi, 33, the occasion is a warrant for his arrest issued by the governor under the Arab king Aretas. This is important for the chronology of Paul's career. We know from coins that Damascus was in Roman possession as late as 34. But no coins of Caligula or Claudius have been found there, and it was probably ceded to Aretas by Caligula early in his reign. Paul's flight must therefore have been between 37 and 40, when Aretas died -- the earlier date being the more probable. This puts Paul's conversion a little earlier, say between 34 and 37.

After three years, according to Galatians, Paul paid a fortnight's visit to Jerusalem, during which he saw Cephas (Peter) and James, but no other apostle, and remained unknown to the

church. Here as elsewhere, the Epistle stresses Paul's independence of the Palestinian Christians. Contrast the story in the Acts, where Paul is introduced to the apostles, preaches and has to make another hurried escape. Only one account can be true; and Galatians is earlier than the Acts. For fourteen years, according to Galatians, Paul was preaching in Syria and Cilicia and did not visit Jerusalem. This contradicts Acts xi, 29-30, which says that Barnabas and Saul (Paul) were deputed by the church of Antioch to take famine relief to Judaea in 44, the year in which Herod Agrippa died. We shall see that the author of the Acts antedated to that year a later relief mission mentioned in the Epistles, on which he is curiously silent. The Epistles also make no reference to the mission of Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus (where they convert the proconsul!) and to southern Asia Minor related in Acts xiii-xiv. Probably this is a romance.

At the end of the fourteen years, we are told in Galatians -- that is about 50 -- Paul and Barnabas visited Jerusalem to lay before the "pillars" of the church there, Cephas (Peter), James and John, the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. The three "imparted nothing" to him and gave him a free hand on the single condition that the Gentile churches "remembered the poor" of Jerusalem.[11] Paul (or the writer of the Epistle) complains that the "pillars" have broken this compact and tried to compel Gentile converts to observe the Jewish ritual law. In his anger he calls them "hypocrites" and twice invokes an anathema on anyone who preaches to his converts a gospel other than his.

On the traditional view that Paul was converted to the Christianity already preached by Peter and the other Palestinian apostles, Galatians is unintelligible. We are left wondering why on his conversion he did not at once contact them and learn what

they could tell him. Why this insistence that he owes them nothing; Why these angry anathemas? A former persecutor lecturing his new comrades on their imperfections is unconvincing. The story is intelligible only if Pauline and Palestinian Christianity represented originally two separate and opposed tendencies, which in the end had to fuse because each was impotent without the other. We shall find confirmatory evidence of this as we proceed. Paul found the Palestinian apostles in his way. His gospel was not their gospel, nor his Christ their Christ. He kept away from them while he could. Then he sought an understanding with them. Failing in that, he cursed them! But their gospels had to be posthumously reconciled if Christianity was to live.

The author of the Acts sees the scandalous incompatibility of Galatians with the account of a primitive united Church which he wishes to propagate. He therefore substitutes a version in which Paul acts in perfect harmony with the older apostles. Dissension arises among the rank and file (not the leaders) on the application of the Jewish law to Gentile converts, especially in the matter of circumcision. Paul, Barnabas and others are deputed by the church of Antioch to confer with the "apostles and elders" at Jerusalem. After a conference, a circular letter is sent to the Gentile churches releasing them from all obligations except chastity, kosher diet and abstinence from meat sacrificed to idols.[12] The ruling is accepted; and the matter never arises again. Needless to say, no such ruling is known to the writers of the Epistles, or if they know it, they do not recognize it. The writ of Jerusalem did not run in the Pauline churches.

Acts xvi brings Paul and his friends Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy to Europe, and the travel diarist into their company for

the first time. At Philippi they preach in a synagogue and convert and baptize the prosperous Lydia and her household.[13] The story of an exorcism which follows has probably been embellished. At any rate after xvi, 17, the diarist temporarily drops out of the story, and miracles recommence. The Acts and the Epistles agree in making Paul proceed from Philippi to Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. If the Acts may be believed, he arrived at Corinth not later than 50-51, for he had been there eighteen months when Gallio, proconsul of Achaia in 51-52,[14] dismissed the case brought against him by the local Jews.

4. *Earlier Epistles*

However much or however little of the Epistles we regard as genuine, one fact leaps to the eye. Paul knew nothing of the career and teaching of Jesus the Nazoraean, or if he did know anything, he chose to ignore it. Even where the Epistles refer to contacts between Paul and the Palestinian apostles, any debt on his part in matters of fact or doctrine is denied.

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians purport to be addressed by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the church of Thessalonica soon after preaching in that city in 50-51. I Thessalonians is basically genuine. Jesus Christ, the Son of God "raised from the dead, who delivers us from the wrath to come," will in the near future, in the lifetime of the writers of the letter, descend from heaven and transport his people to a better world beyond the clouds.[15] Till that day comes, they are to be chaste, sober, industrious and law-abiding. The prediction is unlikely to have been forged after Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were dead. But the Epistle has been interpolated, ii, 1-13, sounds a note of self-praise which we shall meet elsewhere in the Epistles and which should put us on our guard. The violent outburst against the Jews in 14-16 was inserted

after the ruin of the Jewish people, at a time when Pauline Christians were able and eager to say to the Jews, "I told you so!"[16]

2 Thessalonians is certainly spurious. Its vocabulary is peculiar; it deals with a theme (the reign of Antichrist which is to precede the "coming of the Lord") mentioned nowhere else in the Pauline Epistles; and it seems to be written expressly to discredit the statement in I Thessalonians that "the day of the Lord" will come "as a thief in the night".[17] But it is before the year 70, and may date from the troubled year 69, when rumours of the return of Nero were about. The temple is still standing; and the forger can accredit his work by copying Paul's handwriting.[18] So soon did imitators get busy on the work of Paul!

5. *I Corinthians*

I Corinthians provides good practice in unravelling the genuine Paul from his interpolators. Its genuine parts were written not very long after Paul's visit to Corinth in 51-52, and therefore not very long after I Thessalonians. It purports to be addressed by Paul and "Sosthenes the brother . . . to the church of God which is at Corinth, . . . with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place".[19] From this it might be supposed to be a circular letter to all Pauline churches. But it contains much matter which can have been meant only for one church. This at once suggests that the Epistle is a patchwork in which a genuine letter (or more than one letter) of Paul and Sosthenes has been worked up into a homily adapted for general reading.

At the opening of the Epistle Paul refers to his converts as "enriched in Christ Jesus, in all *logos* and all *gnosis*" -- translated

in our versions "in all utterance and all knowledge". *Logos*, as we have seen, is the term used by the Stoics and by Philo to denote the reason or law by which everything develops, and by which man from a mere animal becomes a social and moral being. *Gnosis* is the knowledge attainable by those inspired by the *logos*. We have seen that Philo calls the *logos* the "firstborn Son of God", the "image of God" and the "mediator" between God and the world, and even calls holy men *logoi* -- incarnations of the *logos*. Paul may not have read Philo; but these ideas were in the air. The "Christ" preached by Paul, though in name identical with the Messiah of popular Judaism, is in the passage quoted identified with *logos* and *gnosis*.

The Epistle is full of abrupt transitions. An attack on sectarianism (i, 10-17) is followed by a poetical rhapsody on the Pauline "mystery". At the opening of this (i, 18) we meet the striking phrase, "the *logos* of the cross", leading to a passage which has been put into rhythm to be memorized by the illiterate paupers and slaves who swarmed in the great commercial and administrative centre of Roman Corinth, but which nevertheless represents Paul's line.

"We preach Christ crucified,
To Jews a stumbling-block, and to Gentiles foolishness;
But to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
For the foolishness of God is wiser than men;
And the weakness of God is stronger than men.
For behold your calling, brothers --
Not many wise after the flesh,
Not many mighty, Not many noble!
But God chose the foolish things of the world
That he might put to shame the wise;

And God chose the weak things of the world
That he might put to shame the strong;
And the base things of the world, and the despised
Did God choose, and the things that are not,
That he might bring to nought the things that are:
That no flesh should glory before God."[20]

How revolutionary it sounds! But the revolution which Paul preaches is wholly spiritual and other-worldly.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among the initiates:
Yet a wisdom not of this age,
Nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nought:
But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery --
The wisdom that has been hidden,
Which God foreordained before the ages to our glory:
Which none of the rulers of this age knows: For had they known it,
They would not have crucified the Lord of glory."[21]

Most of us read the Pauline Epistles in the light of the Gospels and assume that this refers to the crucifixion of Jesus the Nazoraean by Pilate. But is it likely that Paul applied the terms "power of God" and "wisdom of God" to a Jew crucified some twenty years before, to whose personal followers he admitted no debt whatever? It is significant that the Pauline Epistles nowhere call their Jesus a Nazoraean and nowhere (except in the forged Epistles to Timothy) mention Pilate. "The rulers of this age" is a Gnostic term for the demons who rule the material world and make human life wretched. Elsewhere, in a passage not by Paul, but in the Pauline tradition, the "world-rulers of this darkness" are said not to be of "flesh and blood".[22] Their chief, Satan, is "prince of the power of the air"[23] and "god of this age".[24] Originally

demons were simply gods of the enemy, as in the ancient Persian mythology and later in Judaism, and any patriotic or revolutionary struggle could be called a war against demons. But Paul does not mean that. For him the whole material world is evil and demon-ridden, and man is to be saved not by carnal warfare, but by divine agency -- by the *logos*, the "power of God and the wisdom of God", incarnate in Pauline believers, against whom demons do their worst in vain.

The attack on sectarianism is resumed, and leads to a rhapsodical passage on the merits and sufferings of Paul and his fellow-missionaries (iii-iv) pitched on so high a note that we wonder whether Paul really wrote it.[25] A sudden transition (so sudden that it is hard to believe that the same hand is at work) leads to a section (v-vii) in which Pauline theory is translated into practice. Sentence of expulsion is passed on a church member guilty of incest. The material world being evil, Pauline converts are to reduce their dependence on it to a minimum. They cannot "go out of the world",[26] and they cannot all be celibate -- though Paul wishes they could. But at least they can lead chaste, sober, ascetic lives and expel from their society any who do not. They are not to go to law before pagan courts. They are to abide in their station in life and not to try to alter it.

These middle chapters must be based on a real letter, though their strongly rhythmical diction shows that they have been rehandled and perhaps interpolated.

"Was any man called being circumcised?
Let him not become uncircumcised.
Has any been called in uncircumcision?
Let him not be circumcised.

Circumcision is nothing,
And uncircumcision is nothing;
But the keeping of the commandments of God.
In the calling wherein each was called,
In that let him abide.
A slave wast thou called? Care not for it . . .[27]
For the slave, called in the Lord, is the Lord's freedman:
Likewise the freeman, that is called, is Christ's slave . . .
Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed.
Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.
But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned;
And if a virgin marry, she has not sinned.
Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh:
And I would spare you.
But this I say, brothers,
The time is shortened henceforth,
That those that have wives may be as though they had none;
And those that weep, as though they wept not;
And those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;
And those that buy, as though they possessed not;
And those that use the world, as not abusing it:
For the fashion of this world passes away."*28*

The material world being evil and doomed, no part of it is more evil than another part. Hence for Paul the dietary taboos of Judaism are superstition. To the spiritually enlightened a pagan idol is no better or worse than any other bit of wood or stone, and since man must eat, meat sacrificed to idols is no better or worse than any other food. But all do not know that. Rather than offend the scruples of the weak, the spiritually enlightened will go without meat.

In the middle of this discussion comes an abruptly introduced and high-pitched panegyric on Paul's forbearance in not charging an honorarium for his apostolic services (ix). Surely Paul did not write that himself! Another interpolator, dissatisfied with Paul's treatment of the meat question, inserts a stern passage more in conformity with majority opinion in the early churches (x, 1-22). The natural conclusion of the liberal chapter viii does not come until x, 23-33. This is alone enough to suggest that the intervening matter is interpolated. The fact that in these chapters no reference is made to the ruling in Acts xv is an eloquent comment on the reliability of that chapter.

In I Corinthians xi-xiv we get glimpses of the day-to-day life of Pauline churches. These chapters are not entirely by Paul. For example, xi, 2-16, requires women "praying or prophesying" (i.e., preaching) at Christian meetings to wear veils. Evidently then they were allowed to preach. But xiv, 34-35, forbids them to speak at all. These passages cannot both be Paul's, xi, 2-16, is plainly the earlier. We have independent evidence that women were free to preach in the primitive churches; for in Acts xxi, 9, the travel diarist meets four daughters of "Philip the evangelist" who "prophesy". We may be sure that when Christians met in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, Priscilla did not keep her mouth shut! The prohibition in I Corinthians xiv dates from a time when the original "liberty of prophesying" (with other democratic features of early church organization) was obnoxious to church leaders and marked down for destruction.

xi, 17-34, deals with the primitive communion or Lord's Supper. We are so used to the medieval and modern Mass, in which each communicant swallows a tiny wafer and sips a little wine,[29] that we discover with some surprise that the original

supper was a genuine common meal to which church members contributed in kind according to their means. Such meals were regular features of the guilds and burial clubs which were the only form of association open to the poorer classes in the Graeco-Roman world. If we eliminate demonstrable interpolations from I Corinthians xi, the real nature of the Lord's Supper becomes clear. Paul censures disorderly scrambles for food and drink:

"But in giving you this charge, I praise you not,
That you come together not for the better, but for the worse . . .
When you assemble yourselves together,
It is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper:
For in your eating each snatches his own supper;
And one is hungry, and another is drunk . . .
For this cause many among you are weak and sickly,
And not a few sleep . . .
Wherefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat,
Wait for one another."[30]

These verses bear the stamp of authenticity. A second-century forger would not so have aspersed the primitive church. The fact of the common meal is confirmed from non-Pauline sources. The Essenes, as we have seen, pooled their property and therefore had common meals. So, according to tradition, did the Nazoraeans, who were probably an offshoot of the Essenes. The Pauline churches did not pool their property, but held a weekly common meal for the benefit of their poorer members. The younger Pliny as governor of Bithynia (111-113) reported to Trajan that the Christians met "on a stated day before daybreak" to sing a hymn "to Christ as to a god", and later reassembled for a common meal.*31* In the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, a work of Jewish origin adapted to Christian use in Syria early in the second century, and with no trace of Pauline influence, the consumption of wine and bread (in that order) is part and parcel of a meal at

which all eat and drink their fill. Before and after the meal a thanksgiving or grace (*eucharistia*) is offered, together with a prayer for the coming of the kingdom of God.[32] The meeting ends with the Aramaic slogan: *Maranatha* -- "Lord, come!" In Roman catacombs of the second century people are depicted reclining at tables provided with bread, wine and fish. As late as 197 Tertullian describes a common meal where, after prayer, "so much is eaten as satisfies hunger, and so much is drunk as meets the need of the modest".[33] He knows of no other communion. All the evidence goes to show that in the early churches, Pauline or not, the Lord's Supper was nothing else than this comradely feast or *agape*.

But from the second century onward church leaders tried to suppress the communal meal. The original writer of I Corinthians xi had no such intention. He only wanted to correct uncomradely behaviour. But a later writer, at a time when the Gospel story was taking shape, interpolated verses with the set purpose of suppressing all except a ritual partaking of bread and wine.[34] The interpolation is discredited on several grounds. The text makes better sense without it. The censure of disorder and drunkenness at the common meal leads naturally to the mention of sickness and the inculcation of better manners. Verses 30 and 33, therefore, should follow close on 21. The injunction to eat at home and the digression on the Gospel story of the Last Supper break an otherwise coherent context. The fact that here, and only here, the Epistles refer to something in the life of Jesus other than the crucifixion and resurrection is enough to awaken suspicion. According to the present text Paul claims to "receive" his account of the Last Supper "from the Lord". That he should appeal to a personal revelation when he could have appealed to eyewitnesses is most unlikely. But that an interpolator, when all eyewitnesses

(if there were any) were dead, should invent a revelation of Paul to accredit his own account is likely enough.

The attempt to suppress the common meal was less successful than the attempt to suppress women preachers. In spite of the disciplinarians it was retained until the time of Tertullian, and in parts of Christendom for centuries later.

I Corinthians xii and xiv deal with the organization of Christian meetings. That these chapters are based on very early material is proved by the simplicity of the organization described. There is no trace of a professional clergy. Bishops and deacons are not mentioned. Instead there are "spiritual gifts" which any church member, man or woman, may possess. Some, like Paul himself, may be travelling missionaries or "apostles" -- a title by no means confined to the twelve of later Gospel tradition;[35] some may be preachers or "prophets"; some may be teachers; some may be endowed, according to the belief of the time, with abnormal gifts of faith-healing, "speaking with tongues" or the like. Ecstatic and inarticulate utterance is a common accompaniment of religious excitement among backward and illiterate people, such as most of the Corinthian church evidently were. Paul, who has no illusions on this subject, tries tactfully to discourage "speaking with tongues" in favour of articulate preaching. "Tongues," he says, are all very well; but God only knows what they mean. If a stranger comes to the meeting, he will mistake such behaviour for lunacy, whereas preaching may convert him. Paul does not forbid "speaking with tongues" -- that would probably have been ineffective -- but he will have "all things done decently and in order".

It is noteworthy that in these chapters the word "Christ" is synonymous with the whole body of believers. This is akin to the usage in other mystery-cults, where the initiates were identified with the god of the cult.

"For as the body is one,
And has many members,
And all the members of the body,
Being many, are one body,
So also is Christ . . .
You are the body of Christ,
And severally his members."[36]

This is all of a piece with ii, where Christ is the "power of God and the wisdom of God" inspiring members of the church. It also enables us to understand the language used in x, 16-17, about the common meal.

"The cup of blessing which we bless,
Is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?
The bread which we break,
Is it not a communion of the body of Christ?[37]
Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body:
For we all partake of the one bread."

This does not mean that Pauline Christians believed that at their meetings they ate the body and drank the blood of a crucified man. They believed that by eating and drinking together they became part of the "body of Christ". Collectively they were that body. Egyptian and Greek peasants, living closer to nature, had believed that in bread and wine they ate the body and drank the blood of Osiris and Dionysus. Pauline converts were not peasants, but uprooted and unhappy people in the slums of Thessalonica or Corinth. Their god, therefore, was no corn-king or tree-spirit, but a projection of their need of comradeship and solidarity -- "Christ Jesus", who welded them from social outcasts into "one body". Such a Christ had nothing to do with any human Jesus crucified

by an imperial procurator. This solidarity, continually expressed in symbolic action and mythical language familiar to the masses, was the strength of both Pauline and Jewish Christianity.

Between xii and xiv stands the great poetical eulogy of *agape* -- inadequately rendered in our versions "charity" or "love". In the modern world "charity" means giving to the "deserving poor", and "love" either sexual attraction or family affection. The early Christian agape would be better rendered by "comradeship", in the sense in which it is used in the modern working-class movement. The inabihty of our translators to find an adequate word is symptomatic of the fact that capitalism tends to extinguish comradeship. Fine though the rhapsody of I Corinthians xiii is, it must be pronounced post-Pauline. It is irrelevant to the context, and is artificially joined to what precedes and follows by the last words of xii and the first of xiv.[38] It is no part of any letter, but a genuine early Christian folk-poem.

A few interpolations in xiv by someone who wanted to tone down Paul's disparagement of the "gift of tongues" can be recognized by any who can follow an argument.[39] The interpolation enjoining silence on women (xiv, 34-36) has been noted earlier.

So far the overwhelming evidence of the Epistles shows that the Christ preached by Paul was Philo's *logos*, the divine power by which man may escape from this evil world and be reborn to a new life. The few short allusions to a historical Jesus occur in passages open to suspicion on other grounds -- the spurious autobiography of Galatians, the anti-Jewish invective of I Thessalonians ii, the self-panegyric of I Corinthians ix. The best-

known of such quasi-historical passages occurs early in I Corinthians xv, the famous "resurrection chapter".

As it stands, this passage reads:

"For I delivered to you first of all that which also I received,
That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
And that he was buried;
And that he has been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;
And that he was seen by Cephas,
Then by the twelve;
Then he was seen by above five hundred brothers at once,
Of whom the greater part remain until now,
But some are fallen asleep;
Then he was seen by James;
Then by all the apostles;
And last of all, as by one born out of due time,
He was seen by me also.
For I am the least of the apostles,
That am not meet to be called an apostle,
Because I persecuted the church of God.
But by the grace of God I am what I am:
And his grace which was bestowed on me was not found vain;
But I laboured more abundantly than they all:
Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
Whether then it be I or they,
So we preach, and so you believed."[40]

Now that the contradictions and relatively late dates of the Gospels are generally recognized, this passage has become the sheet-anchor of those who affirm the historical resurrection of Jesus. For those who reject the resurrection, but still maintain the

Pauline authorship of the passage, it is evidence of ecstatic visions classifiable among the "varieties of religious experience". But before deciding what the passage proves, it is well to know who wrote it.

It has many peculiarities. Firstly, not only these verses, but the whole of chapter xv is as strongly rhythmical as anything in the New Testament. As we have it, it is not a letter or part of a letter, but a rhapsody on the resurrection memorized for recitation at Christian meetings. The chapter may contain Pauline matter, but as it stands it is not Paul's.

Secondly, in verses 3-4 belief in the resurrection is based on "the scriptures", but in verses 5-11 on ocular evidence. "Scriptures" here mean not the Gospels, which were not yet written, but the Old Testament. By forced interpretation Christians from the first found in the Old Testament prophecies of the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Poems included in the book of Isaiah, and really referring to the suffering people of Israel, were applied to the death of the Messiah; and figurative phrases in the prophets and Psalms on national revival were applied to his resurrection. But such exegesis convinced none who did not want to be convinced. An ounce of fact would be worth a ton of scripture. It is hard, therefore, to see why the author of verses 3-4 should have appealed to "the scriptures" if he could appeal to eyewitnesses. The suspicion arises that he appealed to scripture because there were no eye-witnesses, and that verses 5-11 are by a later hand.

Suspicion deepens when we find that Paul is made to refer to "the twelve", whom he nowhere else mentions, and to an

appearance to five hundred persons at once, of which the Gospels say nothing -- an amazing silence if the evangelists knew the story. We are forced to conclude that it was not current when the Gospels were being written. This pushes the date of verses 5-11 well into the second century. Add that Paul's depreciation of himself as "the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle" shows a modesty unparalleled anywhere else in the Epistles. Plainly we have here not only an interpolation, but a very late interpolation indeed, dating from a time when the rival claims of Paul and the "twelve" had to be somehow squared by second-century harmonists.

The rest of the chapter confirms this. From, verse 12 the historical Jesus is ignored, leaving only the mystical Christ of the main body of the Epistle.

"Now if Christ is proclaimed to have been raised from the dead,
How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?
But if there is no resurrection of the dead,
Neither has Christ been raised . . .
And if Christ has not been raised,
Your faith is vain;
You are yet in your sins.
Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
If in this life only we have hoped in Christ,
We are of all men most pitiable."[41]

That is to say, the resurrection of Christ is bound up with the resurrection of all Christians: unless they rise from the dead, Christ is not risen. It is not thus that one speaks of a historical fact. Its occurrence is not affected by the non-occurrence of something

in the future. The author of verses 12-19 cannot have penned verses 5-11. For him Christ is not an individual whose resurrection is attested by eyewitnesses, but the *logos* incarnate in the Christian community, through whom they will defeat death and become immortal. The rest of the chapter celebrates this victory in language reminiscent of the mystery-cults.

"Now has Christ been raised from the dead,
The firstfruits of them that are asleep.
For since by man came death,
By man. came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die,
So also in Christ shall all be made alive . . .
But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised?
And with what manner of body do they come?'
Foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened,
Except it die:
And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be,
But a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind;
But God gives it a body as it pleased him,
And to each seed a body of its own . . .
So also is the resurrection of the dead.
It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:
It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory:
It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:
It is sown an animal body; it is raised a spiritual body."[42]

A contradiction in terms! Paul or whoever wrote this cannot, any more than we, imagine personality without a material basis. He dodges the dilemma by magnificent rhetoric which burkes the issue. Does any idealist do more?

" Now this I say, brothers,
That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;
Nor does corruption inherit incorruption.
Behold, I tell you a mystery:
We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,
At the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound,
And the dead shall be raised incorruptible,
And we shall be changed.
For this corruptible must put on incorruption,
And this mortal must put on immortality."[43]

Clearly the author of this rhapsody could never have believed in a material body rising from a tomb, walking, talking, proving its identity by the print of nails, eating broiled fish and ascending into heaven as depicted in the Gospels. Equally clearly the kingdom of God on earth, the slogan of the Jewish masses in the struggle against Roman exploitation, disappears from the picture. The material world is dismissed as irredeemable. The Pauline Christ is the Son of God, not the Son of Man. The Pauline "kingdom of God" is a kingdom not of "flesh and blood", not of this world, but of spirits set free from matter by a miracle. Paul's mysticism, like all mysticism, reflects the insolubility of the dilemma created by the class society of his day.

6. *2 Corinthians*

2 Corinthians purports to be another circular letter, addressed by Paul "and Timothy the brother to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia".[44] The genuine matter in this Epistle is so embedded in later additions that it is difficult to disentangle. It is hard to believe that any leader of men, however egotistic, writing to followers, however devoted, gave himself such testimonials as Paul is made to give

himself in 2 Corinthians -- that he really boasted of behaving with "holiness and godly sincerity",[45] that he really called himself "a sweet savour of Christ unto God",[46] or that he really made such a parade of his own labours, journeyings, perils, privations and persecutions as he seems to make in xi, 23-33. These passages raise doubts similar to those raised by the panegyric in I Corinthians ix. Great men usually leave their praises to be sung by others. It suits better with probability and raises our opinion of Paul if we see in all this the tribute of a zealous disciple defending his reputation against posthumous detractors.

But Pauline or post-Pauline, 2 Corinthians affords conclusive evidence that the Christ of the Pauline churches was no historical Jesus crucified in Judaea. The Pauline Christ is "the Spirit"[47] and "the image of God"[48] -- one of Philo's names for the *logos*. In a rhapsody on the endurance of Paul and his fellow-missionaries they are described as

"Pressed on every side, yet not straitened;
Perplexed, yet not to despair;
Pursued, yet not forsaken;
Smitten down, yet not destroyed;
Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus,
That the life also of Jesus May be manifested in our body."[49]

Now at the time when Paul is supposed to have written this, he and his friends were very much alive and active. Even if we suppose him to have already suffered the imprisonments, beatings, stonings and shipwrecks mentioned in the Epistle, he had undergone nothing comparable to the torture of crucifixion. The only sense, therefore, in which he and his associates could be said to "bear about in the body the dying of Jesus" would be the

mystical sense that whatever Christians suffer, the *logos*suffers in their persons.

Later we read:

"Wherefore we henceforth
Know no man after the flesh:
Even though we have known Christ after the flesh,
Yet now we know him so no more."[50]

This does not mean that Paul had known Jesus in the flesh. Were that so, he would assuredly have said more about it than this. It means that Paul (or whoever wrote the verse) repudiates the earthly Messiah and material millennium expected by popular Judaism.

As if this were not enough, we have later a bitter, sarcastic invective against the apostles of a revolutionary gospel diametrically opposed to Paul's.

"Though we walk in the flesh,
We do not war according to the flesh
(For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
But mighty before God for the casting down of strongholds)."[51]

These apostles sneer at Paul as a man of the pen:

"His letters, they say, are weighty and strong;
But his bodily presence is weak,
And his speech of no account."[52]

They call his mysticism folly and madness. Anyway, he replies, he and not they brought the gospel to Corinth, and he is not going to let them disrupt his churches. As to his mysticism:

"Would that you could bear with me in a little foolishness!
Nay indeed bear with me . . .
For if he that comes preaches another Jesus,
Whom we did not preach,
Or you receive a different spirit,
Which you did not receive,
Or a different gospel,
Which you did not accept,
You do well to bear it!
For I reckon that I am not a whit behind Those pre-eminent apostles . . .
Such men are false apostles,
Deceitful workers,
Fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ . . .
I say again, Let no man think me foolish;
But if you do, yet as foolish receive me,
That I also may glory a little . . .
Wherever any is bold (I speak in foolishness!) I am bold also.
Are they Hebrews? so am I.
Are they Israelites? so am I.
Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.
Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a madman!)
I am more so;
In labours more abundantly,
In prisons more abundantly,
In stripes above measure, In deaths oft."[53]

Then follows a list of Paul's beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, perils and supernatural revelations to match the record of " those preeminent apostles". And occasion is taken to rub in the fact that

Paul makes no charge for his services. It is unlikely that Paul wrote this panegyric on himself. But this point is secondary. What is more important historically is that the polemic in 2 Corinthians is earlier than the Acts of the Apostles. The list of Paul's tribulations is not taken from the Acts, but from some independent source now lost. The "visions and revelations" described do not include that on the road to Damascus -- presumably because the story was not yet current. The polemic, then, is relatively early and probably dates from the first century. All the more important is its testimony that Paul's Jesus and Paul's gospel were different from and opposed to those of the "pre-eminent apostles" of Palestine.

7. *Romans*

The Epistle to the Romans is ostensibly addressed by Paul to the Christians of Rome, whom he has never yet visited, to prepare them for a coming visit and to give them an idea of his teaching. Actually it is not, as it stands, a letter at all. It is a pamphlet artificially compiled from different Pauline and non-Pauline sources, and with nothing letter-like about it except the names "Paul" and "Rome" at the beginning, some personal notes in the opening paragraphs, and some further personal notes and greetings near the end.

This would not by itself discredit it as a letter. Other men have expounded theories in letters. But their letters are addressed to friends, not to organizations, still less to organizations to which they are personally strangers.

Our suspicions are aroused at once by the opening sentence, which is longer than in any other Epistle.[54] In ninety-three words

of Greek (one hundred and twenty-seven of English in the Revised Version) the writer contrives to mention his apostleship, his divine call, the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy in the gospel, the Davidic descent, divine sonship and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and yet again his own apostleship, before greeting the Roman church which he is supposed to be addressing. Was ever letter so written? Is it likely that Paul, writing to strangers, would start by stressing the unique importance of himself and his doctrine before condescending to greet his addressees? The situation demanded more tact. Probably a second-century editor, compiling a manual of doctrine out of Pauline and non-Pauline material, composed this prodigious sentence to give it the look of a Pauline Epistle when it was not. It is significant that one of the few phrases which are quoted as evidence that Paul preached an historical Jesus ("born of the seed of David according to the flesh"[55]) occurs in this first sentence of Romans.

The rest of the Epistle is composite. The relative date of its parts may be to some extent gauged by comparing them with the early or late parts of I Corinthians. For example, Romans i, 16, where the gospel is called "the power of God", reminds us of I Corinthians i, 18-24, where "the *logos* of the cross" or "Christ" is called "the power of God". Romans i, 22, where the "wise" of the world are called "foolish", reminds us of the same passage in I Corinthians. Now the Corinthian passage, if not by Paul as it stands, is at least basically Pauline. So, we may take it, is Romans i, once we are past the opening sentence. But from verse 18 onward the rhetorical, repetitious and altogether unletter-like style suggests that there has been considerable rehandling and padding.

Again, most of Romans vi and much of viii expound the doctrine of a mystical identity between Christ and the Christian

community. By baptism believers die to the wicked world and rise again to a new life which is eternal. This theme, after a break, is resumed in xii, which refers to the church as the body of Christ. This is exactly the doctrine of I Corinthians xii. We saw that the Corinthian chapter dated from a time when there was no professional clergy and any church member might fulfil any function, and that it was by that criterion early. We may conclude that Romans vi, viii and xii, which reflect the same stage of development, are also early.

In these early strata of Romans, as in the early strata of I Corinthians, "Christ" denotes not an historical character, but the divine power manifest in the Christian community. This is further shown by the fact that, though Romans xii contains exhortations to all intents and purposes the same as some attributed to Jesus in the Gospels ("Bless them that persecute you . . . Render to no man evil for evil") Paul does not attribute them to Jesus, but puts them forward as his own.[56] A Christian who regarded them as sayings of an historical Jesus would not have concealed their origin. Romans xii leads naturally on to xiii, in which Paul enjoins submission to the Roman Empire as a power "ordained by God".[57] These chapters must date before Nero's persecution. The claim that "rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil",[58] would have been flagrantly false after the Neronian horrors. No Christian, however pacifist, can have "blessed" Nero after his exploits of 64. The early part of Nero's reign, when the Empire was relatively well governed and Christianity (apart from Judaism) had not yet attracted official attention, is the most natural date for these chapters of Romans. This is a strong argument for their Pauline origin.

Romans xiv, which deals with dietary and other taboos, reminds us at once of I Corinthians viii. Like the Corinthian chapter, it declares that "nothing is unclean of itself",[59] but enjoins respect for the scruples of weaker brothers. We saw that the Corinthian chapter was early and was corrected after Paul's death by someone who took a narrower view (x, 1-22). We conclude that Romans xiv is early too. But these chapters of Romans cannot have been addressed to the Roman church. Paul could not write with such authority to a church which he had not founded and had not yet visited. The chapters seem to belong to a pamphlet rather than a letter.[60]

Other parts of Romans are not Pauline at all. For example, Romans iii-iv, in which texts of the Old Testament are tortured to prove the dogma of justification by faith, and ix-xi, which rack the law and the prophets in a similar way to prove far-fetched conclusions, are not Paul's, ix-xi in fact is introduced very abruptly, is unconnected with what precedes or what follows, and deals with the downfall of the Jews in a way hardly intelligible before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. These text-twisting chapters show a family resemblance to I Corinthians ix, which uses the same method to prove the right of Christian ministers to remuneration and the magnanimity of Paul in not taking any. The probable date of such matter is the end of the first or early in the second century, when Christianity had finally broken with Judaism and church leaders were anxious to prove by hook or crook that the Jewish sacred books were on their side of the quarrel. Romans v, vi (verse 1) and vii, 7-25, depend on iii-iv and must also be rejected as late. The same text-twister has rehandled parts of Galatians ii-iii.[61]

It is noteworthy that these late strata of Romans differ in doctrine from the early parts. In vi, viii and xii-xiv, as in most of Corinthians, Christ is a divine being with whom believers are mystically united. But in Romans iii-v we read of a "man Jesus Christ" who was offered as a sacrifice for sin. This doctrine of vicarious atonement is impossible to reconcile with the mysticism of the early Paul. It is as though the Pauline movement had encountered and been forced to come to terms with "another gospel" and "another Jesus" whom Paul had not preached, but whose story had a greater mass appeal and who in the end had somehow to be assimilated to the Pauline mystery-god.

The compositeness of Romans is finally proved by the patchwork character of its conclusion. Five times (xv, 5-6, 13 and 33; xvi, 16 and 20) the Epistle seems to finish, and five times it resumes. Did Paul really write so many postscripts to one letter? Or did a compiler after Paul's time combine documents of various origin and omit to prune the perorations? The latter is the likelier alternative. The genuine Pauline pamphlet of xii-xiv flows to a natural conclusion in xv, 1-6. xv, 7-13, is a fragment unconnected with its context, xv, 14-33, seems to be the end of the real letter to the Roman church which began in i. xvi, 1-16, is the end of a letter to some Asiatic church -- perhaps Ephesus: Paul can hardly have known so many people at Rome, where he had never been, xvi, 17-20 and 21-23, are oddments of unknown origin. Finally the compiler rounds off the whole with a close (xvi, 25-27) as prolix as his opening (i, 1-7).[62]

8. *End of Paul's Mission*

Paul's mission in the eastern Mediterranean lasted between fifteen and twenty years. Early in the reign of Nero (the exact year is uncertain) Paul and a number of fellow-missionaries left the

Aegean for Jerusalem. In Acts xx, 5-xxi, 18, the travel diarist relates the journey, noting the ports of call from day to day even when there is nothing else to record. This speaks for the truth of the narrative, even if embellished here and there. It is remarkable that, though the journey is described as urgent and dangerous (Paul hurries to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost and disregards all warnings to desist), nothing is said of its reason. Only in a speech later put into the mouth of Paul by the author of the Acts do we read that he "came to bring alms and offerings" to his countrymen in Judaea.[63] That is the only mention of the matter in the Acts. But the Epistles have more to say. In I and 2 Corinthians and in Romans we read of collections organized in the churches of Galatia, Macedonia and Greece "for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem".[64] But why are the Acts so reticent? They relate, as we have seen, an earlier relief mission to Jerusalem in 44 -- never mentioned in the Epistles and contradicted by the account of Paul's movements in Galatians i-ii. And yet the Acts dismiss in a dozen words in a speech the collection of some years later, on which the Epistles expatiate at length. We read in detail of the journey and the arrival at Jerusalem, but not of the collection or the delivery of the money. Is there something which the author of the Acts wishes to hide?

Before answering this question let us look at conditions in Palestine at the time. The country was heading for a revolutionary crisis. The Roman procurators Cumanus (48-52) and Felix (52-55 or perhaps later) are described by Tacitus -- no friend of the Jews -- as "rivals in the worst crimes",[65] and between them drove the people into simmering revolt which needed only an occasion to become open war. Imperialist repression runs true to form; and we need not be deceived by the priestly collaborator Josephus' habitual description of the resisters as "bandits" or by his pretence that the majority of the people were on the side of the Romans

against them. We saw reason in the last chapter for thinking that the movement associated with John the Baptist and the real Jesus (not Paul's) was revolutionary. The poorer classes, hard hit by priestly and Roman exactions and recurrent famines, were naturally drawn to such movements. From their centre in Palestine, Messianist movements radiated to every part of the Roman Empire where mass poverty and Judaism co-existed.

To Paul and his colleagues, faced by this mounting crisis and concerned for the safety of their own congregations in Asia Minor and Greece, it might well seem that to relieve mass poverty in Judaea was to fight revolutionary propaganda at its source. The travel diary breaks off at the moment when they meet the elders of the Jerusalem church. Thenceforth the story is in the third person and obviously doctored. We should expect some mention of the handing over of the money. There is none. Instead, we are told that the elders drew Paul's attention to the painful impression made on thousands of Jewish Christians by the report that he had preached against the Jewish law and particularly against circumcision -- exactly what according to the Epistles he had been doing. The elders suggest that Paul shall give the lie to the report by taking part in a purification ceremony in the temple, and they remind him of their ruling of some years before as to the observance by Gentile converts of certain Jewish dietary rules. That ruling, as we saw, was certainly not accepted by Paul and is never mentioned in the Epistles. But in Acts he accepts it and actually agrees to the temple ceremony. In the temple he is set on by a mob and nearly lynched, but rescued by the Roman garrison and taken into protective custody. He makes several speeches -- one to the Jewish mob just after his arrest; one to the Sanhedrin next day; one, after his removal to Caesarea, before Felix, who keeps him in prison in hopes of a bribe; and one, after the recall of Felix, before his successor Festus and the Herodian prince

Agrippa II. In these speeches he gives two accounts of his miraculous conversion, which contradict each other and the account given earlier by the author of the Acts. Finally, having appealed to the emperor, he is sent to Rome. A last extract from the travel diary (Acts xxvii and parts of xxviii) relates the voyage, shipwreck and arrival. The Acts end abruptly with Paul still awaiting his trial. That Paul was sent a prisoner to Rome is common ground to the Acts and the Epistles. If we deny that, we may as well deny that Paul ever lived. But the story in the Acts (fascinating though it is and one of the most readable bits of the New Testament) shows free invention and careless revision. Why, for example, is the author silent on the presentation and acceptance of the money? Can it be that the gift was not welcomed -- that it was even rejected? Again, how could Paul after his manhandling by the mob be in any condition to make a speech? And why do the mob, after hearing quietly the story of his former persecution of the Christians and his miraculous conversion, suddenly cry that he is unfit to live when he mentions his mission to the Gentiles? Because they were opposed to missions to the Gentiles? No, for their own leaders, the Pharisees, were ardent missionaries and "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte".[66] Because Paul had broken with the Jewish law? No, for the interrupted speech contains nothing against the Jewish law. Indeed, throughout the proceedings before the Sanhedrin and before Felix and Festus Paul claims to be an orthodox Jew called in question only for holding the traditional Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection. An astonishing claim to anyone who reads the Epistles!

The fact is that all these speeches are concocted by the author of the Acts. In inventing them he merely followed the usual practice of ancient historians. As Acts xxii-xxvi consists largely of these speeches, its credibility sinks to that of an ingenious

historical novel. In reality, Paul's attacks on Judaism and its materialist "kingdom of God" had so enraged the Jews, including the Jewish Christians, that his mere appearance at Jerusalem provoked a storm from which he escaped only by accepting Roman protection.

Finally, why do the Acts, after getting Paul to Rome, break off without even telling us the result of his appeal to the emperor? It is sometimes said that the author, in order to represent the Roman authorities as friendly to Christianity, deliberately suppressed the condemnation and execution of Paul. But nothing would be gained by suppressing a fact well known in the second-century Church. The apologetic purpose would be better served by pointing out (as Tertullian did later) that to be condemned by Nero was to be condemned in good company. The unevenness, contradictions and abrupt ending of the Acts mean only that the work was imperfectly revised and never finished.

9. *Later Epistles*

For the last years of Paul's life our only evidence consists of the later Epistles and of short allusions in the early Fathers. Of the Epistles, the short note to Philemon stamps itself as authentic in the absence of any intelligible motive for forgery, but tells us nothing beyond the fact, interesting so far as it goes, that Paul returned a runaway slave to his master.

The Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians may contain genuine fragments, but are in substance post-Pauline. Both, especially Colossians, are marked by rhythmical rhapsodies on the Christian "mystery" which read more like hymns than letters. Both are marked by flights of self-praise similar to those which

take our breath away in parts of 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul is made to refer to his own "blameless" life as a Jew, to enjoin his readers to take him as an example, and to boast repeatedly of his sufferings and strivings.[67] It is more likery-that some fervent follower put these passages into his mouth after his death than that he wrote them himself. Ephesians with its long, lumbering sentences (so unlike the "punch" of the real Paul) its references to the "apostles and prophets" as holy men of the past[68] and its absence of personal messages or greetings stamps itself as a homily written at least a generation after Paul's time -- later even than Colossians, of which it makes extensive use. As to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus (the so-called Pastorals) all scholars except Catholics and Fundamentalists now agree that they are second-century compositions dealing with a second-century situation. They belong to Church history, but have no bearing on Christian origins. Yet these forgers probably drew on what they knew of Paul's life to lend their work an air of verisimilitude. Some of them may have used short extracts from real letters.[69] When we read of rival propagandists at Rome, some of whom "preach Christ from envy and strife";[70] when we read that "all that are in Asia have turned away" from Paul, that friends have forsaken him and that "only Luke" is with him[71] -- such phrases, if not actually authentic, point to a tradition current in the time of the writers that his life had ended in isolation and failure.

10. *Nero's Persecution*

In 64 the Christian movement emerges into the light of secular history. The greater part of Rome was destroyed by fire. Tacitus leaves it an open question whether the fire was accidental or deliberate. Suetonius roundly attributes it to Nero's orders; and as the emperor was undoubtedly mad, this is likely enough. To divert suspicion from himself, says Tacitus, Nero fastened the guilt on "a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the

populace. ... An arrest was first made of those who avowed the fact. Then upon their information an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city as of hatred against the human race". Tacitus describes their punishment. They were thrown to dogs, crucified or burnt as living torches to illuminate Nero's shows. A hideous story, but not more hideous than the atomic massacre of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the burning of live Koreans with napalm bombs by our modern Neros.

"Hence," continues Tacitus, "even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty that they were being destroyed."[72] The Roman populace had their feelings. In 61 they had turned out in force to try to rescue four hundred slaves who were executed by a decree of the senate under an old law which required that, if a master were murdered by a slave, the whole slave household should suffer death. It had needed troops to carry out the execution. In 64 the same populace resented the butchery of the Christians.

The account of Tacitus raises more than one point of interest. Whom exactly did the populace call Christians? Plainly, the followers of a Jewish Messiah or Christ -- just as the followers of Caesar were called Caesarians, of Pompey Pompeians, of Herod Herodians. That is, these Christians were Jewish revolutionaries. At Rome they were numerous enough to be considered dangerous. A multitude of a thousand or even less would seem "immense in a matter of incendiarism.

What did the original suspects "avow" -- that they were Christians or that they had fired the city? The Latin may mean either; but the more natural meaning is that they avowed having fired Rome. It is quite possible that Nero's police agents entrapped a few unbalanced individuals into starting the fire and then arrested and tortured them into incriminating others who had had no hand in it. Such things have been done in our own century.

The most interesting point about Nero's persecution is its failure. It was intended to clear him and smear the Christians. It did not clear Nero. The people of Rome still believed that he was guilty. And it did not smear the Christians. The people believed that they had been "framed".

11. *Death of Peter and Paul*

We have no contemporary evidence of the fate of Peter or Paul. But in one of the earliest Christian documents outside the New Testament, the Epistle of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, written in A.D. 96 and traditionally known as the Epistle of Clement (it is in fact anonymous), we find this passage:

"By reason of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted and contended even to death. Let us set before our eyes the good apostles. There was Peter, who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one nor two, but many labours, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory. By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and reached

the furthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, he departed from the world and went to the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance.

"To these men of holy lives was gathered a vast multitude of the elect, the victims of jealousy, who through many indignities and tortures set a brave example among us."[73]

This passage is remarkable as the first documentary attempt (older than the Acts of the Apostles) to bridge the gulf between Palestinian and Pauline Christianity, and to treat Peter and Paul not as rivals, but as fellow-apostles and fellow-martyrs. It undoubtedly connects their deaths with Nero's persecution. The "vast multitude" of the Clementine Epistle is the "immense multitude" of Tacitus. Peter was never "bishop of Rome": the Acts never even mention his presence there. But in all probability he made a journey there and was included in the general butchery, though the recent Vatican pretence to have identified his bones can be dismissed as the fraud it is.

In the case of Paul there are unsolved chronological questions. He arrived at Rome the year after Festus succeeded Felix as procurator of Judaea. We do not know when that occurred; there are difficulties in dating it after 55, and the later the date, the greater the difficulties.[74] There is thus a gap of anything up to eight years between Paul's arrival at Rome and Nero's persecution; but the Acts say that his imprisonment at Rome lasted two years only. Either, then, there is a blank in the record, or the chronology of the Acts is wrong. But the Clementine Epistle leaves no room for doubt that Paul perished in 64.

This passage further confirms the fact that Christianity in the time of Nero did not present a united front to its enemies. Otherwise why the dark allusions to "jealousy and strife"? The deaths of Peter, Paul and the other Neronian martyrs can be attributed to "jealousy" only on the supposition that there were mutual denunciations. Paul was no revolutionary. He had combated resisters to the power of Rome, and had once threatened that those who resisted should "receive to themselves judgment".[75] The relations between Jewish and Pauline Christians, whether in Palestine or Rome, were extremely bitter. If at the time of the fire some Pauline Christians (not Paul himself) seized the occasion to denounce Jewish revolutionaries, and some Jewish revolutionaries denounced Paul, the statement that they died "victims of jealousy" is intelligible, but scarcely otherwise. Paul's anti-revolutionary fervour did not save him. Only his Roman citizenship earned him a quick death by the sword. By preaching a spiritualized version of Messianism Paul had tried to dam the revolutionary stream and avert a head-on collision with Rome. In this he failed. The Jewish tragedy had to be played out.

12. *The Social Basis of Pauline Christianity*

Enough has been said to show that Pauline Christianity as reflected in the Epistles was not a movement of the disinherited classes. Paul himself was a master-craftsman and a Roman citizen, and explicitly repudiated resistance to the Roman Empire. Though most of his converts were poor, the live wires of the Pauline churches were householders like Gaius and Stephanas of Corinth, Erastus "the treasurer of the city",[76] Paul's fellow-craftsman Aquila and the slaveowner Philemon -- men perhaps not "wise after the flesh" or "mighty" or "noble", but at least of the middle class and middling education, ranging from small property-owners to artisans in direct contact with the masses. We shall find, so far as the evidence goes, that the same is true of

those who continued Paul's work. The question arises why, if they had no quarrel with the Roman government, such men became Christians?

To this question one answer has already been given. Jewish revolutionaries were at this time propagating among the slaves, freedmen and poorer freemen of the Mediterranean cities Messianic hopes which, if not countered, would end in a head-on clash with the Roman Empire. Middle-class Jews like Paul, and such Gentiles as they could influence, though with no illusions about the Roman Empire or its rulers, were interested in averting that clash and tried to avert it by preaching a spiritualized version of Messianism. This accounts for the content of Pauline Christianity. But it hardly accounts for the persistence with which it was preached after it had failed in its immediate object of averting the clash between Rome and Judaism.

To account for this we must consider ancient imperialism under another aspect. Among its principal agencies was pagan priestcraft. For centuries many who were neither Jews nor revolutionaries, and who had no objection to paying tribute to whom tribute was due, had protested against the State religion. That religion had long been open to attack as an organization of imposture for political purposes and had actually been attacked for that reason before the time of Plato.

The strength of this protest may be gathered from the popularity of the Epicurean and early Stoic philosophies. In the fourth and third centuries B.C. ancient slave civilization and imperialism had not yet reached their peak. The successors of Alexander were "multiplying evils on the earth" by their dynastic

wars;[77] but Roman rapacity and repression did not yet bestride the Mediterranean. To Greek middle-class intellectuals it seemed possible to palliate the misery of the time by a simple appeal to reason -- by organizing a society of people who renounced the struggle for wealth and power, the "hatred, envy and contempt"[78] which that struggle produced, and the superstition and fear of death which it exploited. The teaching of Epicurus, the schoolmaster's son, took the Greek world by storm in the third century B.C.: his adherents were "so many in number that they could hardly be counted by whole cities".[79]

The fact that Epicureanism was a materialistic philosophy and concerned itself only with this life, whereas Christianity called in another world to redress the balance of this, must not blind us to important resemblances. Epicureanism, like Christianity, was a missionary movement rejecting the sanctified magic of official cults and the pretentious learning of rival schools. There is a parallel between Epicurus' advice to a young disciple to "steer clear of all culture"[80] and Paul's dismissal of the wisdom of the world as folly. Like the Christian churches, the school of Epicurus, though its leaders were men of education, admitted women and slaves to membership. Like Christianity, Epicureanism (in spite of the libels circulated by its enemies) inculcated a simple and even ascetic life. The Epicureans held that "the wise man would not fall in love"[81] just as Paul wrote: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."[82] The Epicurean eulogy of friendship as the royal road to happiness is not unlike the Christian panegyric on comradeship (agape). Both Epicurus and Paul accepted slavery; but Epicurus taught that "the wise man would not punish his servants, but rather pity them",[83] just as Paul exhorted Philemon to receive the fugitive Onesimus as "more than a slave -- a brother and comrade".[84] Epicurus bids his converts seek "peace of mind";[85] Paul would have his "free from

cares".[86] The Epicureans have been well described as "a sort of Society of Friends with a system of natural philosophy as its intellectual core".[87]

Even in religion the opposition between Epicureanism and Pauline Christianity was not as absolute as we might think. The theism of Epicurus is no mere lip-service. His teaching that "God is a living being, immortal and blessed", attested by "the common sense of mankind", and that "not the man who denies the gods worshipped by the multitude, but he who affirms of the gods what the multitude believes is truly impious",[88] reminds us of Paul's contrast between the "incorruptible God" manifest in creation and the idols worshipped by the pagan world[89] -- with the important difference that the gods of Epicurus are part of the material universe, while the God of Paul is prior to it and created it.

Epicureanism, in fact, in its best days appealed to the same class of people to whom Pauline Christianity was later to appeal -- not to the ruling class, who found superstition very useful, nor so much to the slaves and disinherited (though they were not excluded) as to small middle-class people who were the victims of power-politics which they could not control, and who, without being revolutionaries, resented the imposture planted on them by an official religion which was a mere wheel in the machinery of State.

But ancient social order was incompatible with the emergence of a scientifically based "society of friends". As Marx puts it, the "duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary one and a real one" is a result of "self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness" in the real world.[90] Not only did the ruling class, as Polybius,

Varro and Cicero frankly tell us, need superstition as an instrument of government, but Greek science, in which Epicureanism was intellectually rooted, slowly withered away in consequence of mass slavery and the divorce of theory from experiment. In the last century B.C. Epicureanism (still in the estimation of Cicero a "plebeian" philosophy) uttered its supreme protest in the noble poem of Lucretius. Then it began to lose ground before the religious counter-offensive launched by Augustus, and from a mass movement eventually shrank to a little-regarded sect. Its rival, Stoicism, after revolutionary beginnings (the early Stoics had advocated a world-state without classes or cults) had since the second century B.C. come to terms with the Roman State and its religion. The later Stoics were no more than a liberal party (not always so very hberal) within the ruling class of the Roman Empire. By the first century A.D. the possibility of either an Epicurean or a Stoic Utopia had disappeared. Whoever else might renounce the struggle for wealth and power, the Roman ruling class did not. They were using superstition as their auxiliary policeman, and refuting Epicurean arguments against the fear of death by a grimly literal experimentum crucis on rebel subjects and slaves. In such a world Epicureanism was no longer a possible creed for the masses. Opposition to the State religion ceased to be materialistic and became mystical.

Pauline Christianity offered people whose ancestors had flocked to Epicurean lectures an ideology equally opposed to the official religion, but turning its back on the material world and based on elements derived from Judaism, Platonism, Stoicism and the mystery religions. It owed nothing directly to the Epicureans, but it appealed to what had once been their public and had, as we have seen, many points in common with their teaching. The difference between the materialism of Epicurus and the mysticism

of Paul is explained by the different historical situations in which the two ideologies arose.

Did any Epicureans join the Pauline churches? We have evidence that some did. In I Corinthians xv Paul argues at considerable length against those who "say that there is no resurrection of the dead". These are not pagan opponents, but Christians -- "some among you".[91] They do not merely reject a physical in favour of a spiritual immortality. Paul would not have objected to that: he himself repudiates a resurrection of "flesh and blood".[92] The men whom he attacks say that Christian hopes relate to "this life only" and that death ends all.[93] Why did such people become Christians? Probably they were Epicureans who found Paul's other teaching to their liking, but could not swallow the dogma of immortality. The Epicureans had always fought that idea as the mainstay of the priestcraft they abominated. For them the reward of virtue was peace of mind in this life, and the punishment of vice its absence. There was no other life -- no reward and no punishment after death.

Now so far as punishment of the wicked was concerned Paul had no quarrel with the Epicureans. We may search the Epistles in vain for the doctrine of hell-fire. For Paul, the "wrath of God" against idolaters is proved by their vicious lives and by the ramifications of wickedness to which they lead.[94] In the end the wicked die, and Paul nowhere suggests that they live again. If he had read it, he would have endorsed the doctrine of Lucretius that "the life of fools becomes a hell here on earth".[95]

What concerns Paul is the fate of Christian believers. Epicurean peace of mind was impossible in the vast slave prison

of the Roman Empire. Nothing sufficed except redemption from the material world which had become wholly evil. Such redemption, says Paul, is open to those baptized into the Christian community. They thereby become part of the body of Christ, the indwelling spirit of the community, and share in his eternal life.

Pauline Christianity thus established on a mystical basis -- the only basis possible in the conditions of that time -- the fellowship of men and women, rich and poor, bond and free, which the Epicureans had tried and failed to establish on a materialistic basis. If they had stopped there, it is possible that Pauline Christians would not have been persecuted any more than the Epicureans. They exposed themselves to persecution when they began to preach their doctrines to the masses and used their funds to attract and capture the destitute followers of the Jewish Messianists. For, as we shall see, Pauline leaders who themselves had no quarrel with the Roman Empire, but only with its cults, thereby found themselves at the head of followers to whom the Empire itself was Satanic, and whom they could not repudiate without undoing their own work and disrupting the "body of Christ". Christian writers usually show little gratitude to the Epicureans who blazed the trail for them in the struggle with paganism. Tertullian cites with approval a maxim of Epicurus on the endurance of pain;[96] otherwise the Fathers seem to accept the vulgar estimate of him as a voluptuous atheist. In the atmosphere of the Roman Empire men who were trying to supplant the official religion by another could not afford to be connected with avowed materialists. But others saw the connection. In the second century A.D. the fashionable fancy religionist, Alexander of Paphlagonia, used, says Lucian, to warn "any atheist, Christian or Epicurean" to leave his meetings. It has been said of Christianity on its social side that "because Spartacus was beaten, Jesus had to

win".[97] We may say of it on its ideological side that because Epicurus was beaten, Paul had to win.

Notes

1 See chap. IV above. Suetonius (*Claudius*, XXV) gives no date. Orosius, a Christian writer of the fifth century, gives the ninth year of Claudius on the authority of Josephus. The extant text of Josephus has nothing about it, but here, as elsewhere, there may have been deletion.

2 In handling the Acts I have taken a middle position. I cannot follow Harnack and other theologians who date the book in the lifetime of Paul. If that were so, Luke's Gospel, of which the Acts are a continuation, would be equally early, and Mark's Gospel, of which Luke makes use, would be still earlier. But this is contradicted by the internal evidence of the Gospels themselves; for they presuppose the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as an accomplished fact (Mark xiii; Luke xxi). The Acts, therefore, arc some time later than A.D. 70. On the other hand I cannot, with Loisy, exclude the possibility that Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote the Third Gospel and the Acts. Still less can I, with Couchoud, date the two books after Marcion. I have therefore provisionally and with due reserve accepted Luke as the author and dated the work in his old age at the beginning of the second century. The arguments against its credibility hold good irrespective of authorship.

3 F. C. Baur and his followers, known as the Tübingen school, were the first modern scholars to stress the discrepancies between the Acts and the Pauline Epistles and their bearing on the historicity of the Acts. The Tübingen school assumed the

genuineness of Galatians, I and 2 Corinthians, and Romans, and pointed out that in these Epistles Paul is completely independent and in places very critical of Peter and the other apostles. In the Acts, on the contrary, he works in harmony with them and recognizes their authority. But if, as I argue, the Epistles are older than the Acts, we must prefer their evidence. Petrine and Pauline Christianity were sharply opposed; and the Acts are a late book designed to reconcile the two.

It is often said by modern apologists that "Tübingen is exploded". But the contradictions to which Tübingen drew attention are undeniable. The weakness of the Tübingen school lay (1) in their too easy acceptance of the four longest Epistles as wholly Pauline -- an assumption since corrected by Van Manen (who goes to the unnecessary length of rejecting all the Epistles) and by such independent scholars as Loisy and the too-little-read Rylands (who take up middle positions); and (2) in their Hegelian idealism and consequent neglect of the social contradictions which underlie the battle of ideas. In both fields the way lies, not back from Tubingen to tradition, but forward from Tübingen to a more scientific position. 4 Romans xvi, 7.

5 Acts xxi, 8-9, 16.

6 Galatians, i, 22. L. Gordon Rylands in *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles*, p. 352, concludes from this that Paul was never a persecutor and that the legend is an invention of the Petrine party. Loisy in *The Birth of Christian Religion*, chapters III-IV, leaves open the possibility that he had been a persecutor elsewhere than at Jerusalem.

7 i, 15-16.

8 Such pseudo-epistles were a common form of composition in antiquity. There are extant pseudo-epistles of Plato, Aristotle and many others which admirers of famous men fathered on them without any sense of impropriety.

9 ii, 20.

10 i, 15-17.

11 ii, 6-10.

12 Acts xv.

13 Paul never considered himself the apostle of the Gentiles only. In the Acts and Epistles alike he preaches "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans i, 16). This makes it difficult to credit the Petro-Pauline division of labour described in Galatians ii, 7-10.

14 This date is known from an inscription at Delphi.

15 I Thessalonians i, 10; iv, 15-17.

16 Loisy in *The Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter I and notes, regards ii, i-i6, as an editorial surcharge " in the spirit and style of Acts". See chap. VII, § 16.

17 v, 2.

18 2 Thessalonians iii, 17. Loisy describes the Second Epistle as "imitated from the First" (*Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter I). See chap. VII, § 2.

19 I Cor. i, 1-2.

20 i, 23-29.

21 ii, 6-8.

22 Ephesians vi, 12.

23 ii, 1-2.

24 2 Corinthians iv, 4.

25 See Loisy, *Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter I.

26 1 Corinthians v, 9-11.

27 The qualification which follows -- "If thou canst become free, use it rather" -- breaks the sense and is an interpolation by some Worldly Wiseman of the next century. Verse 23 also breaks the sense and seems to be by the same hand. These interpolations contradict the tenor of the argument (that slavery and freedom are matters of indifference) by suggesting that after all it is better to be free.

28 1 Corinthians vii, 18-22; 27-31.

29 The modern Catholic Church denies the laity the cup.

30 I Corinthians xi, 17, 20-21, 30, 33. See Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, pp. 159-160; Coulange, *The Evolution of the Mass*, Part I, chapter I, and Part II, chapter I; and Loisy, *Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter VII, 7, for the sorting out of early and late matter in this passage.

31 Pliny, Letters, X, 97. See chap. VII, § 13.

32 See chap. VII, § 5.

33 Tertullian, *Apology*, XXXIX. Tertullian adds that the ability to sing after drinking is a proof of sobriety!

34 1 Corinthians xi, 22-29, 34.

35 In Romans xvi, 7, the "apostles" Andronicus and Junia may be man and wife. But it is uncertain whether the second name is Junias (masculine) or Junia (feminine).

36 I Corinthians xii, 12, 27.

37 The word translated "communion" (*koinonia*) is better rendered "fellowship".

38 See Loisy, *Birth of the Christian Religion*, notes to chapter I.

39 For example, the first half of verse 5 contradicts the general argument, as do verses 18 and 22. Contrast 22 with 23-25, which say the exact opposite. See Rylands, *Critical Analysis oj the Four Chief Pauline Epistles*, pp. 128-131.

40 xv, 3-11. Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, pp. 184-187, discusses this passage in detail. Loisy, *Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter I, sees in it " a certain development of the evangelical tradition".

41 xv, 12-13,17-19.

42 20-23, 35-38, 42-44. As we have seen, an ear of corn was emblematic of human immortality in the mysteries of Eleusis.

43 5O-53.

44 2 Corinthians i, 1.

45 i, 12.

46 ii, 15. "A long dithyramb in praise of the true apostleship which belongs solely to Paul." Loisy, *op. cit*.

47 iii, 17-18.

48 iv, 4.

49 iv, 8-10.

50 v, 16.

51 x, 3-4.

52 x, 10.

53 xi, 1,4-5, 13, 16, 21-23.

54 See Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, pp. 24-27.

55 Romans i, 3.

56 xii 14-21.

57 xiii, I.

58 xiii, 3.

59 xiv, 14.

60 Rylands goes too far in arguing that, because the Roman church was not of Paul's foundation, he is unlikely to have written to them at all. But he would hardly have written this homily to a "community of which he had no personal knowledge". Loisy, *op. cit.*

61 A peculiarity of this late writer is the repeated use of the Greek phrase *me genoito* ("Far from it!" -- translated in our Bibles "God forbid!"). See Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, pp. 27-35, for detailed discussion. Rylands and Loisy divide the Epistle differently, but agree in making most of iii, v and vii post-Pauline.

62 Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, pp. 90-99. Loisy, *Birth of the Christian Religion*, chapter I and notes.

63 Acts xxiv, 17.

64 Romans xv, 26.

65 Tacitus, *Annals*, XII, 54.

66 Matthew xxiii, 15.

67 Philippians iii, 6, 8-11, 17; iv, 9, 11-13; Colossians i, 24-ii, 3. Loisy thinks Philippians Pauline, but interpolated. He puts Colossians at the beginning of the second century.

68 Ephesians ii, 20; iii, 5.

69 But Loisy questions even this. Marcion excluded the Pastorals from his collection.

70 Philippians i, 15.

71 2 Timothy i, 15; iv, 10-11.

72 Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44.

73 I Clement V-VI. See chap. VII, § 10.

74 Felix escaped punishment for his crimes through the influence of his brother Pallas. But Pallas fell in 55. (Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 14.) Therefore, unless Pallas made an

unrecorded come-back, Felix should have been recalled by 55 and Paul at Rome by 56.

75 Romans xiii, 2.

76 Romans xvi, 23.

77 I Maccabees i, 9.

78 Diogenes Laertius, X, 117.

79 Ibid., 9.

80 Ibid., 6.

81 Diogenes Laertius, X, 118.

82 I Corinthians vii, 1.

83 Diogenes Laertius, X, 118.

84 Philemon 15-16.

85 Diogenes Laertius, X, 136.

86 I Corinthians vii, 32.

87 Farrington, *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, ch. XII.

88 Diogenes Laertius, X, 123.

89 Romans i, 18-23.

90 Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, IV.

91 I Corinthians xv, 12.

92 Ibid., 50.

93 Ibid., 19.

94 Romans i, 18-32.

95 Lucretius, III, 1023.

96 Tertullian may have been an Epicurean before his conversion. See chapter VIII, § 10.

97 Hainchelin, *Les Origines de la Religion*.

CHAPTER VII

THE BREAK WITH JUDAISM

1. *The Jewish Revolt*, 66-73

In 66 the great Jewish revolt against Rome broke out at last. We owe our only detailed accounts of it to Josephus, the rich priest and traitor, whose venom against his countrymen is exceeded only by his admiration of himself. As usual, therefore, with revolutionary movements, the historian has to hew his way through a forest of prejudice to get at the truth.

In common with the whole Empire, Palestine had been drained dry by the misgovernment of Nero. But in Palestine, unlike other provinces, there was a resistance party of long standing capable of leading the masses. The revolt began when the procurator, Gessius Florus, raided the temple treasury to meet unpaid taxes. Since temples in addition to their religious uses served as banks, this forced the wealthier citizens to co-operate in a half-hearted fashion with the resistance. To cow opposition Florus ordered an indiscriminate massacre of the people and scourged and crucified many of them, including some wealthy Jews who happened to be Roman citizens. The rich were now no longer able to control the poor. Driven to desperation, the people fought back, seized the temple, forced Florus to retire to Caesarea and made the priests discontinue the daily sacrifice for the emperor. The economic roots of the movement are revealed by the fact that one of the first acts of its leaders was to burn all records of debt -- " the nerves of the city ", says Josephus with natural bias.[1]

The priestly nobility made desperate attempts to control the movement which they could no longer prevent. They managed to capture and kill a Zealot leader, a surviving son of Judas of Galilee, named Menahem, who had set up as king. The single cohort left by Florus in Jerusalem surrendered to them on promise of quarter, but were massacred

by the Jewish rank and file. Pogroms of Jewish men, women and children in the surrounding Greek cities made surrender unthinkable to any patriot. Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, marched on Jerusalem, but was routed with great loss of men and material. The priestly nobility were thus committed to war with Rome whether they liked it or not. Josephus, who was in their counsels and commanded under them in Galilee, admits that they hoped for a speedy Roman victory and were secretly preparing to surrender the country which they professed to defend. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the Zealots, supported by the poorer classes, made a dead set at the priests. After the Roman reconquest of Galilee in 67 (when Josephus seized his chance and ratted to the enemy) the priestly nobility were liquidated without ceremony and the high priesthood filled by lot.

The issue was for a moment in the balance during the upheavals which shook the Roman Empire in 68-69. The same misgovernment which had provoked the Jewish revolt led in 68 to risings in the western provinces and to the downfall and suicide of Nero. For a whole year the Empire was in the throes of civil war. Galba, the commander of the Spanish legions; Otho, put up by the praetorian guard at Rome; Vitellius, the nominee of the army of the Rhine -- all in turn failed to rally enough military support to hold what they had won. The only positive result of this year of chaos was to make many people regret Nero. A few months after the Roman plebs had paraded in caps of liberty in joy at his death, stories were current that he had escaped to Parthia, a false Nero appeared in the Aegean, and Otho was fain to take the name of Nero to legitimate his title. In the end the common interest of men of property throughout the Empire prevailed against the forces of disruption. The legions of the East and the Balkans rallied round Vespasian, the commander in Palestine, and imposed him by force on the distracted West. "The secret had been discovered", says Tacitus, "that an emperor could be made elsewhere than at Rome."

Instead of profiting by the enemy's difficulties, the Jewish leaders wasted time and men in ruinous mutual feuds, apparently expecting that the Roman Empire would collapse of itself. Not until Titus, the son of Vespasian, marched on Jerusalem in April of 70 did they present a united front. Then it was too late. The only Jewish leader who showed some traces of revolutionary statesmanship was Simon Bargiora ("son of a proselyte"), who manned his ranks by offering freedom to slaves and, according to Josephus, was followed with fanatical devotion. While the Jews fought on with lion-like courage, Titus ran up his siege-works, crucified five hundred prisoners a day till "room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies",[2] and slowly starved out Jerusalem. Thousands -- men, women and children -- perished in August in the conflagration of the temple or were massacred by the Romans in the streets. Thousands were butchered later in gladiatorial shows, and thousands sent to a living death in the Egyptian mines. Simon, the most dangerous leader, was reserved for the triumph of Titus and then put to death.

The last of the Zealots, besieged in 73 in the fortress of Masada, killed their wives and children and then themselves rather than fall alive into the

hands of Rome. All land in Judaea was confiscated and sold by auction; and Jews throughout the Empire were made to pay to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus at Rome the tax which they had formerly paid to the temple at Jerusalem.

2. *Christians and the Revolt*

According to Eusebius and Epiphanius, both fourth-century writers, the Christians of Jerusalem took no part in the national struggle, but migrated before the war to Pella beyond Jordan and were left in peace. That, no doubt, was the story told by the remnant of the Nazoraean sect to enquirers in the fourth century. But there are reasons for doubting its truth. Pella was raided by the Jews early in the war and would not have been a safe retreat for Jewish deserters. Moreover we know from Josephus that the Essenes took part in the revolt. He names one John "the Essene" among the commanders who fell in the war, and testifies to the bravery of Essene prisoners under torture. As we have seen, the links were very close between Essenes and Nazoraeans. There is evidence that at least some Nazoraeans stayed in Jerusalem during the siege. Josephus says that the defenders were buoyed up to the bitter end by false prophets who promised miraculous deliverance from the Romans. Some of these prophecies seem to have found their way into the Apocalypse of John, though the book as a whole was not written until over twenty years later. In a passage unconnected with its context an angel seals twelve thousand of each tribe of Israel to guarantee their safety in a coming disaster.[3] In another fragment the prophet is told to measure the crowded temple with a rod, and informed that the rest of the city up to the outer court will be held by the heathen for forty-two months (reminiscent of the time during which Jerusalem had been polluted by Antiochus over two centuries before). The implication is that the temple itself will be safe.[4] This reminds us of a prophet in Josephus who told people to "get up upon the temple, and there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance"[5] -- with the result that they perished in the flames. Both Josephus and Tacitus mention, as a portent of the fall of Jerusalem, the appearance at sunset of armies fighting in the sky. This too has a parallel in the Apocalypse, but with the difference that the atmospheric phenomenon which Romans and Roman

sympathizers interpreted as an omen of their own victory is for the prophet a token of the victory of Israel over the Satanic power of Rome.

"And there was war in heaven:
Michael and his angels warred with the dragon;
And the dragon warred,
And his angels;
And they prevailed not,
Nor was their place found any more in heaven."[6]

In another fragment the Son of Man is seen symbolically reaping the harvest of the earth -- this is, gathering the elect into his kingdom -- and treading the wicked in the "winepress of the wrath of God".

"And the winepress was trodden without the city,
And there came out blood from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses,
As far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs -- "[7]

an apt description of the condition of Palestine during the Jewish War. Sixteen hundred stadia (nearly two hundred miles) is about the length of Palestine. We shall meet with this simile of the harvest and the vintage again.

In another vision the prophet sees Rome as a drunken harlot clad in purple and riding a seven-headed beast, symbolic of her seven hills and of the seven emperors who are to fill up the measure of her iniquity.

"The seven heads are seven mountains,
On which the woman sits:
And they are seven kings;
The five are fallen,
The one is,
The other is not yet come;
And when he comes, he must continue a little while."[8]

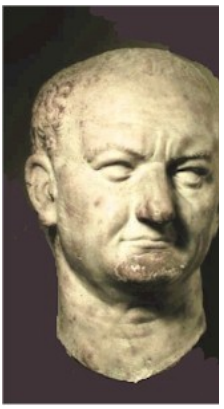
Rome will be devoured by the monster on which she rides and will be burnt to the ground. This alludes to the rumour that Nero had escaped to Parthia and would return to take vengeance on his enemies, and also, no

doubt, to the burning of the Capitol by the soldiers of Vitellius in 69. The prophecy must have originated during the chaos following the fall of Nero, but it shows signs of editing.[9]

Such passages show that Jewish Christians were not so detached from the national struggle as later tradition made out. The Pauline attitude was naturally very different. To allay the ferment in their congregations due to expectations of the collapse of the Empire, Pauline leaders resorted to an ingenious ruse. Suetonius tells us that astrologers had predicted to Nero in his lifetime that, if driven from Rome, he would reign in the East, and that some expressly promised him the kingdom of Jerusalem. These anticipations clearly belong to the end of his reign. We may be sure that among the wild rumours afloat in 69-70 some connected the fallen Nero with the Jewish revolt. Accordingly a Pauline writer, modelling himself on the genuine letter of Paul to Thessalonica twenty years before and copying the very hand of the apostle, concocted a pseudo-Epistle in which such rumours are cleverly exploited. The "day of the Lord" will not come until after a "man of sin", a "son of perdition", has seduced the Jews and been worshipped as a god in the temple at Jerusalem. This cannot happen until "one that restrains is taken out of the way" -- i.e. until the returning Nero has broken the Roman army in Palestine and installed himself there.[10]Meanwhile Pauline Christians are to beware of disorderly people, idlers and busybodies.

It is unlikely that 2 Thessalonians was first published at Thessalonica. Too many there would remember the real Epistle of Paul. The concoction was probably produced in some other Pauline church where it would better serve its purpose. It killed two birds with one stone: it discredited the Jewish rebels by insinuating that they would pay divine honours to Nero, whose atrocities had branded him as the personification of evil; and, by adjourning the "day of the Lord" until after that highly improbable event, it in effect postponed it indefinitely.

3. *The Flavian Dynasty*


Vespasian


Titus


Domitian

The reigns of Vespasian (69-79), Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96) mark a new phase in the history of Roman imperialism. The upheaval which put them on the throne had been due to the over-exploitation of the provinces by the capital. The success of the Flavian family marked a permanent transfer of power from Roman to Italian and provincial hands. They themselves were a banking and tax-farming family from central Italy. They threw the senate open to Italian and provincial notables, bestowed Roman citizenship liberally, and recruited their legions from the provinces where they served. This does not mean that the masses were less exploited; on the contrary, the tribute of the provinces was increased and in some cases doubled. But it went to enrich not only the Roman and Italian owning class, but provincial owners also, and their pampered lackeys in the army.

Under this systematic and intensified exploitation nothing was left to the masses but dreams. Survivors of the massacre in Judaea escaped to Alexandria, Cyrene and other Mediterranean cities, full of visions of vengeance against Rome, but with no plan of action that could lead to anything but more massacres, tortures and crucifixions. The wealthier Jews were foremost in denouncing these fugitive revolutionaries to the Romans. Josephus reluctantly witnesses to the courage of these people and to their refusal under the extremity of torture "to confess or seem to confess that Caesar was their lord".[11]

4. *The Primitive Gospel*

Probably these fugitives, fresh from the horrors of Palestine, were the earliest disseminators of what later took shape as the Gospel story. Our existing Gospels have been so edited that its original form is past recovery. But we saw reason in chapter V for thinking that the basis of the Synoptic Gospels was a document written under the immediate impact of the Jewish War and expressing a revolutionary Messianism. Passages in this category are by internal evidence traceable to the primitive Gospel. The catastrophic defeat of the Jewish revolt had to be accounted for. One way of doing so was to represent it as a judgment on the nation for the rejection of a past Messiah, and as the darkest hour before a dawn in which the dead leader would return to set up his kingdom. The rejected Messiah was identified with Jesus the Nazoraean, crucified by the procurator Pilate a generation before the destruction of Jerusalem.

But the primitive Gospel was in no sense a biography of Jesus. It was embellished with incidents which had been related of revolutionary leaders for generations back and had become common form in this class of story, and with teaching which was part of popular Jewish (especially Essene) tradition. Thus it was common form that the Messiah would perform miracles. It was written in the prophets that in Messianic times the blind should see, the deaf hear, the lame leap and the dumb sing. Such stories would be told of any Messianic claimant. And they also served another purpose. Things which could not safely be written in plain language could be put in the form of miracle stories. It was not safe to say openly that the Romans in Palestine would be driven into the sea. But it could be said figuratively. The Tenth Legion, quartered at Jerusalem, had for emblem a boar. By making Jesus send a "legion" of demons into a herd of swine and drive them into the water to drown, the revolutionary lesson is conveyed in symbol to those who "have ears to hear".[12] The revolutionary nature of the primitive Gospel is also proved by the fact that, while the Pharisees and Sadducees are denounced, the Zealots are not, and that all lists of the apostles include Simon the "Cananaean" or Zealot.[13]

Then there are such passages as

"Think not that I came
To send peace on the earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword!"[14]

and

"From the days of John the Baptist until now
The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence,
And the violent take it by force."[15]

There is the text promising "a hundredfold now in this time" to all who leave house, family or land for the sake of the kingdom;[16] the Messianic entry of Jesus into Jerusalem; the expulsion of the money-changers from the temple; the parable summoning the poor to the feast which farmers and merchants have despised; the prophecy that the "wars and rumours of wars" of 66-70 are "the beginning of travail" from which the Messianic kingdom will be born, and that the coining of the Son of Man will be "immediately after the tribulation of those days";[17] the reference to "the insurrection" unaccountably left in Mark's story of the Passion;[18] the title "king of the Jews" affixed to the cross.[19] How many of these incidents actually occurred, or how many of these sayings were uttered by Jesus, is immaterial. Some are clearly invented; some are probably founded on fact. The point is that a Christian writer or writers soon after the year 70 thought them good propaganda. In them the primitive revolutionary Gospel, uninfluenced by Pauline mysticism, pierces through the camouflage of our evangelists.

The primitive Gospel was written in Palestine in Aramaic at the time of the Jewish War, and turned into Greek by revolutionary propagandists in the Mediterranean cities to which they made their way. This accounts for the occurrence of Aramaic words and phrases in the existing Gospels. The use of Aramaic phrases would have served no useful purpose in a work originally written for a Greek-speaking public; but they are intelligible if the basic document was Aramaic. This evidence tallies, so far as it goes, with the statement of Papias in the second century that "Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language, and everyone translated them as best he could".[20]

5. *Primitive Church Organization*

We get a glimpse of the communities for which the primitive Gospel was written in a handbook of instruction compiled in Syria late in the first or early in the second century and entitled *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. The first part of this is based on a Jewish tract addressed to Gentile converts and probably entitled *The Two Ways*. This part contains no reference to Christianity. It contrasts the "way of life" (true religion, neighbourliness, chastity, honesty, sincerity, open-handedness) with the "way of death" (idolatry, lewdness, hypocrisy, duplicity, greed and oppression of the poor). In it occur (or have been inserted) passages so closely similar to passages in Matthew and Luke that at first glance they seem to be based on the Gospels. But on closer inspection the differences are as striking as the resemblances. The tone of the *Teaching*is more opportunist and less dogmatic than that of the Gospels. Thus, where Matthew and Luke have "Love your enemies",[21] the *Teaching* has "Love them that hate you, and you shall have no enemy."[22] Where Luke says, "Of him that takes away thy goods ask them not again,"[23] the*Teaching* gives a reason: "If anyone takes from thee what is thine, ask it not back; for indeed thou canst not."[24] Where Matthew has, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,"[25]the *Teaching* is more frankly opportunist: "Be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth."[26]Further, while the Synoptics attribute all these sayings to Jesus, the *Teaching* cites no authority. In fact, the *Teaching* takes us back behind the canonical Gospels to a time when submission to the Roman conqueror was a counsel of prudence, but not yet represented as the command of Christ.

The second part of the *Teaching* is wholly Christian, but shows no trace of Pauline doctrine. Most of it cannot be much later than the beginning of the second century, and some of it may be earlier. The Lord's Prayer is given substantially as in Matthew, and is probably taken from the primitive Gospel. The eucharistic formula is unlike any in the New Testament and contains no reference to the Last Supper. In the *Teaching*, as in the Pauline Epistles, the eucharistic bread and wine are part of a common meal at which church members eat and drink their fill. But in the*Teaching* bread and wine do not in any way symbolize the body and blood of Christ. The Christ of the *Teaching* is not a god, a projection of the Christian community, but a "servant" of God by whom "life and

knowledge, . . . faith and immortality" have been made known to men. The*Teaching* does not mention the crucifixion: its readers are less interested in the sufferings of the Messiah than in his coming triumph. The bread which as growing corn was "scattered over the hills", but has been baked into a loaf, symbolizes the assembly of God's people from the ends of the earth into his kingdom.[27] What the wine symbolizes we are not told, but we can guess if we compare the *Teaching* with the Apocalypse of John. There, as we saw, the reaping of the harvest represents the deliverance of the elect, and the treading of the vintage the destruction of their enemies. The danger of committing such matter to writing explains why the *Teaching* is silent on the symbolism of the cup.

In the last part we get a picture of day-to-day life in Christian organizations. As in the Pauline churches, the key people are travelling missionaries or "apostles" (not confined to the traditional twelve) and preachers or "prophets". So long as they conform to the teaching in the handbook, they are to have a free hand and are not to be interrupted or heckled. But apostles are not to stay in the same place more than one or at most two days. They are allowed subsistence for their journey to the next place of call, but are not to charge fees. Resident preachers and teachers are allowed maintenance, but not money payment. Careerists ("Christmongers") are sternly denounced. The common meal is held every Sunday, quaintly called "the Lord's day of the Lord", since there were other "Lord's days" sacred to pagan gods.[28] There is no indication that Sunday was kept as the day of the resurrection. The pagan "day of the sun" was consecrated to the Christian common meal because it was already a festal day in the circles in which converts were made; the Gospel stories of the resurrection came later.

The affairs of each church are managed by local officials ("bishops" or overseers, and "deacons" or helpers) who are democratically elected, and who also preach and teach; but their functions are dismissed in two sentences. Evidently "apostles" and "prophets" were more important.

The *Teaching* ends with an exhortation to vigilance. Evil days are at hand, when false prophets will abound, and a "world-deceiver" (the returned Nero) worshipped as a god will rule the earth and "commit iniquities which have never yet been done since the beginning. Then all created men shall come into the fire of trial, and many shall stumble and perish. But they that endure in their faith shall be saved." Then the heavens shall open, the trumpet shall sound, the dead saints shall rise, and "the world shall see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven".[29]

The *Teaching* is not the work of one hand or one time, but it is good evidence for the character of the Christian movement in Syria late in the first and early in the second centuries. Essentially it was a breakaway Judaism. The *Teaching* is adapted from a Jewish pamphlet. Jesus is the Messiah and the servant of God, but not himself God. The Pauline idea of Christ as the indwelling spirit of the Christian community is totally absent. Submission to the oppressor is urged on grounds of expediency, but is not cited as the command of Jesus. Week by week the faithful pray for, and celebrate in symbol, the speedy coming of the kingdom of God, when his will shall be done on earth as in heaven, his people shall be gathered in, and his enemies shall be trampled in the winepress of his wrath.

The *Teaching* circulated mainly in Syria and Egypt. The primitive Gospel, originating in the same area and written in the same spirit, had a far wider circulation and caused far more anxiety to the Paulinists who were striving to inoculate the masses against revolutionary propaganda. When the posthumous eulogist of Paul who wrote 2 Corinthians x-xii referred to Messianists "according to the flesh" who preached "another Jesus, whom we did not preach",[30] no doubt he had in mind the disseminators of the Gospel of a revolutionary Messiah, so different from the spiritual Christ of Paul and so dangerously attractive to the disinherited classes of the Mediterranean world.

6. *The Roman Gospel*

To counter such propaganda Pauline Christians needed a Gospel of their own. The first essay in this direction was the Gospel of Mark, the

original edition of which was written some few years after the suppression of the Jewish revolt, when the primitive Gospel had reached Rome and was causing a stir there. There is no reason to doubt that the author of our Second Gospel was the Mark who figures in early Christian tradition as a companion sometimes of Peter and sometimes of Paul. In the Pauline Epistles Mark is a cousin of Barnabas, a fellow-worker of Paul and one of his companions during his imprisonment at Rome.[31] In 1 Peter (a spurious Epistle, but good evidence for the tradition current early in the second century) Mark is represented as a close companion ("son") of Peter on his mission to Rome ("Babylon").[32] The Acts tell a longer story. "John, whose surname was Mark," comes from Jerusalem, where his mother is known to Peter and is apparently a person of property, since the church meets in her house. Mark, therefore, is not one of the "poor saints". He accompanies Paul and Barnabas on their mission to Cyprus, but leaves them when they proceed to Asia Minor. As a result Paul refuses to take him on a second mission and quarrels with Barnabas. Mark then goes with Barnabas to Cyprus and drops out of the narrative. The Epistles nowhere allude to the mission to Cyprus or to the desertion of Mark. The story may be a romance of the author of the Acts designed to disparage a rival evangelist. Papias, writing about 140, is the last authority whose account of Mark is worth recording. He tells us that he had heard from an unnamed "elder" that Mark was not a disciple of Jesus, but was Peter's interpreter and wrote "accurately, but not in order", what Peter had related of the sayings and doings of Jesus.[33]

No doubt Mark had had relations of some sort with Peter, and certainly with Paul. But Papias' account of the origin of his Gospel must be rejected. It is a Pauline, not a Petrine work, and it is based not on personal reminiscences -- least of all on Peter's -- but on variant versions of an earlier Gospel freely rehandled. Thus the feedings of the five thousand (Mark vi, 31-44) and the four thousand (viii, 1-9) -- both in a "desert place" and both with a few loaves and fishes -- are obviously variants of a single story told to explain the origin of the Christian common meal. The disciples are just as helpless on the second occasion as on the first; and there is no hint that the same situation has arisen before. Each miracle is followed by a clash between Jesus and the Pharisees (vii, 1-13; viii, 11-12) and by a miraculous cure (vii, 32-37; viii, 22-26) on

which Jesus enjoins silence. Evidently the story reached Rome in two versions. Mark inserts both and adds a paragraph in which Jesus rebukes the stupidity of his disciples (viii, 14-21).

Mark's object is to remodel the Jesus of the primitive Gospel in the image of the Pauline Christ and thereby to draw the sting of revolutionary Messianism. In Mark, Jesus becomes Son of God through the divine Spirit descending on him at his baptism and endowing him with power over demons, disease and death. Faced by this phenomenon, the countrymen, kindred and even disciples of Jesus are completely at sea. His friends say that he is mad. His mother and brothers (who know nothing of the virgin birth of later legend) try to contact him and are bluntly told that

"Whoever shall do the will of God,
He is my brother and sister and mother."[34]

Mark has an answer ready for those who claim to quote against him the actual teaching of Jesus. That teaching, says he, consisted of parables which the multitude were not meant, and which the twelve were too stupid to understand. It was for those who had "ears to hear".[35] Mark suppresses the primitive material (preserved in Matthew and Luke) on the good time coining for the poor and hungry, the impossibility of serving God and Mammon, the taking of the kingdom of God by violence, the exaltation of the low and the humiliation of the high. It is usual to trace this material to a separate document, which modern scholars call Q from the German *Quelle*, "source". But there is no reason to think that Q ever existed as a document. Q is simply that part of the primitive Gospel which Mark as a Pauline Christian deliberately suppressed.

The only occasions when Jesus, in Mark, speaks plainly to the multitude are when he proclaims the Pauline doctrines of the nullity of Jewish food taboos and the indissolubility of marriage. Both these have to be explained over again to the dense disciples. Peter in a lucid moment recognizes Jesus as the Christ, but immediately spoils it all by "rebuking" him for prophesying his death and resurrection; whereupon Jesus turns fiercely on Peter with: "Get thee behind me, Satan!"[36] (We remember how

in 2 Corinthians xi the "pre-eminent apostles" are denounced as ministers of Satan.) The twelve go from stupidity to stupidity and from cowardice to cowardice. The transfiguration reduces Peter to gibbering imbecility. They dispute over their precedence in the Messianic kingdom and end by running for their lives, while Peter thrice denies Jesus. All this is not biography or history, but the counter-propaganda of Mark, the fellow-worker of Paul, to the Palestinian gospel of revolution. It is hard to believe that Mark had ever been intimate with Peter, whom he depicts in so contemptible a light. In order to dissociate Christians from any subversive activity he deliberately shifts the responsibility for the crucifixion from Pilate to the Jews -- an audacious fiction which later evangelists underlined in every possible way.

Mark is a careless writer. In revising the primitive Gospel he lets details stand, such as the limitations of the healing power of Jesus, which are hard to reconcile with the thesis that Jesus was the vehicle of the divine Spirit; and others, such as the "legion" miracle (v, 1-20), the promise of earthly rewards (x, 29-30), the Messianic entry into Jerusalem (xi, i-io) and the allusion to "the insurrection" (xv, 7) which reveal the revolutionary character of the real movement. The genuine part of Mark ends at xvi, 8, with the women flying from the empty tomb and saying "nothing to anyone; for they were afraid". But he cannot have ended so. Whatever he said about the risen Christ was so unacceptable to second-century Christians that they deleted it and substituted verses 9-20, which are a mere condensation from the Third and Fourth Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Some fourth-century manuscripts lack this ending.[37]

Gospel-making was an important instrument in the gradual fusion of Pauline and Jewish Christianity. The Pauline propaganda of the middle of the first century had opposed to revolutionary Judaism the idea of a wholly spiritual Christ whose kingdom was not of this world, who shared the sufferings of his votaries and who gave them victory over death. This propaganda failed in its immediate object. The gospel of an actual Messiah who had suffered on a Roman cross, but would return and set up the kingdom of God on earth, had a greater mass appeal -- the greater because the recent deaths of so many revolutionaries on Roman crosses cried aloud

for vengeance. The Paulinists had therefore to de-Judaize the historical Jesus, to refashion him as a mystery-god and so to transfer the kingdom of God from earth to heaven. This was the work of the later Gospel-makers.

7. *Domitian and the Jews*

The process was hastened by the repression of Judaism under the Flavian emperors and especially under Domitian. The Jewish War had forced into the open the antagonism which had always existed between Judaism, with its dream of a kingdom of God on earth, and the existing Graeco-Roman social order. Under Domitian not only was conversion to Judaism forbidden on pain of death or confiscation of goods, but (says Suetonius) "those were prosecuted who, without publicly acknowledging that faith, yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people".[38] Converts to Christianity could escape Domitian's inquisitorial net only by a total repudiation of Judaism and its obligations. Since the hope of a kingdom of God on earth was the root from which the Christian movement had stemmed, very few Christians were ready for such a total repudiation. In the primitive Gospel:

"Till heaven and earth pass away,
One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law."[39]

In the less rigid *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which circulated in Syria and Egypt, the Jewish law is the ideal to which converts are to conform as far as they can. "If thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect; but if thou art not able, what thou art able, that do."[40] The crucial question for Christians under Domitian was how much of Judaism they could jettison without ceasing to be Christians.

One of the chief centres of Jewish revolutionary agitation and anti-Jewish repression was Alexandria. At Alexandria about this time appeared an anonymous Christian tract commonly known as the Epistle of Barnabas.[41] The author pleads for the total repudiation by Christians of the Jewish law. Outdoing Philo in the allegorical interpretation of scripture, he contends that the Pentateuch was never meant to be taken literally, and that the Jews misunderstood it from the first. In proof he cites the invectives of the ancient prophets against the temple cult. The "land

flowing with milk and honey" is not Palestine, but (by a freak of interpretation) Jesus Christ -- "land" symbolizing a man (since man is made of earth) and "milk and honey" the Christian faith. "Circumcision" means not the Jewish initiation rite, but circumcision of the "heart" by hearing and believing. Food taboos mean not abstinence from particular meats, but abstinence from the vices typified by various animals. Here the author introduces some odd bits of popular zoology. The building of the Jewish temple was a sin justly punished by its demolition. The true temple is in the hearts of Christian believers. The Messiah is not, as pretended by the Jews, a Son of Man, much less a Son of David. The twelve apostles were "sinners above all sin". In this the author outdoes Mark, who makes the twelve out fools, but stops short of calling them knaves. The author ends (notwithstanding his anti-Judaism by citing, in a slightly different form, the Jewish tract on the *Two Ways* which is also used in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Owing to its extreme anti-Judaism the Epistle of Barnabas seems never to have circulated much outside Alexandria and, though found in some manuscripts, did not eventually win its way into the . canon of the New Testament.

8. *The Apocalypse*

How hard it was to cut the Jewish roots of Christianity may be gathered from the popularity among Christians of the most Jewish book that ever found its way into the New Testament. About 93-95 a Jewish Christian in Asia Minor, probably one who had escaped from Palestine twenty years before, collected some prophecies (possibly his own) dating from the Jewish revolt, added much new matter and produced the poem known as the Apocalypse (or Revelation) of John. Jewish apocalypses were invariably pseudonymous; and there is no reason to think that the author had anything to do with John the apostle.[42] He uses the name for intelligible reasons to conceal his own identity. He was not a native of any of the Greek cities of Asia Minor to which his work is addressed; for he writes Greek as a foreign language which he has never mastered.

Anyone familiar with the prophetical books of the Old Testament can see that the visions of the Apocalypse are a literary artifice and not the record of a personal experience. Its themes and its very language are taken

wholesale from the Hebrew prophets. To collect such in material was easy to anyone soaked in the older prophetic literature. But into this mould of stock prophetic imagery the writer pours a wealth of white-hot invective which could have come only from a Jewish revolutionary under the Flavian emperors. He is brimful of hate against Rome and against the Pauline missionaries who preach submission to Rome.

The first part of the Apocalypse consists of seven short epistles (as we should say, open letters) to Christian congregations in Asia Minor which had once been a stronghold of Paulinism, but which had become a scene of furious conflict. Writing in his ungrammatical Greek, he congratulates the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia on having seen through the false apostles and false Jews, the "synagogue of Satan".[43] But in some churches the Paulinists are harder to evict. At Pergamum they are in a strong position. At Thyatira they are led by a woman preacher or "prophetess" whom the author fiercely denounces as "Jezebel".[44] Evidently the embargo on women preachers, later inserted in the Pauline Epistles, was not yet in force at the time of the Apocalypse. But "Jezebel" leads a minority only. The majority are commended for rejecting "the deep things of Satan" -- a parody of the phrase, "the deep things of God", used by Paul of his own teaching.[45] The worst marks are awarded to the church of Sardis, which is "dead",[46] and to that of Laodicea, which the Messiah will "spew out of his mouth" as "neither cold nor hot".[47]

After this the seven churches drop out of the poem. The transition is so abrupt that it is reasonable to regard the letters to the churches as a later insertion in the work. But if so, the insertion is the writer's own. The uniformity of language, even down to mistakes in grammar, establishes unity of authorship.

The author's ideas of the "kingdom of God" are as materialistic and un-Pauline as they can be. The Messiah, symbolized in the poem by a slain Lamb -- a projection and personification of the martyrs of all ages, "slain from the foundation of the world"[48] -- has purchased by his blood an

earthly kingdom for "men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation".[49] The redeemed are to be kings and priests: the author recognizes no hierarchy within the movement. But before that kingdom comes, tribulation stalks the earth. Four horsemen (taken from Zechariah) carry war, famine and pestilence to mankind. Corn soars in price, while the luxuries of the rich abound.[50]Jerusalem is trodden under foot by the Gentiles. During this time the beast-empire of Rome -- the very incarnation of Satan -- led by a returned Nero slays those who will not worship his image. Nero is cryptically identified by the number 666 -- the sum of the numerical values of the letters of "Nero Caesar" in Hebrew. False Neros had appeared in the eastern provinces in 69, in 80 and again in 88. But to many, and. perhaps to our prophet, Domitian himself with his cruelty and his assumption of the title of "Lord and God" ("names of blasphemy" in Christian eyes)[51] seemed Nero enough to fill the bill.

In any case the days of Antichrist are numbered. Angels flying in mid-heaven proclaim that the hour of judgment is come, that "Babylon the great" (Rome) is fallen, and that emperor-worshippers will be tormented for ever with fire and brimstone. The prophet's ferocity, revolting if read out of its historical context, is a natural retort to the ferocity with which the Flavian emperors had treated the conquered Jews. Plagues of boils, of blood, of scorching heat, of supernatural darkness, recalling those of Egypt in Exodus, rain on the Roman Empire amid angelic acclamations.

"I heard the angel of the waters saying,
'Righteous art thou,
Who art and who wast, thou holy one,
Because thou didst thus judge:
For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets,
And blood hast thou given them to drink:
They are worthy.' "[52]

Parthian armies invade the stricken Empire and burn Rome. A hymn of hate celebrates the fall of the harlot city with her merchants, mariners and client kings.

"The merchants of the earth
Weep and mourn over her,
For their cargoes
No man buys any more;
Cargoes of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls,
And fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet;
And all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel of most precious wood,
And of bronze and iron and marble,
And cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankincense,
And wine and oil and fine flour and wheat,
And cattle and sheep; and of horses and chariots and slaves,
And souls of men."[53]

Traffic in human beings crowns the prophet's indictment.

With Rome a smoking ruin, the kingdom of God is inaugurated on earth. The Messiah, a warrior in blood-stained garments, leads the armies of heaven to annihilate his foes. The beast-emperor is cast into hell; and the birds of the air fatten on the flesh of his armies. For a thousand years the faithful will live and reign with the Messiah in Jerusalem. At the end of the millennium the prophet, following Ezekiel, foresees a last war between the saints and new enemies from the ends of the earth, and a last supernatural victory. Then the last judgment of the dead, when cowards, traitors and idolaters will join Nero in hell; and then a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem in which God shall dwell with men, and death, mourning and pain shall be no more. The author's Utopia, though miraculous, is earthly and material to the end.

The end of the Apocalypse, like the beginning, has been rehandled. The new Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth twice, in xxi, 2, and in xxi, 9-10. In xix, 10, the seer falls down to worship the angel who shows him the vision, and is rebuked; in xxii, 8-9, the same mistake provokes the same rebuke. Obviously, therefore, the section beginning at xxi, 9, is not a continuation, but an alternative version of what immediately precedes it. It looks as if the author had rewritten this part in a second edition, and as if a later editor, finding two versions current, had combined them regardless of repetition. The account of the new Jerusalem, like the rest of the

Apocalypse, is an echo of ancient prophecies, especially those of Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah. The author in his second edition seems to take a less ferocious view of the destiny of the Gentiles. The gates of the new Jerusalem are open to all except idolaters, sorcerers, murderers and the like; by the riverside grow trees bearing fruit every month; and "the leaves of the tree" are "for the healing of the nations".[54]

The popularity of the Apocalypse is proved not only by the issue of two editions by the author himself, but by its early acceptance as a canonical book. Papias cited it as authoritative in the first half of the second century. Justin in the middle of the century, in spite of his pro-Roman attitude, accepts the Apocalypse as the work of John the apostle. But as time went on the book proved embarrassing to Church leaders who sought accommodation with the Roman Empire. Not only Marcion, an exponent of extreme anti-Judaism, but other second- and third-century writers denied its authority. Some went so far as to ascribe it to Cerinthus, a prominent Jewish Christian at the end of the first century, whose doctrine of a material millennium was obnoxious to the Greek Fathers; and the attribution is not impossible. Eusebius in the fourth century hesitates whether to class the Apocalypse among canonical or spurious books. Its place in the canon was eventually secured by the support of the mass of Christians who, whatever scholars and courtiers might say, found its invective against the rulers of the earth and its prophecy of a material millennium exactly to their taste.[55]

9. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*

Paulinists were trying to wean the Christian movement from dreams of revolution. This could not be done by totally repudiating Judaism, but only by reinterpreting it and proving that it contained prophecies of its own supersession. That is the line taken in an anonymous tract published at Rome about this time, entitled in our Bibles the Epistle to the Hebrews and attributed, in the teeth of internal and external evidence, to the apostle Paul. It is an epistle in name only. Apart from a few verses tacked on to the end to give it the look of a letter, it has no resemblance to one: it bears no name and no indication of its addressees. It was first attributed to Paul at the end of the second century at Alexandria, probably for no better

reason than to find an apostolic author for a highly esteemed piece of writing. Tertullian, writing about the same time at Carthage, attributes it to Barnabas. But the work clearly belongs not to the first, but to the second generation of Christians. At Rome, where it first appeared, its Pauline authorship was denied down to the fourth century. At Rome today that denial is heresy.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition by a Pauline Christian to other Pauline Christians (not necessarily Hebrews) of the relation of Christianity to Judaism. The work is in good literary Greek -- the best in the New Testament -- and its addressees seem to be people of means and education. Under the pressure of Domitian's inquisition they are in danger of apostasy to paganism. The author's object is to stiffen their morale. He reproaches them with requiring instruction when they ought to be instructing others. He tells them that Christianity is not the negation of Judaism, but the substance of which Judaism is the shadow. To prove this he appeals to the Old Testament, which he twists in a way that was to become increasingly common as the breach between Christianity and Judaism developed. After the manner of Philo he ransacks the Psalms, the prophets and the Pentateuch to establish conclusions at which their authors would have gaped -- the divinity and incarnation of Christ, and the supersession of the Jewish cult by his sacrifice of himself. In a typical piece of Philonian allegorizing the author uses the myth of Melchizedek, to whom in Genesis Abraham gives a tenth of the spoils of victory, to prove the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. Consequently apostasy is not less, but more heinous in Christians than in Jews; indeed it is past pardon. The author rejects an earthly millennium. Unlike the heroes of old who fought for an earthly Israel, Christians desire "a better country, that is a heavenly".[56] He exhorts them not to abandon their meetings, "as the custom of some is"; to "call to remembrance the former days" (those of Nero's persecution); and to resist apostasy, as they have not yet done, to the death.[57]

From the reiterated warnings of this writer against apostasy it is evident that with middle-class Christians morale was a serious problem. They did not share the heartfelt hatred of the Empire which animated the

poorer Messianists. There was real danger that they would fail in the hour of trial. To prevent that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written.

10. *End of the Flavian Dynasty*

Domitian's persecution of Jews and Christians cost him dear. He had made the mistake of fighting on two fronts. The power of the Flavian dynasty, as we have seen, depended on the support of the owning classes of the Empire as a whole. Domitian failed to understand this, and became involved in a feud with the senate at the very time when he was posing as the protector of Roman institutions against subversion from below. Exploiters and exploited, senators and small men found themselves the victims of a common tyranny. This brought certain highly placed Romans into touch with the Christian movement. In 95 Domitian put to death a senator named Acilius Glabrio on a charge of plotting revolution. It is singular that in one of the catacombs used as burying-places by the early Christians there should be fragments of the epitaphs of several Acilii, including an Acilius Glabrio. Evidently many of the family were Christians; and the revolutionary senator may have been among them. In the following year, 96, Domitian executed his own cousin Flavius Clemens, an ex-consul, and banished Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Clemens, on a charge of "atheism and Jewish practices".[58] There is no room for doubt that they were Christians. The oldest of the catacombs is proved by its inscriptions to have lain in ground belonging to Flavia Domitilla. Eight months later Domitian was assassinated in his bedchamber by the steward of Domitilla, Stephanus, and some accomplices. One Christian at least -- and she a woman -- was no non-resister!

Flavius Clemens is probably the only real person behind the shadowy figure of "Clement of Rome". Shortly before, or perhaps shortly after the death of Domitian the Roman church addressed a letter to the Corinthian church on questions of discipline. There is no internal evidence of authorship; and the fact that the letter bears no name is proof positive that at that time no single bishop, and therefore no Pope was at the head of the Roman church. The name of Clemens (Clement) seems to have been attached to the letter late in the second century for no better reason than

that he was known to have been prominent in the Roman church about the date when it was written, and had been enrolled in the spurious list of "bishops of Rome" (beginning with Peter) composed later on.

The main interest of the Epistle lies in the light it throws on church organization at the end of the first century. As we have seen, the earliest churches had no clergy in our sense of the word. "Spiritual gifts" such as preaching or teaching could be exercised by any church member, man or woman. "Bishops" and "deacons" (literally, overseers and helpers) were elected officials of the local church. But, by a process not unfamiliar to us, elected officials came in course of time to consider themselves entitled to continuity of office. About 95-96 a party in the Corinthian church dismissed several of their "bishops". We do not know why; but we know that at that time a struggle was raging between the Jewish and Pauline parties in the neighbouring churches of Asia Minor, and we may guess that it had repercussions at Corinth. Perhaps a rank-and-file movement, fired by the millennial hopes of the Apocalypse, revolted against grey-bearded elders who had known Paul. The beaten party at Corinth appealed to the Roman church; and this Epistle is the reply.

The writer uses good literary Greek and is evidently a man of education. After apologizing for delay in answering, due to "the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses which have befallen us" (Domitian's persecution), he vehemently supports the dismissed officials. He deplores the "detestable and unholy sedition" of "a few headstrong and self-willed persons" which has disrupted the church of Corinth.[59] The young are to obey their elders. Jealousy and envy have wrought evil from, the beginning of the world, and in Nero's persecution brought about the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. This, as we saw in the last chapter, is the earliest evidence we have of the fate of Peter and Paul, and the first attempt at a posthumous reconciliation between the rival apostles.[60] The writer cites a few "words of the Lord Jesus", enjoining mercy and forgiveness, from a source unidentifiable with any known Gospel. He knows and cites I Corinthians and the Epistle to the Hebrews (naturally, since it had lately appeared in Rome) but no other writing of the New

Testament. With something like Roman pride he refers to the discipline of the legions as an example of that which should prevail in the Church.[61]

"Let us mark the soldiers enlisted under our rulers, how exactly, how readily, how submissively they execute the orders given them. All are not prefects, nor tribunes, nor centurions, nor captains of fifty and so forth; but each man in his own rank executes the orders given by the emperor and the governors. The great cannot exist without the small, nor the small without the great . . .

"So in our case let the whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each man be subject to his neighbour, according as he was appointed with his special grace. Let not the strong neglect the weak; and let the weak respect the strong. Let the rich minister aid to the poor; and let the poor give thanks to God because he has given him one through whom his wants may be supplied."[62]

He then lays down what was to become known as the doctrine of apostolic succession. Christ appointed the apostles; the apostles appointed bishops and deacons to succeed them and provided that "other approved men" should succeed these. Bishops and deacons, provided their conduct is good, are not to be "thrust out".[63] This is the first assertion in Christian literature of the irremovability of the clergy. It is flatly contrary to the freedom of election recognized in the*Teachingg of the Twelve Apostles*. It is significant that the only proof of his statements offered by the writer is from the Old Testament. He comparers the Corinthian rebels to the Israelites who mutinied against Mosses and Aaron, and to the persecutors who threw Daniel to the lions andd his three friends into the fiery furnace! He calls on them either to submit or to quit Corinth, that "the flock of Christ" may "be at peace with its duly appointed elders".[64]

This Episistle is an example of the combination of social conservatism, loyalty to the Roman Empire and an authoritarian view of church government which had become the policy of the Pauline party. History was is on their side. The result of the Jewish War had proved revolt against Rome to be hopeless and forced revolutionaries to take

refugee in dreams and fantasies. Domitian's prohibition of conversion to Judaism drove a permanent wedge between the church and the synagogue. The leading Jewish rabbis, living on Roman sufferance at Jamnia in the coastal plain of Palestine, abandoned propaganda and gave themselves up to those scholastic studies of the law and the prophets which later produced the Mishnah and the Talmud. Revolutionary propaganda like the Sibylline Oracles and the apocalypses of Enoch, Baruch and Ezra still circulated, but found no favour with the rabbis. These Jewish apocalypses owe their preservationn to Christian copyists and translators, and survive today only in Greeek, Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic or Slavonic texts. Yet, with the single exception of the Apocalypse of John, no such work has found its way into the New Testament. The Christian rank and file might cherish writings which prophesied the fall of world-empires and the advent of the millennium. Their leaders were set on reconciliation with Rome and on the diversion of hopes of redemption from earth to heaven.

This proocess was assisted by economic factors. Revolutionary propaganda naturally appealed most to the poorest classes—the "poor saints" of Palestine for whom Paul had collected money from his churches; the debtors, vagabonds and runaway slaves who, Josephus says, had flocked to the standard of the Jewish rebels; the Jews of Rome whose penury made them a butt of satirists like Juvenal: and such of the poorer Gentiles as could be won by visions of a millennium founded on the ruins of fallen "Babylon". Such propaganda might have mass appeal, but could command no money. Pauline propaganda on the other hand, though equally addressed to the masses, had from the first moneyed supporters -- Paul himself, from whom the greedy Felix had hoped for a bribe; Lydia, the seller of purple whom Paul converted at Philippi; Stephanas of Corinth, "Erastus the treasurer of the city",[65] and other affluent Greeks who contributed to Paul's funds; Philemon of Colossae, to whom he sent back a runaway slave; and, a generation later, the addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who "ministered to the saints and still do minister".[66]Money, leisure and organizing experience were more likely to be found among Pauline than among Jewish Christians. Once the Paulinists had put their funds and power of organization at the disposal of the poorer Christians, and had proved their equal title to the Christian name by resisting the emperor-worship exacted by Domitian, their control

of most of the churches (and of the disbursement of benefits and admission to, or exclusion from, the common meal, which went with that control) was a matter of time. Once in control, they naturally favoured a system of church government which would prevent the rank and file getting out of hand as they had done at Corinth.

The death of Domitian gave them a few years of quiet in which to work. Nerva, his successor, revoked his repressive edicts. Pauline leaders could reasonably hope that, if they restrained their fellow-Christians from revolutionary action, they might enjoy at least an equal toleration with the Jews, who had not long since been in open rebellion against the Empire; and at Rome at least they seem at this time to have received it. Under Nerva and in the early years of Trajan proceedings against Christians were so rare that, when the younger Pliny became governor of Pontus and Bithynia in 111, he did not know how to deal with Christians and had to write to Trajan for guidance.

11. *The Syrian Gospel*

The literature of the churches had to be rewritten to meet the new situation. As we have seen, the only Gospels which can be proved to have existed in the first century are, firstly, an Aramaic work attributed to the apostle Matthew and written under the immediate impact of the Jewish revolt -- a manifesto of revolutionary Messianism, looking for the speedy advent of the kingdom of God on earth and circulating only in the Aramaic-speaking churches of Palestine and Syria; secondly, Greek documents purporting to be translations of this and circulating in the chief Mediterranean cities; and thirdly, Mark's Gospel, written at Rome as a Pauline counterblast to this, deliberately suppressing its revolutionary message and depicting Peter and company as dolts who had misunderstood Jesus and had finally forsaken him and fled.

All such documents were subject to interpolation. There was no central authority yet to declare one writing canonical and another apocryphal. Such partisan pamphlets could hardly serve as manuals of instruction in churches containing both Pauline and Petrine Christians. The

rival versions had to be harmonized. The posthumous reconciliation of Peter and Paul had to be completed.

The work was done independently in different parts of the Empire. In the early years of the second century a Syrian Christian dovetailed the Jewish Matthew with the Pauline Mark, and produced for the Greek-speaking churches of the East what we know as the "Gospel according to Matthew". The Jews were numerically strong in the East; and Jewish Christians still predominated in the eastern churches. The primary aim of our First Gospel is to wean such people from their Jewish background. The result is a strange patchwork in which the author combines contradictory sources without much intelligence. His Jesus is a Jew, "the son of David, the son of Abraham",[67] but also the Pauline Son of God. From the primitive Jewish Gospel the evangelist takes long discourses said to have been addressed by Jesus to the Jewish multitude -- including such sayings as that not a jot or a tittle of the law shall pass away till all things are accomplished, and that the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees is to be followed, but their practice avoided. From this source too are taken the charge to the twelve not to preach to the Samaritans or the Gentiles, and the prophecies that they will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes, and that the advent will immediately follow the horrors of the Jewish War. At the same time, without any apparent sense of incongruity, our evangelist reproduces the Pauline Mark's statements that Jesus abrogated the Jewish sabbath and dietary rules, that he spoke to the multitude in parables to conceal his meaning, and that the gospel is to be preached to all nations before the end comes. Our evangelist reproduces Mark's disparagement of Peter -- his stupidity, his cowardice, his denial -- but to conciliate Petrine Christians balances this with the famous pun in which Peter is proclaimed the "rock" on which the Church is built, and is promised the "keys of the kingdom of heaven".[68] This passage, by the way, has nothing to do with the Roman church, of which Peter was not regarded as the founder until much later.

These contradictory accounts are juxtaposed without any attempt at reconciliation. Sometimes the evangelist meets with variant versions of the same story -- e.g., of the Gadarene miracle and of the blind man cured at

Jericho. In such cases he duplicates the miracle and gives us two Gadarene demoniacs and two Jericho cures. Anti-Jewish polemic takes the form largely of quotations from the prophets -- usually forced and sometimes careless. Occasionally the writer's zeal to make an anti-Jewish point leads to absurdity, as in the parable of the wedding guests. Originally (as we can see by comparison with Luke) this was a simple allegory of the rejection of the Messianic message by the rich and its acceptance by the poor. But our author must at all costs drag in the destruction of Jerusalem. So in his version of the parable the guests murder the messengers sent to fetch them, the host (who in this Gospel is a king) sends an army to burn their city, and the feast proceeds with new guests, the interval for military operations not having spoilt the cooking![69]

With all its naiveties and contradictions, this Gospel is invaluable for the early material which it preserves and which reflects "in a glass darkly" the revolutionary character of primitive Christianity. From this material we know that John the Baptist and Jesus the Nazoraean were regarded by their followers as prophets of the "kingdom of God" proclaimed in Daniel, which was to break in pieces all earthly empires and to stand for ever. The commentary on the law put into the mouth of Jesus corresponds with the teaching of the Essenes, whose revolutionary role, minimized by Josephus, is now no longer deniable. By comparing different Gospels we can see how this teaching was watered down -- how the poor became the "poor in spirit";[70] how the hungry became "they that hunger and thirst after righteousness";[71] how the command to the rich man to sell all that he has and give to the poor is qualified by the condition, "if thou wouldst be perfect".[72] The primitive Gospel is being whittled down before our eyes. As in Mark, the odium of the crucifixion is shifted in the First Gospel from Pilate to the Jews, who are made to shoulder the responsibility by the terrible cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!"[73]

The story of the virgin birth is a later insertion in the Gospel, perhaps made in Egypt, where such stories were popular. This is suggested by the story of the flight into Egypt in Matthew ii. The opening genealogy in i, which traces the descent of Jesus from David through Joseph, is pointless unless he was the son of Joseph. Some old manuscripts provide in i, 16, a

natural conclusion to the genealogy by saying that he was Joseph's son; but most have been doctored to conform to the birth-story. The evangelist never refers to the virgin birth again, and follows Mark in making Jesus say that his disciples are his real mother and brothers. Evidently the First Gospel originally had no birth-story and, like Mark, held Jesus to have become Son of God by the descent of the Spirit at his baptism.

12. *Luke*

Within a short time of the compilation of our First Gospel a far greater artist wrote the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Their traditional ascription to Luke, the companion of Paul, has this in its favour, that Luke was not celebrated enough for much to be gained by fathering on him a work which he had not written. It is not impossible that, having known Paul in his youth, he wrote the Gospel and Acts as an old man forty or fifty years later. The Epistle to the Colossians (which, though not by Paul, embodies early information) calls Luke a physician. He was therefore representative of the middle-class Greeks who rallied to Paul and continued his work after his death. But Luke's authorship of the Gospel and Acts is attested by no one earlier than Irenaeus in the late second century, and even if a fact, is no guarantee of his reliability. Paul himself had disclaimed all interest in the Jesus preached by his Galilean rivals. His disciples doubtless shared his detachment until the exigencies of propaganda forced Gospel-making upon them.

The work of Luke must be later than the death of Domitian. His invariable representation of the Roman authorities as friendly (or at least benevolently neutral) to Christianity would have been too unconvincing under the Flavian emperors, but would be plausible under Nerva or in the early years of Trajan. We do not know where he wrote. Certainly not in Palestine, of which he has little knowledge, nor in Syria; for if so, he would show some knowledge of the First Gospel, or the First Gospel (if later) would show some knowledge of Luke, whereas neither seems to know anything of the other. Probably Luke wrote at Rome. The distance between Rome and Syria would explain the mutual ignorance of these two evangelists. Luke in his preface refers to "many" contemporary Gospel-

writers, and in claiming accuracy and order for his own work censures theirs by implication.[74]

Like the compiler of Matthew, Luke dovetails Jewish and Pauline sources in order to produce a Gospel suitable for use in churches containing (as did that of Rome) both Pauline and Petrine elements. The opening birth-stories of John the Baptist and Jesus contrast sharply in style with the elegant Greek of the preface, and seem to be taken from a Jewish-Christian folk-poem. Luke preserves intact its frankly revolutionary language. Jesus is to recover "the throne of his father David" and to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever"; princes are to be "put down from their thrones", and those of "low degree" to be "exalted"; the hungry are to be "filled with good things", and the rich "sent empty away".[75]

This source knew nothing of the virgin birth. Luke i, 34-35, is a palpable interpolation, as is evident from the inept question ("How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?") put into the mouth of Mary -- a girl about to be married -- in order to introduce the theme. Any doubt on the matter is removed when we find that in chapter ii Joseph and Mary are five times called the parents of Jesus, and that the virgin birth is never alluded to again. The naivety of the folk-poem is shown by the device of bringing the parents to Bethlehem on account of a census ordered by Augustus. Luke, who knew something of the Roman Empire, cannot really have supposed that a census necessitated everyone travelling from his home to the home of his ancestors a thousand years before! But the story was in his source and too popular to be omitted.

Luke inserts early in his Gospel a genealogy (different from that in Matthew) tracing the descent of Jesus through Joseph. This is one more proof that the virgin birth was not originally in the Gospel. The genealogy has been feebly doctored by interpolating the words, "as was supposed", in iii, 23. As in Matthew, the whole genealogy is pointless unless Luke believed Jesus to be really the son of Joseph.

From this point on Luke bases his narrative mainly on Mark, and his "sayings of Jesus" mainly on the primitive Jewish-Christian Gospel, but edits and embroiders his sources, sometimes to heighten the miraculous element in the story, sometimes to enforce the Pauline point of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles. Thus he antedates Mark's story of the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, and dramatizes it by putting a provocatively anti-Jewish sermon into the mouth of Jesus and adding an attempt on his life and a miraculous escape. Luke's purpose is to stress the rejection of Jesus by the Jews at the very outset. He duplicates Mark's story of trie healing mission of the twelve by adding an account of a mission of seventy other disciples, peculiar to himself. This symbolizes the evangelization of the pagan world, seventy being in Jewish tradition the number of the nations, as twelve was the number of the tribes of Israel. After figuring in Luke's Gospel, the seventy disciples disappear without trace. Until the fourth or fifth century no one even pretended to know their names.

Luke preserves intact the blessings pronounced in the primitive Gospel on the poor and hungry, and does not suppress them like Mark or water them down like our First Gospel. But he qualifies them by stressing the spiritual and other-worldly nature of the promised blessing. Where Matthew speaks of the heavenly Father giving "good things to them that ask him", Luke speaks of the gift of the "Holy Spirit".[76] In Luke Jesus rebukes a man who asks him to arbitrate between him and his brother over the division of their patrimony. Where Matthew has the revolutionary passage,

"Think not that I came
To send peace on the earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword!
For I came to set a man at variance with his father,"

Luke turns a call to arms into a mournful prophecy:

"Think you that I am come
To give peace on the earth?
I tell you, No; but rather division . . .
They shall be divided, father against son,
And son against father."[77]

Following Paul, Luke repudiates the material millennium by making Jesus say: "The Kingdom of God is within you," or "in the midst of you."[78] The Greek is ambiguous; but however we translate it, the point is that the kingdom is not a coming event, but is already present in the Christian community under the Roman Empire. Luke preserves the summons to the rich man to sell all that he has and give to the poor, but almost immediately neutralizes it by making Jesus promise salvation to a rich tax-collector, Zacchaeus, who gives away half. Every occasion is taken to exalt Pauline Christianity as against any sort of Judaism. The stories of the busy Martha and the contemplative Mary, of the prodigal son, of the ten lepers -- all peculiar to Luke -- ram home the moral that fulfilment of the law is nothing and acceptance of Christ everything. As in the First and Second Gospels, the onus of the crucifixion is transferred from the Romans to the Jews. Clearly Luke writes for a church where Paulinists are in control.

Yet he is no uncompromising Paulinist. His aim is not to write a party pamphlet, but to cement the union of Pauline and Petrine Christians in one church by giving an account of Christian origins which shall please everybody. That is why, though no revolutionary, he preserves so many revolutionary sayings, merely balancing them by skilfully interpolated matter of his own. His Jesus is no mystery-god like Paul's, but a "man approved of God" and appointed by him "Lord and Christ".[79] Luke underlines his humanity at every step. He depicts him as sprung from an obscure branch of the Davidic line, as a child growing "in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man",[80] as Son of God through the descent of the Spirit at his baptism, but not as himself God. Luke, and Luke alone, is responsible for such romantic embellishments as the scene with the sinful woman in the house of the Pharisee, the penitent bandit on the cross, and the walk to Emmaus. As if to put the divine claims of Jesus as low as possible, the centurion at the crucifixion, who in Mark and Matthew is made to say, "Truly this man was Son of God," in Luke only says, "Certainly this man was righteous."[81] It is enough for Luke that a Roman officer should testify to the injustice of the crucifixion and therefore, by implication, to the injustice of later persecutions. Finally Luke breaks with Paul and conciliates his simple readers by giving the risen Jesus a body of "flesh and bones" that can walk, talk and eat.[82] Luke

has contributed more than any other single writer to the Christmas and Easter myths of popular Christianity.

Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, continues the work of reconciliation between Pauline and Jewish Christianity. To humour his Jewish-Christian readers Luke confines the name of apostle to the twelve. Later on he unobtrusively cancels the restriction by extending the title to Paul and Barnabas; but they remain loyal subordinates of the older apostles. All differences between Paul and the Palestinian apostles are suppressed. Peter leads the way in preaching the gospel to Gentiles and setting aside the Jewish law; Paul preaches nothing that Peter has not already preached, and is personally as strict a Jew as he. The speeches which Luke (after the manner of ancient writers) puts into the mouth of Peter and Paul proclaim in almost identical language that Jewish prophecies have been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that salvation is open to all who repent and are baptized in his name. No one would gather from the Acts that there had ever been the rivalries and anathemas, charges and counter-charges which re-echo through Corinthians, Galatians and the Apocalypse.

Luke preserves the tradition of the community of goods in the primitive Palestinian church -- a tradition which, in view of the close connection of primitive Christianity with the Essenes, is doubtless founded on fact. But he qualifies it by making the pooling of property optional. Peter tells the delinquent Ananias that he need not have sold his land or handed over the price, and strikes him dead not for retaining the money, but for lying about it. As in the story of Zacchaeus, the amount of property surrendered is left to the owner's discretion. The rich after all are not "sent empty away"!

On one point Luke is uncompromising. He has no quarrel with the Roman Empire and will not allow that the Church has any. Roman officials are uniformly depicted as benevolently neutral, if not friendly to Christianity. Pilate tries to save Jesus (going even to the improbable length of finding "no fault" in one who claims to be king of the Jews) and yields

at last only to the outcry of the Jewish mob.[83] Cornelius and Sergius Paulus are converted to Christianity. Gallio refuses to hear the case of the Jews against Paul. Felix listens to Paul in fear. Festus sees nothing wrong with him but madness due to much learning. The centurion Julius treats him kindly, though a prisoner. Some of the details may be historical: the cumulative effect is to rouse suspicion. The only Gentile hostility to Christianity in the Acts is stirred up by unbelieving Jews, or comes from interested parties like the men who exploit the possessed girl at Philippi or who live on the cult of Artemis at Ephesus. In short the enemies of Christianity, according to Luke, are either Jews or racketeers. The Acts end with Paul waiting his trial at Rome and preaching unforbidden to all comers.

The inaccuracies, inventions and suppressions which abound in the Gospel and the Acts destroy Luke's credit as a historian. He remains one of the world's great romancers.

13. *Trajan and the Christians*

Under Nerva, Trajan and their successors the Roman Empire entered on the reformist phase which so often immediately precedes the final breakdown of imperialism. The policy of government in the interests of the owning classes of the whole Empire was continued and developed; and concessions were made to the disinherited so far as this was necessary to provide for the defence of the Empire and to stave off complete social collapse. Attempts were made to arrest the depopulation of Italy by agrarian legislation, by better communications, by public provision for the maintenance and schooling of the children of poor freemen, and so forth. Such palliatives in no way affected the class structure of the Empire. Hence, in spite of the lull in persecution after the death of Domitian, official toleration of Christianity, in so far as it presented any sort of challenge to that class structure, was not to be expected. Not until the teeth of revolutionary Messianism were drawn could Christ and Caesar be at peace. That they were not completely drawn in the second century is proved by the popularity of apocalyptic writers and by the amount of revolutionary material which the Synoptic evangelists -- neutralize it how

they might -- admitted to their Gospels. Christianity therefore remained under suspicion.

This was revealingly illustrated in in, when Trajan, in the course of a general tightening up of provincial administration, sent the tried and trusted Pliny to govern Pontus and Bithynia. Since the death of Domitian the Christians of those provinces had conducted an intensive propaganda which, by the time Pliny arrived, had led to a widespread desertion of pagan temples and to a slump in the sale of sacrificial animals. By Trajan's order Pliny issued an edict dissolving associations (collegia) of every kind. Not even a fire brigade was to be allowed in case it should turn into a political club! A veritable witch-hunt ensued. Anonymous informers sent Pliny long lists of alleged Christians in all walks of life. Some of these, when arrested, turned out never to have been Christians at all and proved it by invoking the gods, burning incense to the emperor's statue and reviling the name of Christ. Others had been Christians, but had lapsed long since and proved it in the same way. Others confessed Christianity and were executed or, if Roman citizens, were sent to Rome for trial.

Ex-Christians gave Pliny an account of the cult they had abandoned.

"They meet on a stated day before daybreak and sing in turns a hymn to Christ, as to a god. They bind themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked end, but never to commit fraud, theft or adultery, or to break their word or to deny a trust when called on to deliver it up. Then it is their custom to separate, and then to meet again and eat together a harmless meal."[84]

Suspecting that there is more to it than this, Pliny puts to the torture two female slaves (deaconesses in the church) but discovers nothing. The worst he can prove against them is the "perverse and extravagant superstition" of worshipping an executed rebel. Feeling that this enquiry into un-Roman activities is getting beyond him, he writes to Trajan for guidance. Trajan is obviously in two minds about it. He plumes himself on being a progressive and dislikes a witch-hunt. He tells Pliny not to look for Christians, and to ignore anonymous denunciations as "foreign to the spirit

of our age". But if Christians are charged, they must be punished unless they clear themselves by worshipping the gods of Rome.[85]

This correspondence proves two things. The fact that Pliny can find no evidence of sedition shows that in Pontus and Bithynia at any rate the Pauline leadership had successfully restrained the rank and file from revolutionary action. But the fact that Pliny and Trajan nevertheless consider Christianity punishable with death shows that the odour of revolution still clung to it. Paul's attempt to inoculate the masses against revolutionary Messianism by spreading the cult of a purely mystical Christ had ended in a fusion between the Pauline mystery god and a crucified Jewish rebel whose worship not even the most liberal of emperors could allow to flaunt itself in the light of day.

From the time of Pliny's governorship probably dates the document entitled the First Epistle of Peter. This professes to be addressed by Peter from "Babylon" (Rome) "to the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia."[86] But the writer is not Peter; if he were, we should expect him, when he dwells on the sufferings of Christ, to give some personal memories instead of a string of prophetic texts. At the time of writing persecution is raging. The devil is abroad "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour".[87] The writer's object is to fortify his readers in their "fiery trial"[88] and to prevent any attempt at active resistance. He exhorts them to submit to the emperor and his governors. Slaves are to obey their masters, wives their husbands, the younger the elder. Better suffer as a Christian than as a murderer, a thief or a "meddler in other men's matters" -- as we should say, a troublemaker.[89] By a masterly device the name of Peter, supposed to be writing under Nero shortly before his martyrdom, is used to accredit a work which echoes the teaching and sometimes the very language of Paul. Incidentally the fact that Peter is styled simply an "apostle", and is made to address the Asiatic elders as a "fellow-elder",[90] proves that in the early second century Peter was very far from being regarded as a Pope.

In 113 Trajan embarked on a war with Parthia. In the course of the next three years he annexed Armenia and Mesopotamia and carried the Roman eagles to the Persian Gulf. This aggression strained the resources of the Empire beyond their capacity and gave the conquered Jews an opportunity, in concert with the other enemies of Rome in the East, to rise in Trajan's rear and take a wild revenge for the destruction of Jerusalem. He was forced to retreat, and died in 117 before the Jewish revolt was completely stamped out.

It is during Trajan's campaign in the East in 114-116 that we must date the martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch. Probably Trajan, with a Parthian war on his hands and a Jewish revolt brewing, tried to steady the situation in Syria by making an example of a local Christian militant. The facts of the case are obscure. The only documents worth considering are seven Epistles attributed to Ignatius (five addressed to churches of Asia Minor, one to the Roman church and one to Polycarp of Smyrna) and the Epistle to the Philippians attributed to Polycarp. The authenticity of these is disputed, but at latest they date from the middle years of the second century. Other documents include some half-dozen more Epistles of Ignatius forged in the fourth century or later, and a sixth-century martyrology in which Trajan talks like a stage tyrant. They can be ignored.

According to the second-century documents Ignatius was a slave (the Epistles contrast his servile condition with the freedom of Peter and Paul) and was arrested at Antioch with other Christians and sent to Rome to be thrown to the beasts. So much may be taken as historical. But the seven Epistles, supposed to have been written on his last journey to Rome, are difficult to accept. Ignatius (if it be he) tells the Roman church that he is badly treated by his escort. "From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts by land and sea, by night and day, bound to ten leopards -- that is, a band of soldiers -- who become worse for kind treatment."[91] Yet, we are asked to believe, he was allowed to receive Christian visitors at places on the way and to write long and apparently uncensored letters on church business -- including these remarks about his guards! Would Roman soldiers in charge of a slave condemned as a member of a criminal association have allowed him to write letters on the business of his

association? The Epistle of Polycarp, which is used to support the genuineness of the Ignatian Epistles, may be in the main genuine, but shows signs of interpolation. The first authority to quote any of the Epistles is Irenaeus, and he refers to the writer as "one of our people" without naming Ignatius.[92] We must regard them as the work of an unknown forger who later in the second century used the name of a famous martyr to support the episcopal government and theological orthodoxy of his own day.[93]

14. *The Ephesian Gospel and Epistles*

After the second Jewish revolt church leaders found it more than ever necessary to dissociate Christianity from Judaism. This is the object of the Gospel attributed by Christian tradition to John. In the form in which it has come down to us the Fourth Gospel professes to have been written by an unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" -- the only internal evidence of authorship contained in any canonical Gospel.[94] Irenaeus, writing about 180, tells us that this Gospel was written at Ephesus by "John, the disciple of the Lord", who lived there until the reign of Trajan. Irenaeus claims himself to have known in childhood Polycarp of Smyrna, a disciple of this John. But Irenaeus nowhere calls the writer of the Fourth Gospel a son of Zebedee or an apostle.[95]Only in the third century do Christian writers begin to identify the evangelist with the son of Zebedee.

The ascription of the Fourth Gospel to any disciple of Jesus breaks down on examination. Chapter xxi, in which the ascription is first made, is an appendix to the Gospel written by another hand. The body of the Gospel makes openly no such claim. The "beloved disciple" is doubtless introduced into the story in order to make it seem to embody the testimony of an eyewitness more exalted than Peter -- an eyewitness to whom, as he leans on Jesus' bosom, Peter turns for information; an eyewitness who stands by the cross when Peter has denied his Lord; an eyewitness who enters the empty tomb and believes while Peter stands gaping. But the evangelist, writing under Trajan, has not the hardihood to say that he was the man. That claim is made by the editor who added chapter xxi.[96] On the strength of that chapter Irenaeus identifies the evangelist with the "beloved disciple". Yet the Epistle of Polycarp, whom Irenaeus calls a disciple of

John, contains no suggestion that Polycarp had ever met a disciple of Jesus, and the Ignatian Epistle to the Ephesians, which mentions the association of Paul with Ephesus, says nothing of the residence there of any such person as the "beloved disciple". All we can say of the writer of the Fourth Gospel is that he was a respected elder of the Ephesian church in the reign of Trajan, certainly a Jew (there are marked Semitisms in his style) and probably named John, but so alienated from his people that his book is the most anti-Jewish writing in the whole New Testament.

In the Fourth Gospel the doctrine of the logos or divine reason enlightening a dark world (taken from Greek philosophy by Philo and, as we have seen, fundamental in the Pauline Epistles) is given allegorical form. The main theme is stated in the prologue:

"In the beginning was the logos,
And the logos was with God,
And the logos was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him;
And without him was nothing made that was made.
In him was life;
And the life was the light of men.
And the light shines in the darkness;
And the darkness apprehended it not."[97]

Here there is intentional ambiguity. " pprehended" in Greek, as in English, can mean either "understood" or "arrested". The dark, demonic forces of the world, says John, can neither understand nor defeat the divine *logos*. The prologue continues:

"There was the true light,
Which lights every man,
Coming into the world.
He was in the world,
And the world was made by him,
And the world knew him not.
He came to his own,
And his own received him not.
But as many as received him

To them gave he the right to become children of God
. . . . And the logos became flesh,
And dwelt among us
(And we beheld his glory,
Glory as of the only-begotten from the Father)
Full of grace and truth."[98]

So far there is no new doctrine. Philo of Alexandria had called the logos the first-begotten Son of God by whom the world was created, the orderer and disposer of all things, the light by which man could attain knowledge of an otherwise unknowable God. Philo had believed too in the*logos* taking human form: Moses and Aaron were *logoi* -- incarnations of the *logos*. Where John of Ephesus differs from Philo is in identifying the incarnate *logos* not with any ancient worthy, but with Jesus the Nazoraean, crucified as "king of the Jews" less than a century before. In the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist and Jesus are no longer recognizable as the revolutionary preachers whose legend underlies the Synoptic record. The Baptist becomes simply "a man sent from God" to proclaim the advent on earth of the pre-existent Son of God.[99] Jesus, though still the son of Joseph (the evangelist knows nothing of a virgin birth), becomes Son of God when the logos takes possession of him, and from that moment sheds all human limitations. He shows off his omniscience to his first disciples, repudiates his mother ("Woman, what have I to do with thee?")[100] and proves his divinity by turning water into wine, as Dionysus was said to do annually at Andros, a short sea voyage from Ephesus.

There is to be no earthly millennium. Jesus tells Nicodemus (a personification of materialistic Judaism) that the kingdom of God is only for those "born anew".[101] The only salvation is by spiritual rebirth through faith in the Son of God.

"He that believes in him is not judged:
He that believes not has been judged already,
Because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.
And this is the judgment,
That the light is come into the world,

And men loved the darkness rather than the light;
For their works were evil."[102]

In a series of discourses, each illustrated by a miracle (the feeding of the five thousand, the cure of a man bund from birth, the raising of Lazarus) the God-man declares that he is the bread of heaven, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life. Because the Jews, mistaking him for a mere man, think his claims blasphemy or lunacy, he denounces as children of the devil not only the priests and Pharisees, but the whole people and in one place even "those Jews who had believed him".[103] Even Jewish Christians wear the devil's livery! The Satanic character of the Jews is inseparably bound up with their nationalism. The reaction of the people to the miracle of the five thousand is to try to make Jesus king -- a design which he defeats by disappearing. He tells the Jews of Jerusalem:

"I am come in my Father's name,
And you receive me not:
If another comes in his own name,
Him you will receive."[104]

There is something repellent in this picture of a God in human disguise luring on the unsuspecting Jews by enigmatic sayings to misunderstand him and to fall into the trap laid for them, eluding them easily until his time is come, and then scornfully surrendering to them that he may go through the preordained programme of death and resurrection. We are reminded of Dionysus playing with Pentheus in the Bacchae of Euripides. The dialogue in the Fourth Gospel is often dramatic -- notably in the scenes between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, between the Pharisees and the man restored to sight, and between Jesus, the Jews and Pilate at the trial. The onus of the crucifixion is thrown on the Jews even more heavily than in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world, whereupon Pilate pronounces him innocent, and is intimidated into letting him be crucified only when the Jews threaten to denounce the procurator to Caesar if he lets Jesus go. A Pilate most unlike the Pilate of history! The whole work is artificially written to prove a thesis -- namely that the Jews in their blindness not only failed to

know God incarnate when they saw him, but committed the supreme impiety of killing him.

There are signs that the stark anti-Judaism of the Fourth Gospel was tempered in a second edition to make it less objectionable to Jewish Christians. The Jewish element was still powerful in the eastern churches; and many Christian intellectuals were carrying anti-Judaism to lengths which threatened to disrupt their precarious unity. Not content with repudiating the material millennium, these Gnostics rejected the Old Testament altogether and saw in the God of the Jews a being opposed to the God revealed by Jesus. The Fourth Gospel as originally written was a Gnostic Gospel. Jesus is made to repudiate Judaism root and branch: the Jews have never known God; they do the work of their father, the devil, who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning. He even repudiates the Jewish doctrine of a future resurrection and judgment: believers already have eternal life; unbelievers are already condemned. But in the Gospel as we have it such passages are counterbalanced by the statement that "salvation is from the Jews",[105] and by reaffirmations of future resurrection and judgment "at the last day".[106] These contradictions have been accounted for by interpolation; but it is possible that the author himself, feeling that the current of anti-Judaism was flowing too strongly for church unity, inserted the saving clauses in a second edition.[107]

The three Epistles of John are by one author, and there is little doubt that they are by the same author as the Fourth Gospel. The first and longest bears no superscription and is less a letter than a manifesto. The themes of the Fourth Gospel -- the incarnation of the logos, the light shining in a dark world, the promise of eternal life -- are also those of the First Epistle. It has been suggested that the Epistle was a covering letter introducing the Fourth Gospel to distant churches. It is noteworthy that in certain manuscripts known to Augustine in the fifth century this Epistle is said to have borne the address "to the Parthians". Perhaps the immediate object of the Fourth Gospel and its covering letter was to counteract revolutionary propaganda in the eastern churches during the Jewish revolt of 116-117.

The two shorter Epistles are written by "the elder" to specific addressees -- 2 John to a local church ("the elect lady and her children") and 3 John to one Gaius, an active Christian of whom nothing further is known. The writer of these Epistles (and therefore of the Fourth Gospel) has been plausibly identified with "John the Elder", whom Papias of Hierapolis (a town not far from Ephesus) cited as one of his authorities. 2 John may have been a letter introducing the Fourth Gospel to churches where the author was personally known and where a formal introduction like 1 John was unnecessary. 3 John throws some light on the opposition encountered by the Gospel. The "elder" complains that a local church leader named Diotrephes refuses to receive his letters or his emissaries. Evidently the Fourth Gospel, amend it as the author might, had a mixed reception even in the churches of Asia Minor, not to say further afield. Rank-and-file Christians preferred the revolutionary slogans of the Synoptic tradition to the mystic musings of John of Ephesus. We need not wonder that fifty years elapsed before the Fourth Gospel was generally received as canonical.

15. *Christianity under Hadrian*

Hadrian (117-138), the successor of Trajan, was perhaps the most enlightened ruler who ever reigned in Rome. He abandoned Trajan's eastern conquests and inaugurated a policy of peace. Assisted by Stoic lawyers, he continued the reforms initiated by Nerva and Trajan. Since the Empire had now ceased to expand, its resources in man-power and slave-power had to be conserved. Hadrian increased the provision for the maintenance of the children of poor freemen in Italy. He deprived slave-owners of the power of life and death and of the right to sell slaves as gladiators or prostitutes, prohibited human sacrifice where it still survived, remitted onerous arrears of taxation, endeavoured to equalize the burdens of the provinces, substituted direct collection for the oppressive system of tax-farming, and made two prolonged tours of the Empire to see that his reforms were carried out. He began the codification of Roman law. He tried, in short, to make slavery comfortable. The blood-bath in which his reign ended illustrates the impotence of the most enlightened ruler in a class society to escape the consequences of the class structure which holds him prisoner.

In 130, during his second imperial tour, Hadrian visited Alexandria. A letter written to his brother-in-law, Servianus, throws a curious light on the condition of Judaism and Christianity in Alexandria at that time, and shows that in their reaction against revolutionary Judaism many rich Jews and Christians were ready to come to terms with paganism.

" Here the worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ are devotees of Serapis. There is not a Jewish ruler of a synagogue, nor a Samaritan, nor a Christian elder who is not an astrologer, a soothsayer or a quack. When the Jewish patriarch himself comes to Egypt, some of them make him worship Serapis, others Christ. ... They have but one god, money. This is he whom Christians, Jews and the whole world revere."[108]

Among the Alexandrians who tried to reconcile Christianity and paganism the only one who need detain us is Basilides. He repudiated the God of the Jews and elaborated a mythical theology on the Hesiodic model, in which the supreme God begets divine beings in a descending order of dignity, who eventually create the world. The eldest of these emanations, the divine reason or Christ, descended into the man Jesus at his baptism in order to liberate a minority of elect souls from the conflict and evil of the material world. Since the elect are already saved, there is no need to struggle against paganism or to risk martyrdom. To drive the point home Basuides composed a Gospel (now lost) in which Jesus was not crucified, but allowed Simon of Cyrene to be mistaken for him and to suffer in his place, while he stood by and laughed.[109] This recommendation to the elect to save their skins and leave fools to their fate illustrates the demoralization of the richer Alexandrian Christians in the reign of the enlightened Hadrian.

A more reputable and more formidable exponent of anti-Judaism was Marcion, a shipowner of Sinope and, it is said, the son of a Christian bishop. He must have witnessed Pliny's persecution of the churches of Pontus and Bithynia in 111-113. That, followed by the Jewish revolt of 116-117, convinced Marcion of the necessity of a clean cut between Christianity and Judaism. Like the Alexandrian Gnostics, he repudiated the Jewish scriptures and taught that Jesus had descended from heaven to

liberate men from the material world created and misgoverned by the God of the Jews. The twelve apostles, said Marcion, had not understood this; only Paul, the one true apostle, had seen it. Marcion's Jesus, a mystery-god not born of woman and only in outward form a man, by his death and resurrection saved from death and hell all who would renounce the material world and its works, including marriage, meat-eating and every kind of bodily enjoyment. The Marcionite communion accordingly consisted of bread and water. Marcion's activity in the reign of Hadrian seems to have been confined to Asia Minor. His attempt to capture the Roman church belongs to later history.[110] Marcion did not compromise with paganism like the Alexandrian Gnostics; but his extreme asceticism and anti-Judaism were equally calculated to disrupt the churches, most of whose members based their hopes on Jewish prophecy, celebrated their comradeship in a weekly common meal, and expected a kingdom of God on earth and not only in heaven.

Christian leaders had now to wage a war on two fronts, against revolutionary Judaism on the one hand and against disruptive Gnosticism on the other. To do so they had to tighten church organization and discipline, and to expel from their ranks those who threatened to break up the movement. The pseudo-Pauline Epistles to Timothy and Titus (the so-called Pastoral Epistles) seem to have been fabricated and circulated with the express object of cbuntering the exaggerated Paulinism propagated by Marcion and his like. The author of the Pastorals may have embodied a few genuine Pauline fragments to give his forgeries a look of authenticity, but for the most part he does not even try to imitate Paul's style. He probably wrote in Asia Minor: his background is Asiatic; he knows more about Timothy's family than Luke does; and the venom against Marcion suggests geographical proximity. The author denounces the complex theology of the Alexandrian Gnostics with its " fables and endless genealogies",[111] and stigmatizes in still stronger language the rejection of the material world as evil and the consequent extremes of asceticism preached by Marcion. The exhortation to "be no longer a water-drinker, but take a little wine for the stomach's sake"[112] is part of the attack on Marcionite asceticism and is of no biographical value for the habits of Paul or Timothy. The Jewish scriptures are declared to be divinely inspired and profitable for Christian instruction. The warning at the end of

1 Timothy against "antitheses of the gnosis falsely so called" is a direct allusion to Marcion's *Antitheses*, in which he set forth the contradictions between the Jewish law and the Christian gospel; but the passage comes after the natural finish to the Epistle and looks like a later addition.[113] At the same time the author enjoins loyalty to the Empire and denounces Jewish troublemakers -- "unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped".[114] His condemnation of love of money as the root of all evil, and his comparison of his antagonists to Egyptian necromancers, remind us of Hadrian's reflections on Alexandrian religionists. The author's remedy for all is rigorous discipline -- the subjection of slaves to masters, women to men, and each church to its elders. Far from accepting Marcionite celibacy, the author (in this most unlike Paul) lays down that a bishop or elder must be "the husband of one wife".[115] There is no distinction yet between bishops and elders: in Titus i, 5-9, they are synonymous. They are entitled to their pay. We have travelled a long way from the primitive Christian meetings at which all alike, men and women, exercised "spiritual gifts" as they were able.

What the rank and file thought of these disputes can be gathered from the pamphlet called in our Bibles the Epistle of James. This is not the work of James of Jerusalem, the antagonist of Paul. The author is acquainted with the Greek text of the Old Testament, but not with the Hebrew, and himself writes good, fluent Greek. Nor are the conditions which he describes those of the primitive church. The churches have become corrupted by class distinctions and "respect of persons"; the rich have good seats at meetings, and the poor sit on the floor or stand.[116] Internal evidence points to the reign of Hadrian. To match the spate of pseudo-Pauline or pseudo-Petrine literature circulating in the churches, the author fathers his composition on James, the leader of the Palestinian church honoured next after Peter. For him Christianity is not a negation, but an extension of Judaism: he addresses his work to "the twelve tribes of the dispersion".[117] In his respect for the Jewish law and his revolutionary attitude to riches he belongs to the Essene tradition which antedates Christianity and had so much to do with its beginnings. He is not interested in dogma. He quotes no Gospel and never mentions the crucifixion or resurrection. He refers to Jesus Christ as the "Lord of glory"

who will judge the world.[118] His attitude to the intellectuals who wrangle for the control of the churches is "A plague on all your houses!" There is too much talk and too little action, too much humbug about justification by faith while brothers and sisters go naked and hungry. Echoing the ancient prophets, he bids the rich exploiters of labour weep and howl for the miseries that are coming on them in "a day of slaughter".[119] His readers are to be patient, firm and united. "The coming of the Lord is at hand . . . The judge stands at the doors."[120]

This revolutionary pamphlet was late in winning canonical rank. No writer of the second century mentions it. Origen in the third quotes it as "the Epistle said to be by James". Eusebius in the fourth notes that its authenticity is denied, and classes it among "disputed books which are nevertheless known to most".[121] Like the Apocalypse, this Epistle was preserved in the teeth of their leaders by the rank and file whose aspirations it reflected. The Syrian churches, where the primitive type of Christianity which it embodies was latest in disappearing, were the first to admit it to their canon. Jerome, writing in Palestine at the end of the fourth century, notes that its authorship is questioned, but himself accepts it as genuine. Thus it won a place in the New Testament. In modern times Luther rejected it as an "epistle of straw"; but the Anabaptists loved it and often knew it by heart. Its value lies in the evidence it affords of the persistence of a revolutionary tradition in second-century Christianity.

16. *The Last Jewish Revolt, 132-135*

The march of events soon provided church leaders with reasons for disavowing revolutionary literature. About 130 Hadrian, perhaps misled by the laxity he had noted among the rich Jews of Alexandria, decided to do what Antiochus had unsuccessfully attempted three centuries earlier and to end Judaism once and for all. He issued an edict prohibiting circumcision, the reading of the Jewish law and the observance of the sabbath, and gave orders that Jerusalem should be rebuilt as a Roman colony. His hope was to settle the Jewish question by assimilating the Jews to other subjects of a more or less liberalized Empire. The effect was to goad the Jewish people into a last, desperate uprising. The revolt broke out in 132 under Simon Barcocheba, who took the title of "prince of

Israel" and was hailed as Messiah by the famous rabbi Akiba. But most rabbis held aloof. The insurgents, 200,000 strong, liberated Jerusalem and many other strongholds in Palestine, and were aided by the Jews of the "dispersion" and even by some Gentiles. "The whole world", says the historian Dio, "was thrown into commotion."[122] But Trajan's generals twenty years before had done their work too well for the new revolt to be anything but a forlorn hope. An immense army under Hadrian's best general, Severus, was massed against the rebels. Even so, not until 135 was Jerusalem recaptured, Simon killed, the last rebel stronghold at Bether, south-west of Jerusalem, taken and the war, at enormous cost in life on both sides, brought to an end. The conquerors massacred men, women and children in thousands, sold thousands more dirt-cheap in the slave markets, and flayed Akiba alive. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Roman city under the name of Aelia Capitolina; a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus was erected where the Jewish temple had stood; and Jews were forbidden to come within sight of the city on pain of death.

One result of this revolt was the final separation of Christianity from Judaism. Even Jewish Christians had refused to back Barcocheba; and the Gentile churches had been too well dosed with anti-Jewish propaganda by their leaders to run into danger. There was now no longer room, as some first-century Paulinists had thought, for a Petrine "gospel of the circumcision" beside the Pauline "gospel of the uncircumcision".[123] The Jews, three times in seventy years crushed by the military might of Rome, were in Christian eyes plainly under a curse. Jewish Christianity became a heresy. It was probably at this time that an editor wrote into I Thessalonians that invective in which Paul by an anachronism is made to gloat over the ruin of his people --

"Who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets,
And drove us out,
And please not God,
And are contrary to all men,
Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved—
To fill up their sins always:
But wrath is come on them to the uttermost!"[124]

1 Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, 17, 6.

2 Josephus, *Jewish War*, V, II, 1.

3 Revelation vii, 1-8.

4 xi, 1-2.

5 Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI, 5, 2.

6 Revelation xii, 7-8.

7 xiv, 20.

8 xvii, 9-10.

9 The "seven kings" seem to begin with Augustus (the real founder of the principate) and to include Nero twice over -- once as the fifth who has "fallen" and once as the seventh who is to reign again "for a little while". But in such edited passages identification is conjectural.

10 2 Thessalonians ii. This should be compared with Suetonius, *Nero*, XL, 2. See above, chapter VI, § 4.

11 Josephus, *Jewish War*, VII, 10, 1.

12 Mark v, 1-20; Luke viii, 26-39. In Matthew viii, 28-34, the word "legion" is cut out.

13 *Qananaya* is the Aramaic for "Zealot".

14 Matthew x, 34. Cf. Luke xii, 51.

15 Matthew xi, 12. Cf. Luke xvi, 16.

16 Mark x, 29-30. Cf. Matthew xix, 29; Luke xviii, 29-30.

17 Matthew xxiv, 6-8, 29-31. Cf. Mark xiii, 7-8, 24-27.

18 Mark xv, 7.

19 Matthew xxvii, 37; Mark xv, 26; Luke xxiii, 38.

20 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 39, 16. Few Greeks could distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic.

21 Matthew v, 44; Luke vi, 27.

22 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, I.

23 Luke vi, 30.

24 *Teaching*, I.

25 Matthew v, 5.

26 *Teaching*, III.

27 IX.

28 XIV.

29 XVI.

30 Corinthians x, 1-6; xi, 4.

31 Colossians iv, 10; 2 Timothy iv, 11; Philemon 24 (the only certainly genuine reference).

32 1 Peter v, 13.

33 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 39.

34 Markiii, 35.

35 iv, 9, 23.

36 viii, 27-33.

37 See chap. VIII, § 6. Verse 7 shows that the original must have ended with a manifestation of the risen Jesus in Galilee.

38 Suetonius, *Domitian*, XII.

39 Matthew v, 18. Cf. Luke xvi, 17.

40 Teaching, VI.

41 The work itself does not claim to be by Barnabas. It is first ascribed to him in the third century. The only internal evidence of date is the author's reference in chapter IV to Daniel's prophecy of "ten kings," whom he identifies with ten Roman emperors. This points to the Flavian era. But we cannot be sure how the author counted his emperors. An Alexandrian writer might omit Julius, who had not reigned over Egypt, and Vitellius, who had not been recognized there. This would make Domitian the tenth emperor.

42 Mark x, 35-40, implies that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, had both been martyred before Mark wrote. Papias in a passage cited by two Byzantine chroniclers says that John was "killed by Jews", presumably before the fall of Jerusalem in 70.

43 Revelation ii, 9.

44 ii, 20.

45 Corinthians ii, 10. Cf. Revelation ii, 24.

46 iii, I.

47 iii, 15-16.

48 xiii, 8.

49 v, 9-10.

50 vi, 5-6. "A choenix of wheat for a denarius, and three choenices of barley for a denarius; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not." An allusion to the neglect of Domitian to enforce an edict of 92 which restricted wine-growing to encourage agriculture. This dates the book within a few years.

51 xiii, 1. Cf. Suetonius, *Domitian*, XIII.

52 xvi, 5-6.

53 xviii, 11-12.

54 xxii, 1-2.

55 The case is well put by John Morris in *Past and Present*, February, 1953: "The Apocalypse . . . survived because it echoed those revolutionary yearnings which the counsels of Paul had discouraged; if Paul's counsels had not prevailed, it is doubtful if Christianity itself could have survived. But if the Apocalypse and its tradition had not stood forth on behalf of those revolutionaries, Christianity might have shrunk to a philosophy of the leisured class, an inoffensive neo-Stoicism."

56 Hebrews xi, 16.

57 x, 19-25, 32-34; xii, 4-6.

58 Suetonius, Domitian, XV; Dio, LXVII, 14, 1. Only Dio mentions the charge.

59 Clement I.

60 See chap. VI, § 11.

61 This would be evidence for the authorship of Flavius Clemens, but for the fact that the writer is a Jew by descent ("our father Jacob," chap. IV).

62 XXXVI-XXXVIII.

63 XLII-XLIV.

64 LIV.

65. Romans xvi, 23.

66 Hebrews vi, 10.

67 Matthew i, I.

68 xvi, 17-19. The pun must be from the Aramaic Gospel. *Kepha* in Aramaic means "rock" and is also the apostle's name. In Greek the play on *Petros*, *petra*, is not so good.

69 xxii, 1-14. Cf. Luke xiv, 16-24.

70 v, 3. Cf. Luke vi, 20.

71 v, 6. Cf. Luke vi, 21.

72 xix, 21. Cf. Mark x, 21; Luke xviii, 22.

73 xxvii, 25.

74 Luke i, 1-4.

75 i, 32-33, 52-53.

76 xi, 13. Cf. Matthew vii, 11.

77 xii, 51-52.Cf. Matthew x, 34-35.

78 xvii, 20-21.

79 Acts ii, 22, 36.

80 Luke ii, 52.

81 xxiii, 47. Cf. Matthew xxvii, 54; Mark xv, 39. The recognition of a martyred hero as a "son of the gods" goes back to the story of Cleomenes in the third century B.C. See above, chap. V, § 4.

82 xxiv, 39-43.

83 xxiii, 1-4, 13-25.

84 Pliny, *Letters*, X, 97.

85 X, 98.

86 I Peter i, 1.

87 v, 8.

88 iv, 12.

89 iv, 15-16.

90 i, I; v, I.

91 Ignatius, Romans, V.

92 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 28, 4.

93 The question of the Ignatian Epistles has been debated since the sixteenth century and is still open. Since eminent theologians can be quoted on both sides, a layman may be permitted to use his common sense. See chap. VIII, § 5.

94 John xxi, 20-24.

95 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II, 3.2, 5; HI, 1, 1; 3, 4.

96 See chap. VIII, § 6.

97 John, 1-5.

98 i, 9-12, 14. Note the ambiguity of "we". It need only mean the Christian community; yet it hints at an eyewitness -- the "beloved disciple" of later chapters.

99 i, 6-8, 15, 29-34.

100 ii, 4.

101 iii. 3, 5.

102 iii, 18-19.

103 viii, 31-47.

104 v, 43.

105 iv, 22. Cf. v, 37-38; viii, 19, 23, 38, 42-44, 54-55.

106 v, 28-29; vi, 39-40, 44, 54. Cf. iii, 16-19; v, 24.

107 Schmiedel and Loisy regard the saving clauses as interpolations, Eisler as the author's own corrections.

108 Augustan History, *Life of Saturninus*, 8.

109 Simon of Cyrene is historical: Mark mentions his sons, Alexander and Rufus, evidently as persons known to the Roman church (xv, 21). The other Synoptics copy Mark. But the Fourth Gospel suppresses Simon and makes Jesus carry his own cross (xix, 17) -- probably in order to kill the story of Basilides.

110 See chap. VIII, § 2.

111 Timothy i, 3-4.

112 v, 23.

113 vi, 20-21. The Authorised Version misleadingly translates this phrase by "oppositions of science falsely so called" -- causing

Fundamentalists to read into the passage a prophetic warning against Darwin and Huxley!

114 Titus i, 10-11.

115 I Timothy iii, 2; Titus i, 5-6.

116 James ii, 1-4.

117 i, 1.

118 ii, 1; v, 7-9.

119 v, 5.

120 v, 8-9.

121 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 23, 25; III, 25, 2.

122 Dio, LXIX, 13.

123 Galatians ii, 6-10.

124 I Thessalonians ii, 15-16. This passage was not in Marcion's edition of the Epistles. There was no reason why so extreme an anti-Judaist should have deleted it, had it been there.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIRTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. *The Antonine Age*

After the death of Hadrian the Roman Empire began visibly to decline. Gibbon's verdict that the age of the Antonines was the happiest and most prosperous in the history of the world is contradicted by contemporary evidence. The Stoic reforms represented the utmost amelioration of which slave society was capable, and they were not enough to save it. The cessation of imperial expansion had limited the supply of slaves, raised their price and ensured their better treatment. Under Hadrian's successors, Antoninus Pius (138-161) and Marcus Aurelius (161-180), a trickle of palliatives continued: slavery was further regulated by law, the use of torture limited and manumission facilitated. But the improvement of the lot of the slaves was accompanied by an aggravation of the burdens of the peasantry. This double process prepared the way for medieval serfdom. An Egyptian papyrus of the year 154 speaks ofpeasants flying from the tax-gatherer and taking to banditry -- a symptom of crisis which became widespread both in the East and in the West before the end of the second century.

In a social order sick to death the Christian churches played a dual role. Their membership, drawn mainly from the exploited masses, was recruited and held by the hope of a brighter future not only in heaven, but on earth -- a millennium based on the dreams of Jewish prophets and psalmists, and on more recent apocalypses and Sibylline oracles, in which the saints would break their oppressors like a potter's vessel and rule as priests and kings over a world of peace and plenty -- a millennium of which the communal feast in which church members joined weekly was a sort of foretaste and pledge. But few of the leadership shared these dreams of the rank and file. They looked rather for an alliance with the Empire, which under Hadrian and the Antonines seemed to the optimistic to be gradually reforming itself. The problem of church leaders was to speak a

language revolutionary enough to hold their members, but not so revolutionary as to alarm the imperial authorities. The dilemma was to dog them for generations. It explains not only the contradictions found in early Christian writings, often in one and the same writer, but also the alternation of imperial policy between repression and toleration, often under one and the same emperor.

2. *Marcion*

About 139-140 the rich shipowner Marcion came from Asia Minor to Rome and made a large contribution to the funds of the Roman church. The Roman elders took the money, but in 144, when they knew more about Marcion, returned it and expelled him from their church. They could not have done less without wrecking the movement. Marcion spent his remaining years organizing churches of his own and providing them with a Bible of his own compiling. This consisted of a single Gospel (an emasculated version of Luke) and a collection of ten Pauline Epistles from which anything that suggested the Jewish origin of Christianity was carefully excluded.[1] Marcion's text is lost; but the polemics of Irenaeus, Tertullian and other Fathers have enabled modern scholars to reconstruct it with considerable exactitude. Marcion cut out of the Gospel the birth-stories of John the Baptist and Jesus, with their perilous talk of putting down princes from their thrones and filling the hungry with good things, and made Jesus descend from heaven to do away with the law and the prophets.[2] Similarly he cut out of the Epistles all texts which identified the Jewish God with the true God, or which recognized any authority in the law or the prophets, or which suggested any relation but enmity between the older apostles and Paul. In a separate work, the*Antitheses*, Marcion rubbed in the opposition between Judaism and his version of Christianity. In so handling Christian documents he did no more violence to them than other editors of Gospels and Epistles had done from the first century onward. He believed that he was freeing the authentic Christianity of Paul from Jewish accretions, and in rejecting the Pastoral Epistles he certainly anticipated modern scholarship. By founding breakaway churches Marcion and other heretics forced the main body of Christians to tighten their organization and to consider the question, which had not till then arisen, of a New Testament canon.

3. *Justin*

The attitude of intellectuals who adhered to official Christianity at this time may be gathered from the writings of Justin. According to his own account he was born of pagan parents in Palestine and after dabbling in various Greek philosophies was converted to Christianity. After travelling about the Empire as a wandering philosopher he settled at Rome, and about the year 150 addressed an *Apology* for Christianity to the emperor Antoninus Pius, the princes Marcus Aurelius and Verus, and the Roman senate and people. It was not the first work of its kind. The era of reform which culminated under Hadrian had inspired some Christian leaders for the first time with hopes for the conversion of the Empire. A Christian preacher or "prophet" named Quadratus had addressed to Hadrian an apology now lost; and the extant *Apology* of Aristides was addressed to Antoninus before Justin's. But Justin's work is more ambitious. He seeks to find common ground with the rulers whom he addresses.

Justin protests at the outset against persecution for a mere name. He even plays on words: "We are charged with being Christians; but it is not right to hate what is good " (*chreston*).[3] Christians should be judged only for overt acts. Their sole crime is that they refuse to worship idols, believing with the poet Menander that the workman is greater than his work. Socrates denounced false gods and was put to death as an atheist. Reason (*logos*), which inspired Socrates, has since taken human form in Jesus Christ. Christians therefore worship the same God as Socrates and Plato. They believe with Plato that the just will be rewarded and the wicked punished after death; but the judge will not be Rhadamanthus or Minos, but Christ, and the sentence will not be for a thousand years, but for ever.

It is said, continues Justin, that Christians look for a kingdom. So they do, but for a divine, not a human kingdom. If the emperor only knew, they are the best promoters of peace in his Empire. They renounce the pursuit of riches, give to the poor out of their common funds, and in everything but idolatry are loyal subjects, praying that in the emperor wisdom and

power may be united. Loyalty to Jesus Christ kept them from supporting the late Jewish revolt under Barcocheba.

In affirming the virgin birth, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Christians say no more than pagans say of Perseus, Asclepius and other demigods: those myths are a demonically inspired anticipation of the Gospel story. As to deifying men, what about the deified emperors? What about the Samaritan Simon, who practised magic in the reign of Claudius and has a statue on the banks of the Tiber in Rome itself?[4] The emperor, says Justin rashly, can, if he pleases, verify the story of the birth of Jesus from the census returns of Quirinius, and the story of his miracles and death from the despatches of Pilate.[5] The twelve apostles, obscure men and unskilled in speaking, could not have preached, as they did, to all nations without divine aid.

Justin does not say that only believers will be saved. Those who live according to reason are Christians, "even though accounted atheists"; those who live without reason are enemies to Christ.[6] In fulfilment of prophecies made before Christ came, Judaea has been devastated and Gentiles have been converted in such numbers that Gentile Christians now outnumber Jewish.

Justin gives a short description of the ritual of the Roman church in his day. Converts are baptized in the name of God the Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit who spoke by the prophets. After baptism the convert is admitted to the assembly. Once a week, after a reading from "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets", and after exhortation and prayer, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water are brought to the presiding official, who returns thanks (*eucharistia*) to God for providing them.[7] The people say "Amen". Deacons distribute the eucharistic food to those present and reserve some for those absent. A collection is taken for all in need. These meetings are held "on Sunday, because that is the first of days, when God, having transformed darkness and matter, created the world, and because on that same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead ".[8] In a paragraph which some consider to

have been interpolated as an afterthought by Justin himself, he says that the bread and the mixed wine are the flesh and blood of Jesus, and cites the story of the institution of the eucharist from the apostles' "memoirs, which are called Gospels "[9] Justin ends by appealing to the emperor and his government to accept Christianity if they think it reasonable, but even if they think it folly, not to condemn to death people who have done no evil.

This *Apolog*y has more than one remarkable feature. Firstly, Justin not only repudiates revolution, but aims at an alliance between Church and Empire. He appeals to the Antonines as philosopher-statesmen to adopt Christianity as a completion of their philosophy and an aid to their policy. Without completely repudiating its Jewish origin, he minimizes it as far as he can.

Secondly, in his account of Christian meetings he describes only the eucharistic consumption of bread and wine, and ignores the communal meal. Yet we know from the evidence of the catacombs and from Tertullian that the eucharist, both before and after Justin's day, was part and parcel of a meal at which all ate and drank to sufficiency.[10] We know, too, that pagans who regarded the Christians as a dangerous secret society embroidered the facts with horrific allegations of cannibalism and sexual promiscuity.[11] Justin (less bold than Tertullian) avoids the subject.

It is instructive to compare Justin's first *Apology* with his second, written when his first had failed to impress the imperial government. Provoked by the execution of three Christians at Rome, he becomes more militant. He tells the Romans that the demons whom they call gods are responsible for "murder, war, adultery, intemperance and every kind of vice among men "[12] that everything good in the world is the work of the *logos*, that is of Christ; that Socrates knew Christ only in part and therefore appealed only to the learned; but that in Christ as now manifested "not only philosophers and grammarians put their faith, but even craftsmen and such as were wholly uneducated, despising reputation and fear and death."[13]

In the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, written after the first and perhaps after both Apologies, Justin shows another face. Here he insists that Christianity is the true Judaism. Marcionites and others who deny this are, he says, unworthy of the name of Christians. If any Jewish Christian likes to keep the Jewish law, he may do so, says Justin, provided he does not try to force it on Gentile Christians; but in fact, as the law and the prophets foretold, Moses is superseded by Christ. Justin develops this theme at some length. Challenged as to whether he expects an earthly millennium in a restored Jerusalem, he replies that, while many do not, all really sound Christians undoubtedly believe in a millennium in accordance with Jewish prophecy. He cites the Apocalypse of John as proof that this belief is apostolic and that Christians inherit the prophetic gifts formerly enjoyed by Jews.

It will be seen that Justin takes a very different line in addressing the imperial government and in addressing fellow-Christians, or Jews whom he hopes to make Christians. One remarkable feature of both the *Apologies* and the *Dialogue* is his silence about Paul. The only New Testament books he uses are the Synoptic Gospels and (in the *Dialogue*) the Apocalypse. Yet he must have known the Pauline Epistles, and if he knew Luke, he surely knew the Acts. It is strange, therefore, that he should ignore the apostle of the Gentiles and deliberately credit the evangelization of the world to the twelve. It seems that Paul's reputation had suffered damage from the use made of his name by Marcion and the Gnostics. Until that damage was repaired, writers who wished to be read in the churches were slow to invoke his authority.

Despite or perhaps because of his veneer of philosophy Justin seems to have been little read by the majority of Christians. His works have come down to us in a single manuscript.

4. *Hermas*

Far more representative of the rank-and-file Christians of the time was Hermas, author of the work called the *Shepherd*. According to a catalogue of New Testament books drawn up at Rome about 190-200 and

called, after its discoverer, the Canon of Muratori, Hermas was a brother of the Roman bishop Pius and wrote about 140-154. Hermas himself names more than one contemporary official of the Roman church, but never mentions Pius. Evidently this Pius (though reckoned the first of twelve papal Piuses) was not what we should call a Pope.

Hermas from his book seems to have been a Greek freedman (perhaps from Arcadia, since the scene of one of his visions is laid there) and to have made money in business, but lost it. He cannot afford a conveyance from Rome to Cumae and goes on foot. He has a wife and children. In a series of visions an aged woman (symbolizing the Church, which "was created before all things, and for her sake the world was framed"[14]) charges him with messages which he is to read to the Roman Christians, and which their secretary, Clement, is to send to other churches.[15]

In the next vision Hermas sees a number of men building a tower. The tower again symbolizes the Church. Of the stones used some fit perfectly: these are good Christians. Some of these are brought from deep water: they represent martyrs. Other stones are thrown aside for a time: these are sinners who are not past hope " if they repent now, while the tower is building".[16] Others are rejected: these are hypocrites, apostates and other grave sinners. Among them are white, round stones which do not fit into the building: these are rich Christians who "when tribulation comes, deny their Lord by reason of their riches and their business affairs". But if their wealth is cut away, we are told, they will become good square stones, as Hermas did when he lost his money.[17] Even those rejected, except apostates, may be saved after undergoing a spell of torment -- the first trace in Christian literature of a doctrine of purgatory. The tower will soon be finished -- so soon, says Hermas, that pardon cannot be expected for any sins committed in the short time remaining. Rich Christians are warned to share their abundance with the poor, lest when the tower is finished they find no place in it. Church leaders are warned to stop their quarrels before it is too late.

Later visions give the book its title. Hermas meets a man in the garb of a shepherd ("the angel of repentance") who dictates to him a set of maxims very like those of the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistle of James. Noteworthy are the commands to give freely to all in want ("they that receive in distress shall not be judged; but they that receive by false pretence shall pay the penalty: he then that gives is guiltless ") and to tell no lies -- a maxim which Hermas finds difficult to keep in his business! [18] In a passage which seems to be deliberately directed against the Pauline doctrine of universal depravity, the "angel of repentance" tells Hermas that he can keep these maxims if he makes up his mind to it, but that if he doubts his ability to keep them, he will fail.

This leads to more denunciation of the pursuit of riches. Christians who lay up treasure on earth are giving hostages to the lord of this world.

"Prepare nothing more for thyself but a competency which is sufficient for thee, and make ready that whenever the master of this city may desire to cast thee out for thy opposition to his law, thou mayest go forth from his city and depart to thy own city."[19]

Evidently Hermas expects no reconciliation with the Roman Empire. But neither does he hope for social revolution. The rich are to be shorn, but are to be left with enough to supply the wants of the poor; and the poor man is to "thank God for him that gave to him ".[20]

Hermas is but little interested in doctrinal disputes. His creed is simple, though set forth in a rather involved series of parables. God through his Holy Spirit, manifested in the Christian community, has given a law to all mankind. The Spirit dwells in all "who are worthy of repentance",[21] but dwelt especially in one man (Jesus) who for "labouring much and enduring many toils" and "behaving himself boldly and bravely" was chosen by God to be the agent through whom the new law should be given to the world.[22] None who reject it can be saved. Among those who accept it the highest place is reserved for martyrs; the next for Christians who, though not martyrs, "have kept the commandments of the Lord". Hermas puts the majority of Christians in this class.[23] Others may be saved

by repentance -- petty sinners easily; great sinners too, if they are loyal to the cause; rich men with much more difficulty. Even for heretical teachers (whom Hermas regards as conceited prigs rather than as first-class sinners) there is hope. Only renegades and traitors are beyond pardon.[24]

Finally Hermas returns to his comparison of the Church to a tower. He addresses a special warning to corrupt church officials -- "deacons that exercised their office ill, and plundered the livelihood of widows and orphans, and made gain for themselves"e;[25] -- and ends with a passage which sheds a lurid light on the misery of the poor under the Antonines.

"Every man ought to be rescued from misfortune; for he that has need and suffers misfortune in his daily life is in great torment and want . . . Many men on account of calamities of this kind, because they can bear them no longer, lay violent hands on themselves. He, then, who knows the calamity of a man of this kind, and rescues him not, commits great sin and becomes guilty of the man's blood. Do good works, therefore, whoever of you have received benefits from the Lord, lest while you delay to do them the building of the tower is completed . . . Unless you hasten to do right, the tower will be completed and you shut out."[26]

In Hermas we have a more than usually articulate spokesman of the mass of freedmen, slaves and poor freemen who made up the rank and file of the Roman and other churches in the middle of the second century. He is innocent of Pauline theology, never quotes a book of the Old or New Testament and sees only a nuisance in doctrinal wrangles. By later Catholic standards he is very much a heretic: his story of God taking Jesus into partnership on his merits would never have passed muster in the fourth century. To Hermas dogma is infinitely less important than comradeship. His Church is not a hierarchy directing him what to think and do, but a body of very ordinary people who have found, as they believe, a way out of the evil society of the Roman Empire. The essential thing is that Christians should stick together, that they should stop wrangling over things that do not matter, that the rich should share their wealth with the poor, and that they should leave the rest to God. So evil a world cannot last long!

For a time Hermas was accepted as an inspired writer. By an impossible anachronism (which there is no reason to think he intended) his book was attributed to a first-century Hermas mentioned by Paul. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen quote him as scripture. His work is actually included in our oldest manuscript of the New Testament, the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus. All this speaks volumes for his popularity in the churches. But in the end authority could not stomach him. The Canon of Muratori excludes him in view of his recent date. Tertullian finds him morally lax and calls the book the "Shepherd of adulterers". Eusebius in the fourth century (rather unfairly, since Hermas wrote under his own name) dubs the book spurious.

5. *The Episcopate*

In order to hold their members and at the same time to bid for an alliance with the Empire, Christian leaders had more and more to tighten their organization and discipline. We have seen how from the end of the first century the democratic organization of the primitive churches depicted in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles gradually gave place to government by irremovable elders or "bishops" claiming to derive their office by succession from the first apostles. By the middle of the second century the necessity of presenting a united front to disrupters of one kind or another, as well as to the imperial government, was leading to a further step in centralization. Of the committee of elders who ran each particular church one was coming to be regarded as the bishop par excellence, with unlimited power to discipline and in the last resort to expel undesirable or insubordinate members. The new episcopate, like the older presbytery, claimed apostolic authority, though the New Testament may be searched in vain for evidence of its existence.

This development did not take place everywhere simultaneously. Justin, writing at Rome about 150, mentions a presiding officer at Christian meetings, but does not say that the same official always presided. Hermas, though he mentions and even names officials of the Roman church, says nothing of a supreme bishop, though later writers "wished" that dignity on his brother Pius. Episcopal government seems to

have originated not at Rome, but in Asia. The first full-blown bishop of whom we know anything is Polycarp of Smyrna.

We derive our information on Polycarp from three sources -- the Epistle bearing his name, addressed to the church of Philippi; an account of his martyrdom, said to have been written by the church of Smyrna in 155-156; and the writings of his pupil Irenaeus. The account in Eusebius is based on these three sources and has no independent value. None of these authorities is above criticism. The Epistle of Polycarp in its present form is linked with the Ignatian Epistles, which we have seen reason to reject. The martyrology as it stands is embellished with miracles more edifying than credible -- a prophetic vision, a voice from heaven, a miraculous deflection of the fire from the victim, a sweet smell of incense from the burning faggots. Irenaeus on his own showing knew Polycarp only in boyhood and may easily have misunderstood the reminiscences of an old man of eighty. Still Irenaeus is an honest witness and, except when he demonstrably blunders, is entitled to consideration. Since he mentions Polycarp's letter to Philippi and the fact of his martyrdom, we may take it that both are historical, though the letter has been interpolated and the martyrdom embroidered.

Irenaeus states that Polycarp had personally known "John and the others who had seen the Lord", and had been appointed by them bishop of Smyrna.[27] We can check this by another statement of Irenaeus. He tells us that Papias of Hierapolis was a "hearer of John and companion of Polycarp ".[28] Now Papias was not a hearer of John or any other apostle: we have his own word for it (quoted by Eusebius) that to get material for his book, the Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord, he had to contact older men who had known the apostles. But Papias seems to have known another John whom he calls "the elder",[29] This John in all probability was the real author of the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles. It is a fair inference that Polycarp, like his friend Papias, knew John "the elder", but not John the apostle, and that Irenaeus, sitting at the feet of Polycarp as a boy, pardonably confused the two.

The career of Polycarp at Smyrna covered the first half of the second century. Mere seniority would give him a unique place among the local leaders. By the end of his life no one, least of all young Irenaeus, was in a position to check his early history. All who wished to exalt the episcopate would foster the legend of his appointment by men "who had seen the Lord"; and his congregation would easily credit it.

The rise of the episcopate was a by-product of the struggle against Marcionism and other disruptive movements. Irenaeus relates that Marcion once met Polycarp and asked: "Do you recognize me?" and that Polycarp replied: "I recognize the first-born of Satan!"[30] This must have been when Marcion was still in Asia, i.e., before 139-140. Polycarp's letter to Philippi must have been written about the same time; for in it he uses the self-same phrase: "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and says that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan,"[31] That the material body could not rise again was the teaching of Marcion. In this letter Polycarp does not style himself bishop and is careful to associate the ciders of Smyrna with him. The episcopate is building, but not yet built. Still more noteworthy is the total silence of the Epistle as to any contact with the apostles, though that contact was to become for Irenaeus the supreme title of Polycarp to fame. The letter names no apostle except Paul.

We next hear of Polycarp about 154-155, when as a very old man he visits Rome to confer with bishop Anicetus (by now Rome too has a single bishop) on the keeping of Easter and other disputed matters. This visit is notable not only as the first recorded conference between bishops of different churches, but as the first evidence of the existence of the Easter festival.

Except Sunday, the day of the weekly meeting and common meal, no Christian feast-day is mentioned in the New Testament or appears to have existed in the first century. No record was kept of the date or even the year of the crucifixion. To Jewish Christians the sufferings of the Messiah were less important than his coming return in triumph. To their Pauline rivals

the death and resurrection of Christ were mystical and dateless. In the Pauline Epistles the observance of dates is treated sometimes as a foible to be tolerated in weaker brethren, sometimes as a sign of backsliding.[32]

But in the second century, as the mystical Christ of Paul became fused in the Gospels with a historical Messiah, the need of an annual commemoration began to be felt. The Asiatic churches, which contained a high percentage of Jewish converts, kept the Jewish Passover as the anniversary of the resurrection. The western churches, in which pagan converts predominated, preferred the Sunday next after the Passover. Polycarp and Anicetus failed to resolve the discrepancy and agreed to differ. The incident illustrates the variety of practice existing in the churches of the second century.

Soon after returning to Smyrna Polycarp perished in a local persecution. Its occasion is obscure; but it was probably connected with contemporary events in the neighbouring district of Phrygia. In Phrygia the spread of Christianity among the distressed peasantry had led to a revival of revolutionary Messianism by preachers or "prophets" led by one Montanus. We know of the Phrygian movement, which Church historians call Montanism, only from attacks by late second-century writers quoted by Eusebius, and from Tertullian, who became a Montanist early in the third century. Tertullian does not tell us much about the early history of the movement; and in the attacks of opponents, as usual, we have to disentangle the facts from a great deal of nonsense. The facts which emerge are that Montanus and his comrades, two of whom (Priscilla and Maximilla) were women, revived the ecstatic extempore preaching which had been a feature of primitive Christianity; that they won such support in the Asiatic churches that local bishops were powerless against them; that the preachers foretold the imminence of war and revolution; and that one of them (Alexander) was accused of being a "bandit" -- i.e., he had taken arms in some revolt against the government. Such a movement inevitably led to intensified repression in the affected provinces and amply accounts for the martyrdoms at Smyrna.

The extant account of Polycarp's end, though obviously "written up", gives a graphic and convincing picture of the procedure in trials of Christians. Many historians (from Mommsen onward) have drawn attention to the identity of the procedure against Christians with that against bandits. If in the eyes of the authorities Christians were bandits or at least accomplices of bandits, this is not surprising. The rise of the Montanist movement in Asia just at this time supplies the key to much that is otherwise difficult to understand. The small fry arrested at Smyrna get no consideration whatever: they are tortured and thrown to the beasts without ceremony. But the proconsul of Asia, Quadratus, would like to spare Polycarp. If only this old man would meet him half-way and repudiate the trouble-makers! "Swear by the genius of Caesar, and I will let you go. Revile Christ!" But that is just what Polycarp cannot do. He is no revolutionary; he offers to explain to the proconsul in private what Christ means to him; but a public repudiation of the Christ whose cult keeps the churches together he will not make. "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" By refusing to swear by the emperor, and by giving to an executed rebel a title reserved for the emperor and the allies of Rome, Polycarp seals his fate. Such language is treason. He is burnt in the public stadium.

One tragic feature of the case must not be missed. The Jews of Smyrna vie with the pagans in howling for the old bishop's death. It is only twenty years since the suppression of the last Jewish revolt. Christians like Justin, bidding for an alliance with the Empire, loudly dissociate themselves from the beaten Jews. The Jews, as at Smyrna, retaliate by denouncing the Christians.

Zealots for the episcopate naturally exploited the name of Polycarp for all it was worth. Not only so, but by letters forged soon after his death they linked him with Ignatius, the revered martyr of forty years before. In these letters Ignatius, a slave closely guarded on his way to martyrdom at Rome, is improbably allowed to write at length to various churches charging them to stick to their bishops, who are " in the place of God ", and their elders, who are " in the place of the apostles ".[33] By so doing

they will escape the poison of heresy, right or left. "Whoso follows a schismatic shall have no part in the kingdom of God.[34] ... It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate the holy communion; but whatever he shall approve, that is also pleasing to God."[35] To authenticate all this the letter of Polycarp to Philippi was amplified by a few lines recommending the letters of Ignatius and asking for news of his fate, and so was made to appear contemporary with the older martyr. That the lines are interpolated is evident: if Polycarp had wanted news of the end of Ignatius, he would have written to Rome, not to Philippi. By these forgeries episcopal government, unknown to the apostles and evangelists, yet so necessary to church order in the middle of the second century, was sanctified with the authority of two famous martyrs. The myth of primitive episcopacy was further bolstered by the industry of Hegesippus, a converted Jew who came to Rome about 160 and with slender historical warrant compiled lists of supposed bishops from apostolic times to his own day.

6. *Canon of the New Testament*

The organization of the episcopate made it possible for the first time to secure general agreement on a canon. The Old Testament in its Greek version was accepted by all Greek-speaking Christians except the Marcionites and other Gnostics. But hitherto each church had pleased itself in the selection of Christian literature to be read at its weekly meetings. Consequently by the middle of the second century many rival Gospels were in circulation, all reputed to be "memoirs of apostles" or of their associates. The elders of each church, no doubt, exercised a certain censorship; but the variety of quotations in the early Fathers shows that the net was cast very wide. With a single bishop in control of each local church it became possible to work to a common rule.

Accordingly in the third quarter of the second century four Gospels were selected from the rest. Matthew headed the list: it stressed more than any other Gospel the Jewish roots of Christianity and was the favourite of the Syrian churches, where Jewish converts abounded. But an Aramaic variant used by the Jewish Christians of Palestine and known as the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* was rejected as heretical. Only

fragments of it are extant; but we know that it lacked the virgin-birth story and made Jesus far more human than the average church leader of the second century could stomach.

Mark was ancient, had long been in use in the Roman church and was known elsewhere. But to make him generally acceptable his conclusion, relating the manifestation of the risen Christ, was deleted and an epitome taken from the other Gospels substituted.[36] The absence of this ending from two of our oldest manuscripts betrays the work of second-century surgery.

Luke's sheer artistry, his command of Greek and his skill in welding Judaic and Pauline material into an apparently harmonious whole made him an indispensable third to Christians who valued good literature. His Gospel accredited his Acts.

The Fourth Gospel was the least popular. Hitherto it had circulated mainly in its native Asia Minor. The prestige of Polycarp, the disciple of the evangelist, may have helped to win a wider public for the Johannine Gospel and its companion Epistle.[37] Even so this Gospel was not accepted without amendment. To conciliate the majority Peter, whom the author had pointedly subordinated to the unnamed " disciple whom Jesus loved ", was reinstated by adding a chapter in which Jesus pardons Peter's denial, charges him to " feed his sheep " and prophesies his martyrdom. Opportunity was taken to authenticate this suspect Gospel by identifying the " beloved disciple " with the author himself.[38] Even that did not silence objectors. They remained lively until the third century.

There is no evidence that the Pauline Epistles were universally read in the churches before the time of Marcion. No doubt they were current in the original Pauline churches of the Aegean; but they were not read at Rome. Justin never cites or even names Paul. Hermas seems positively to dislike him. Obviously the Marcionites could not be allowed so dangerous a controversial weapon. The Epistles were therefore rendered safe by

suitable doctoring in places and by including the anti-Marcionite Pastorals in the final collection.[39] Even so an aroma of Gnosticism clung to the name of Paul. Tertullian in the third century, though he accepts him, still calls him the "apostle of the heretics".

Final agreement on the canon was not yet reached. Some writings, including the Apocalypse and the Epistle of James, were the subject of dispute down to the fourth century. The latest book of the New Testament, the so-called Second Epistle of Peter, may be said to have scraped in by the skin of its teeth. It was written after the Pauline Epistles had been canonized, as is evident from its reference to them as " scriptures which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest to their own destruction " -- a palpable hit at the Marcionites.[40] No one refers to 2 Peter before the third century; and even Eusebius in the fourth refuses to count it canonical, though " known to most " and " useful to many ".[41]

7. *Deepening Crisis*

Thus in the second half of the second century the Christian movement was knit into a network of disciplined local churches governed by bishops in regular mutual contact, with a common groundwork of doctrine and documents (but with many unresolved points still outstanding) and well equipped to meet the deepening crisis of Roman imperialism.

Even before the death of Antoninus in 161 the Parthians, tempted by the internal weakness of the Empire, took the offensive in the East. In the first year of the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus the enemy overran Armenia and invaded Syria. By withdrawing troops from other provinces and recruiting in Italy (a rare operation in those days) Roman generals managed in a few years to free the frontier, invade Parthia and dictate peace. But the war left the Empire so impoverished that in 166 and the following years whole districts were depopulated by plague -- one of many symptoms of the mass misery which was dragging Rome to her fall. An Egyptian papyrus of 168 tells of a village where the number of taxpayers has fallen from eighty-five to ten, " of whom eight have fled". Meanwhile German barbarians had broken through the weakened Danube

defences and penetrated into northern Italy. The rest of the reign of Marcus Aurelius (Verus died in 169) was spent in meeting this new threat. To restore the frontier he was driven to enlist bandits inhis armies, and finally to settle thousands of Germans in the depopulated border provinces on condition of military service against their countrymen across the Danube.

The sharpening situation led to sharper action against the Christians. About 165 Justin was martyred at Rome. No one had been louder than he in professing loyalty to the Empire; but the government may have doubted the sincerity of an apologist who in addressing them repudiated revolution, while in addressing Christians and Jews he endorsed the inflammatory Johannine Apocalypse.

Christianity was now beginning to spread to the western provinces of Gaul and Africa. In both the burden of taxation pressed heavily on the impoverished peasantry. Gaul in particular from the imperial point of view was a danger-point owing to the proximity of the Rhine frontier. Christianity was brought to Gaul by missionaries from Asia Minor, some of whom were certainly Montanists: we find the Gallic churches later opposing the excommunication of the Montanists, and Irenaeus (though himself no Montanist) writing sympathetically of their "prophetic gifts".[42]

The infiltration of this subversive movement into a province so near the northern frontier explains the savage persecution directed in 177 against the churches of Lyons and Vienne. The contemporary and wholly unmiraculous account quoted by Eusebius bears the stamp of authenticity.[43] One fact that emerges from this account is the intensity of anti-Christian propaganda. The authorities are frightened. The stock charges of cannibalism and incest, bolstered by evidence wrung from slaves by threats of torture, are used to whip up mob frenzy against the martyrs and to counteract any possible sympathy with their sufferings. Another notable point is the personal part played by Marcus Aurelius. After a number of martyrdoms the governor of Lyonnese Gaul, like Pliny on an earlier occasion, finds liis job beyond him and writes to the emperor

for instructions. Marcus, like Trajan, orders that Christians who recant are to be freed, but that those who do not are to suffer the rigour of the law. Accordingly those who are Roman citizens are beheaded, and the rest (including a boy of fifteen and a slave girl) frightfully tortured and then thrown to the beasts.

Marcus cannot have believed the grosser cEarges against the Christians. The one allusion to them in his Meditations refers to their "sheer obstinacy"[44] -- a very mild charge to lay against incestuous cannibals! His action is evidence that he considered the Empire to be in deadly danger from Christian propaganda.

8. *Celsus*

That this was by now the general opinion of the ruling class is shown by the polemic against Christianity written between 177 and 180 by Celsus, a Platonist philosopher, probably of Alexandria. Like other anti-Christian writings, it was destroyed after Christianity became the State religion; but as the authorities omitted to destroy a reply written by Qrigen. most of the work of Celsus survives in Origen's quotations.[45]

Celsus attacks Christianity on both theoretical and practical grounds. The theoretical attack is extremely able and in some ways anticipates modern criticism. Christianity, says Celsus, is of Jewish origin; yet the Jews repudiate it. According to them the founder was a base-born adventurer who picked up magic in Egypt and set up as a wonderworker and a Son of God.[46]The passages in the prophets said by Christians to refer to Jesus have nothing to do with him. The original Gospel has been revised "three or four times, nay many times", in the interest of Christian propaganda.[47] The story of the resurrection has many parallels in pagan myth, and rests on the evidence of a crazy woman and a handful of dreamers, wishful thinkers or plain liars. The risen God should have appeared to his judges! The quarrel between Jews and Christians, says Celsus, is as silly as a quarrel between worms and frogs as to which are the favourites of God. Christian teachers are mainly weavers, cobblers and such low people; they address their propaganda not to educated men, but

to women, children and slaves; they teach that wisdom is evil and folly good. God, being perfect and unchangeable, cannot become man; he is visible only to the eye of the soul; Christians in worshipping a corporeal God are gross materialists.

Equally interesting is Celsus' practical indictment of Christianity. The Christians are a secret and illegal society. They venerate no ancient and accredited god or hero, but a recent ringleader of sedition, thus showing disloyalty to the Empire at a time when the Empire is in the gravest danger. How can they expect toleration? If such disloyalty became general, the Empire would be overrun by wild barbarians who would make an end of Graeco-Roman culture and of Christianity too. Let Christians believe what they will, but let them respect the time-honoured religion of the State and join in saving civilization while there is yet time!

This urgent appeal of Celsus shows how greatly the outlook of the Empire had darkened under Marcus Aurelius. It is no longer enough that Christians should abjure revolution: Celsus calls for their active co-operation in imperial defence. Like other spokesmen of the ruling classes in times of crisis, he overlooked the fact that to an increasing number of its subjects life under the Empire was so intolerable that it was no longer worth defending. Such co-operation as he demanded the Christians were not prepared to give. Even had the bishops offered it, they could not have answered for the rank and file. The Church never officially forbade military service; but the majority of Christians would not serve.[48]

9. *Irenaeus*

The policy of Christian leaders at this time may be gathered from the writings of Irenaeus. By birth an Asiatic Greek and in boyhood a hearer ofEolYcarp, Irenaeus accompanied other Asiatic Christians to Gaul and settled at Lyons, where after the persecution of 177 he became bishop. A zealous missionary, he tells us that he learnt Celtic in order to preach to the Gallic peasantry. His chief work, the *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So Called* (usually cited under the shorter title *Against Heresies*) was written during the lull in persecution which followed the

death of Marcus Aurelius in 180. The main purpose of the work, as its title indicates, is to defend what we may call the "general line" of second-century Christianity against disruptive deviations, and particularly against the Gnostic sects who taught that matter was evil and that only a "spiritual" minority of mankind could be saved.

Irenaeus accuses the Gnostics of charging high fees for their esoteric teaching, of eating meat sacrificed to idols, of attending gladiatorial shows, of denying the necessity of martyrdom, of practising sexual promiscuity on the pretext that the flesh cannot contaminate the spirit, and in short of being no better than pagans. It is of course a partisan indictment. Charges of sexual promiscuity should be read with reserve: they were levelled by pagans at Christians generally, and have been levelled at minority movements at most periods of the world's history. The other charges are doubtless true. We are reminded of Hadrian's account of the sectaries of Alexandria fifty years earlier. Allowing for the bias of Irenaeus, we can see that the Gnostics dealt in recondite fancy religions which had not even the makings of a mass movement, and that in combating them Irenaeus stood for the future.

At the opposite pole to the Gnostics were the Ebonites or " poor men " -- the Jewish Christians of Palestine and Syria who continued to observe the Jewish law, condemned Paul as an apostate and used only an Aramaic Gospel attributed to Matthew. Irenaeus dismisses them briefly. We may doubt whether they were much heard of as far west as Gaul.

Against these opposite deviations he lays down what later became the Catholic criterion of orthodoxy -- the common doctrine of the churches, derived, he claims, through an unbroken succession of bishops from the apostles. Irenaeus singles out (and is the first writer to single out) the church of Rome as the model to which all other churches and the faithful everywhere should conform, since its tradition goes back to the glorious apostles Peter and Paul. Here Irenaeus forsakes history to follow the romance of Hege.sippu.Sr The story that Peter and Paul founded the church of Rome is irreconcilable with either the Pauline Epistles or the

Acts of the Apostles. Indeed the office of bishop, as Irenaeus understood it, was unknown until the time of his master Polycarp. His high opinion of the Roman church did not prevent Irenaeus from protesting with other bishops a few years later when Victor, bishop of Rome, tried to enforce his views on the date of Easter by excommunicating the Asiatic churches. Papal infallibility was still a good many centuries off. Socially and politically Irenaeus is, like Paul, conservative. Existing property relations are ordained by God. He pleads for property in tones which suggest that he had not done badly for himself:

"All of us own property, more or less, which we have acquired from the mammon of unrighteousness. Whence come the homes in which we dwell, the clothes which we put on, the vessels which we use and all else which ministers to our daily life, save from what we avariciously acquired when we were heathen, or received from heathen parents, kinsmen or friends who acquired it unjusdy -- not to mention what we acquire even now when we stand fast in the faith? Who sells and does not wish to profit out of the buyer? Who buys and does not wish to do a useful deal with the seller? Who is in business save that he may live by his business?"

Irenaeus reinforces this by an ingenious appeal to the Gospels:

" For this cause the Lord said: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged * -- not at all that we should not rebuke sinners, nor that we should consent to what is done ill, but that we should not unrighteously criticise the dispensation of God. For he has justly provided all things for our good."[49]

Similarly the kingdoms of this world, says Irenaeus, are not the devil's, but ordained by God to prevent a war of all against all.

"Since man by departing from God reached such a pitch of fury as even to look on his brother as his enemy, and engaged without fear in every kind of restless conduct and murder and avarice, God imposed on mankind the fear of man, as they did not acknowledge the fear of God; that being subjected to the authority of man and kept under restraint by their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword suspended full in their view. . . .

"For this reason, too, magistrates themselves, having laws as a clothing of righteousness whenever they act in a just and legitimate manner, shall not be called in question for their conduct nor be liable to punishment. But whatever they do to the subversion of justice, iniquitously, impiously, illegally and tyrannically, by that shall they also perish. For the just judgment of God comes equally on all and in no case is defective."[50]

The space which Itenaeus devotes to this argument shows that a great many Christians still regarded the existing social and political order as Satanic. Irenaeus knows that they will quote against him the scorching invectives of the Apocalypse against " Babylon the great" and the seven-headed beast. He takes up the challenge. He accepts the apostolic origin of the book (innocent of literary flair, he sees no difficulty in attributing the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel to the same John!) and meets his opponents by ingenious exegesis. Ninety years had passed since the Apocalypse was written: allusions topical under the Flavian emperors had become unintelligible and could be made to mean anything. Irenaeus insists that Antichrist is not a Roman emperor (neither Nero, Domitian nor any other) but a tyrant who will arise after the disruption of the Empire. He will be an apostate Jew, he will reign for three years and six months in Jerusalem, and he will be the foe of both Christianity and paganism, since he will set himself up as the only God. His tyranny will end with the coming of the Lord in the six thousandth year from the creation of the world. Then will come the millennium. Irenaeus, citing Papias and "the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord", ends with a naively materialistic picture of the plenty which will mark the Messianic kingdom.[51]

In this way Irenaeus reconciles loyalty to the Empire, which had become the policy of the Christian leadership, with the millennial hopes which still sustained the Christian rank and file. The Church and the Empire are not enemies, but predestined allies, since Antichrist will be the common enemy of both. Antichrist will be a Jew, and his capital Jerusalem. The millennium will come not by the destruction of Rome, but by the destruction of the enemy of Rome.

10. *Close of the Second Century*

Thus towards the end of the second century the Catholic Church emerges as a highly disciplined mass organization, led by bishops who have succeeded in harnessing potentially revolutionary followers to a policy anything but revolutionary. The leaders hold the rank and file by the disbursement of benefits from Church funds under their control, and rally their morale by what were once revolutionary slogans, but officially they repudiate revolution and are ready for an alliance with the Empire on one condition -- the recognition of Catholic Christianity as the State religion, and of its clergy as dispensers of the social services which the Empire can no longer provide. Their propaganda is directed not against the Empire as such, but against its most vulnerable organ, namely its official religion -- against sacrificial cults with their "stinking holocausts of dead beasts";[52] against gladiatorial shows, a relic of human sacrifice; and against emperor-worship. In all these respects Christianity played a progressive role under the conditions of that time.

The ultimate victory of the Church was assured. Year by year the Empire became less and less able to ensure a tolerable life for the masses or even for the middle classes. The wars of Marcus Aurelius had brought plague and famine in their train. Under the irresponsible Commodus (180-192) the Empire slid visibly towards anarchy. Not for nothing did Irenaeus forecast its disruption. Desertion and mutiny in the legions, and peasant revolts, especially in the West, became chronic. The rising of Maternus in 186 swept Gaul and Spain, and needed a whole army to cope with it. In 189 there were famine riots at Rome. In 193 the emperor Pertinax abolished the provision made by Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian for the education of poor children in Italy: the Empire could no longer afford even a fraction of a welfare State. After the murder of Pertinax four years of devastating civil war gave the purple to the African Septimius Severus. In his advice to his sons to enrich the soldiers and treat the rest of their subjects with contempt we may read the declaration of bankruptcy of Roman imperialism -- if indeed it could still be called Roman when Rome and Italy were at the mercy of provincial generals and provincial armies.

And another factor favoured the Church. In an Empire no longer expanding, but now permanently on the defensive against the barbarians, with its economic basis shifting from chattel-slavery to serfdom, its man-power reduced by plague and its surplus wealth steadily diminishing, the pagan cults began to be felt by the middle classes as a burdensome expense. Tertullian in his brilliant, defiant and often witty Apology, published at Carthage in 197-198, mentions pagan complaints of dwindling temple revenues, and retorts: "We cannot cope with men and gods begging together."[53] The Church, with a mass following to whom it could offer more than the Empire did, had only to expel irreconcilables like the Montanists and stand out for terms. Sooner or later a competitor for the purple would find Christian support worth buying. Tertullian's boast of the numbers of the Christians, whose " only commonwealth is the universe ", and his hint of what " one night and a few little torches " could do if they were permitted to render evil for evil, must have gravely embarrassed the bishops.1 No doubt they were relieved when a few years later he seceded to the Montanists. Montanism was not Tertullian's only heresy. The frank materialism of his book *On the Soul*, published shortly before his secession, raises the interesting question whether he was a convert from Epicureanism. To Tertullian the soul is a material substance transmitted from parents to children in the process of reproduction, and no immortality is conceivable except the "resurrection of the flesh ".

Only the revolutionary origins of Christianity, the continuing disaffection of its rank and file (shown less in active resistance than in apocalyptic denunciation and the refusal of military service) and the natural reaction of a ruling class at bay delayed for another century the alliance between the Catholic Church, which had put the millennium into cold storage, and an Empire heading for feudalism, Roman now only in name, and soon to crumble under barbarian attacks into the feudal monarchies of the next age.[55]

11. *Conclusion*

In this book we have been concerned with the origins of Christianity. The results arrived at differ both from orthodoxy and from most current Rationalism.

Orthodoxy accepts at their face value the books of the New Testament, despite their contradictions. It is thus committed to a creed according to which God, without ceasing to be God, became man in the person of Jesus Christ, suffered death under a Roman governor of Judaea in the first century, rose again, founded the Catholic Church, and will return hereafter to judge the living and the dead.

The Rationalist rightly points out the contradictions in the orthodox creed and in the documents which support it, and the absence of independent historical confirmation of its claims. This commits him to the quest of a credible explanation of the facts. So far Rationalists have reached no agreed solution. The more conservative hold that a teacher named Jesus lived and died at the traditional date and uttered enough of the sayings recorded in the Synoptic Gospels to entitle him to be called the founder of Christianity. The more radical reject an historical founder and regard Jesus as a mystery-god pure and simple. The difficulties of both views have been pointed out. Neither explains all the facts. Neither takes sufficient account of the fact that early Christianity was a mass movement conditioned by the decaying slave society of antiquity. Yet in a sense both are true, since both are legitimate deductions from some of the available data.

This seeming contradiction disappears when we realize that the texts which support the historical and mythical theories refer to two opposed tendencies in early Christianity.[56] Some, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, refer to a first-century revolutionary movement of the poorer classes, centred in Palestine and connected with the Essenes. Round a crucified leader of this movement or, more likely, round confused traditions of more than one leader the original Gospel story was written. Other texts, especially in the Pauline Epistles, refer to a mystery cult among Greek-speaking Jews of the *diaspora*, whose Christ Jesus was no leader of flesh and blood but a god by whom its initiates were to be redeemed from this evil world, and which attracted rich as well as poor converts. The propaganda of both tendencies was conducted in the underworld of the Mediterranean cities. Their bitter rivalry can be traced in the Pauline Epistles and in the Johannine Apocalypse.

After the Jewish revolt and the destruction of Jerusalem the Pauline leaders set to work to draw the sting of the revolutionary movement and so to prevent, if possible, clashes with Rome in which they too were likely to be involved. They did this, firstly, by using the funds at their disposal to provide benefits which the revolutionaries could not afford, and secondly, by rewriting the Gospel story, neutralizing its revolutionary content and remaking its hero in the image of their own mystery-god. The first process put the control of the churches into safe hands; the second left the Gospels the contradictory patchwork which we see today.

In the second century the church leaders had to turn round and fight another enemy -- the ultra-PauUnists who would have cut the Jewish roots of Christianity, and the Gnostics who would have so mystified it as to rob it of all mass appeal. The upshot was the emergence of the episcopate and the formation of the New Testament canon.

Consequently the New Testament exhibits insuperable contradictions -- a Jewish Messiah of human descent, who is nevertheless God from the beginning; a material kingdom of God on earth, and yet a kingdom not of this world and not to be inherited by flesh and blood; denunciations of the rich and visions of the fall of Rome, side by side with exhortations to slaves to obey their masters and to all to obey the government. These contradictions illustrate the different points of view rooted in different social classes -- the millennial dreams of the poor and hungry, and the mystical escapism of the more comfortable -- which went to form the Catholic Church and the Catholic creeds of later centuries. The dogmatic, authoritarian side of the new religion became the ideology of feudalism. Its revolutionary, millennial side, submerged for the time being, helped to shape the popular and progressive thought of ages to come.

Notes

1 The theory of a few critics that Luke's Gospel is an expansion of Marcion is untenable. Luke came first. Tertullian, who had the documents before him, says: "Marcion in his *Antitheses* argued that the Gospel which

we attribute to Luke was interpolated by defenders of Judaism in order to bring in the law and the prophecs." Against Marcion, iv, 4.

2 Here lay Marcion's real significance. He was not merely anti-Judaic, but anti-revolutionary in a crude way which threatened to drive away church members. That was what church leaders could not tolerate.

3 Justin, *Apology* 1, 4.

4 Justin here commits a first-class blunder. The statue he saw was dedicated to an old Italian god Semo Sancus -- *Semoni Deo Sanco*. Justin misread this as *Simoni Deo Sancto* -- "to the holy god Simon"!

5 Justin of course had no access to official papers and is speaking entirely "in the air". In later centuries "despatches of Pilate" (*Acta Pilati*) were forged in default of the genuine article.

6 *Apology* I, 46.

7 The mixture of water wiih eucharistic wine is unknown in the New Testament. Was it an attempt to conciliate the Marcionites, who used water only?

8 *Apology* I, 67.

9 I, 66. For discussion of this passage see Coulange, *The Evolution of the Mass*, part II, chap. I. Justin's purpose is not to affirm transubstantiation, but to repudiate Marcion, who said that Jesus had no material body. Bread, wine and water made the body of Jesus, just as they make other human bodies.

10 See chap. VI, § 5, and VII, § 5.

11 Charges of cannibalism and promiscuity seem to have been stock weapons against ancient revolutionaries. They were levelled at Catiline and his associates in 63 B.C., doubtless with as little truth as later against the Christians.

12 *Apology* II, 5.

13 II, 10.

14 Hermas, *Vision* II, 4.

15 This Clement cannot be the author of the Epistle of the Roman to the Corinthian church, which in fact bears no name. He may have been a descendant of the Flavius Clemens put to death by Domitian. The family seem to have remained Christians. (Renan, *Les Evangiles*, chap. XVI.) Titus Flavius Clemens, better known as Clement of Alexandria, was probably another descendant.

16 III, 5.

17 III, 6.

18 *Mandates* II-III.

19 *Parable* I.

20 II.

21 VIII, 6.

22 V, 5-6.

23 VIII, 1-3.

24 VIII, 6-10.

25 IX, 26.

26 X, 4.

27 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 3, 4; letter to Florinus, cited by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 20, 4-8; letter to Victor, cited *ibid.*, V, 24, 12-17.

28 *Against Heresies*, V, 33, 4.

29 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 39, 1-4. See above, chap. VII, § 14.

30 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 3, 4,

31 Polycarp, *Philippians* VII.

32 Romans xiv, 5-6; Galatians iv, 10.

33 Ignatius, *Magnesians*, VI-VII. See above, chap. VII, § 13.

34 *Philadelphians*, III.

35 Smyrnaeans, VIII.

36 Mark xvi, 9-20. See above, chap. VII, § 6.

37 Loisy suggests that the fixing of the canon of the Gospels was among the subjects discussed by Polycarp and Anicetus in 154-155. *Birth of the Christian Religion*, chap. X.

38 John xxi, 15-24.

39 Marcion had certainly doctored his collection of the Epistles. But there is no reason to suppose that his opponents were not equally good at the game. A signal example of anti-Marcionite padding is the exordium and peroration of Romans (i, 1-7; xvi, 25-27). The Jewish prophets and the Jewish descent of Jesus are dragged by force into what should be a simple greeting and farewell. See chap. VI, § 7.

40 2 Peter iii, 15-16.

41 *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 3, 1; 25, 3.

42 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 6, I.

43 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 1-4. The ultra-critical Van Manen concedes that the account is "historical, even if here and there adorned with touches of art". *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, article "Old Christian Literature".

44 XI, 3.

45 Origen, writing seventy years after Celsus, mistakes him for an Epicurean namesake, a friend of the satirist Lucian. But the quotations prove that Origen's Celsus is a Platonic idealist.

46 This proves that the rabbinical counterblast to the Gospel story, later incorporated in the Talmud, was already current in the second half of the second century.

47 Origen, *Against Celsus*, II, 27.

48 The story preserved by Eusebius of a Christian legion whose prayers produced a timely thunderstorm is fiction. The name "Thundering Legion", alleged to have been conferred on this unit by Marcus Aurelius, really dates from Nero, if not from Augustus. The thunderstorm, however, really occurred and is depicted on the Antonine column at Rome. The sculpture may have suggested the story. As early as the time of Tertullian (197) a forged despatch of Marcus was in circulation attributing the rain to the prayers of Christian soldiers (Tertullian, *Apology*, V, 6).

49 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 30, 1-3.

50 V. 24, 1-2.

51 V, 33, 3-4. See chap. V, § 2, above.

52 Tertullian, *Apology*, XXIII.

53 XLII.

54 XXXVII-XXXVIII. The fact that Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century, called Tertullian "master" need imply no more than admiration for his style. Cyprian had not to cope with Tertullian alive.

55 Constantine was not the first emperor to consider the official recognition of Christianity. The Syrian Alexander Severus (222-235) proposed the concurrent endowment of Christianity, Judaism and paganism. Philip the Arab (244-249) was actually a Christian; but military opposition destroyed him before he showed his hand.

56 The Tübingen school of critics may be said to have pointed the way to this conclusion. But the Tübingen school were Hegelians and interested only in the struggle of *ideas*.

APPENDIX ON THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In offering a second edition of this book to the public, my first duty is to acknowledge the kind reception of the original edition which made a second possible. Naturally I did not expect general agreement. Criticism has come from quarters from which it was to be expected. I do not propose to take up space here to deal with it.

I take this opportunity, however, to supplement the short references to the Dead Sea Scrolls on pages 56-57, 72 and 89 by giving some account of the literature that has sprung up round the subject since Dupont-Sommer wrote his preliminary survey, to which alone I refer in my text.

The most comprehensive account of the discoveries is *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1956) by J. M. Allegro, one of the international team of scholars engaged in the excavation and editing of the Scrolls. Thanks to the work of Allegro and his colleagues the ancient date of the documents is now undisputed: not even Driver contends now for the sixth or seventh century. The final proof of antiquity was supplied by physical science. All organic matter contains an atomically unstable form of carbon, known as carbon-14, in addition to the normal form of that element (carbon-12). In dead matter carbon-14 disintegrates at a constant rate. By measuring, therefore, the amount of carbon-14 in any specimen of organic matter scientists can estimate the time that has passed since it ceased to be part of a living body. Tests made on the flaxen covers of scrolls taken from the first cave excavated show that the flax was cut at some date between 168 B.C. and A.D. 233. Any closer dating must depend on the internal evidence of the documents, and may vary with different documents.

The scrolls taken from the first cave include two manuscripts of the book of Isaiah (one well preserved, the other in bad condition), a book of rules of the sect, regulations for a "war of the sons of light against the sons of darkness," a hymn book, and the commentary on the prophet Habakkuk

mentioned in my text. All are interesting. The interest of the manuscripts of Isaiah lies in their bearing on the textual criticism of the Old Testament, into which we need not enter here. The book of rules, or "Manual of Discipline," as some prefer to call it, serves to identify the sect with that responsible for a document discovered in 1896 at Cairo and known as the "Damascus Document," since it refers to the exile of the sect "in the land of Damascus."

The sect which produced these writings called itself the "Covenant" or the "New Covenant," practised community of goods and managed their affairs at meetings provided for in the rules. Both men and women were admitted; female skeletons have been found in the cemetery of the community. There can be no reasonable doubt that we have to do with the Essenes described by Josephus who also practised community of goods, and some of whom married, though the severer sort did not.

It is over the relation of this sect to the primitive Christians that controversy is hottest. The sect of the Dead Sea documents are the followers of a certain "teacher of righteousness" (or, as Dupont-Sommer translates it, "master of justice") who was persecuted by a "wicked priest." Of the "teacher of righteousness" nothing is known outside the Scrolls and the kindred "Damascus Document." The identification of the "wicked priest" is disputed. Du pont-Sommer, whom I follow in my book, identifies him with Aristobulus II (67-63 B.C.) on the ground that the commentary on Habakkuk refers to a disaster which overtook the Jews on the Day of Atonement and to the deliverance of the "wicked priest" into the hands of his enemies. If the text is correctly translated, this can refer only to Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C., which occurred on that day, and to his carrying of Aristobulus into captivity at Rome.

Allegro, on the other hand, identifies the "wicked priest" with Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.), the father of Aristobulus. He argues that another Dead Sea document, a commentary on the prophet Nahum, refers to Alexander's practice of crucifying his enemies as an atrocity never before committed in Israel. On the assumption that the Nahum and

Habakkuk commentaries refer to the same oppressor, this would clinch the argument. Allegro, however, does not explain the statement of the Habakkuk commentary that the "wicked priest" fell "into the hands of his enemies." Alexander reigned until his death. It is, after all, possible that the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to more than one tyrant.

Be this as it may, the fact remains that about a century before the traditional date of the foundation of Christianity, the Essenes venerated a "teacher of righteousness" who was persecuted and martyred by a Hasmonaean priest-king. Further, they expected the reappearance of a "teacher of righteousness," an "elect," through whom judgment would be executed on all nations and especially on false Jews. It is a legitimate inference that the martyred teacher and he who was to appear at the end were one and the same. This is in accordance with Jewish ways of thought. Elijah was popularly expected to return to anoint the Messiah; the Messiah himself, for some, was to be Joshua *redivivus*; Jesus in the Gospels is reputed to be Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist or one of the prophets. From all this it results that in Jewry at the time of the Christian era the expectation of the return of a dead leader as a deliverer was not the unheard-of paradox which it is said to have been by apologists of Christianity.

It must be remembered that "Messiah" -- "annointed" -- was a title, not a personal name. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Essenes should have used the title to denote two separate functionaries, the "Messiah of Aaron," or priestly interpreter of the law in the days to come, and the "Messiah of Israel," the warrior who was to lead the people to victory and inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth. The "teacher of righteousness" killed by the Hasmonaeans seems to have been a dissentient priest opposed to the Jerusalem hierarchy; and it was as the "Messiah of Aaron" that he was expected to return. Along with him would appear the "Messiah of Israel," and between the two of them they would carry out the revolution that would put down princes from their thrones and exalt them of low degree. In historic Christianity all trace of a dual Messiahship is absent. But in view of the revision of the Gospels "three times, four times,

many times," (as Celsus said) in the interests of Pauline theology this is not surprising.

It was not to be expected that Christian scholars would acquiesce in an interpretation of the facts which reduced the crucifixion of Jesus, and the faith in his resurrection and advent, from something unique in human history to something that had happened before and might have happened a dozen times in the underworld of Jewry with its visions of revenge on the kingdoms of the world. In *The Dead Sea Scroll and the Originality of Christ* (London, 1956) Father Geoffrey Graystone puts the best face on the matter that a Catholic can. After all, there is nothing in the Dead Sea Scrolls about the incarnation of the Son of God, or about the Atonement, or about the resurrection on the third day; nor anything in the New Testament about the Essenes; so what can one have had to do with the other? To be sure! And there is nothing in the Dead Sea Scrolls about the virgin birth, the immaculate conception, transubstantiation or the infallibility of the Pope. Allegro disposes of this argument when he points out that the New Testament in its present form (still more the dogmas of the Church) "cannot be claimed to represent with certainty the standpoint of the first Jewish-Christians of Jerusalem."

I have dealt with this aspect of the matter more fully in my book. A Protestant scholar, Professor Millar Burrows of Yale University, U.S.A., carries hedging to the length of a fine art by casting doubt on any positive conclusions from the evidence whatever. One wonders what Professor Burrows would say if his skeptical methods were applied to the Bible!

The coincidences between the practices of the Dead Sea sect and those of the primitive churches are too many to be fortuitous -- the community of goods; the communal meal; the blessing of bread and wine; the apocalyptic expectation of final victory of the "sons of light" over the "sons of darkness"; the very name, "New Covenant," by which the sect was known to its members. Are we really to believe that the primitive church of Jerusalem knew nothing of, and owed nothing to a community

who lived some dozen miles away and whose rules so resembled their own?

Archibald Robertson

August, 1961.

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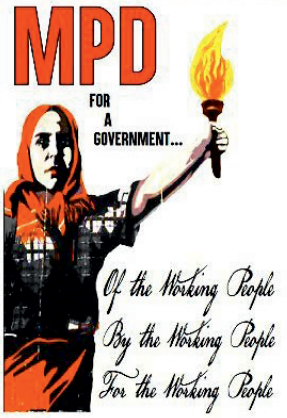

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