

sometimes seen with a lion's skin over his shoulders, such statues have been thought to resemble, and allude to, those of the Theban Hercules and their legends." (Note. "The pestle is of hard wood, about four feet long, and two inches in diameter, with the ends tipped or ferrelled with iron, to prevent their splitting or wearing.")¹

We shall have to consider further hereafter the mythological significance of Bala Râma and the other two Râmas. In the meantime, beyond noting how precisely the former corresponds with the Hercules of Megasthenes, it will suffice to say that one of the other Râmas, closely connected with Krishna, corresponds with the Hercules figure so far as to support strongly M. Senart's hypothesis of a combination of various personages in the Greek's conception:—

"It is Rama Chandra, however, who is the favourite subject of heroic and amatory poetries: he is described 'of ample shoulders, brawny arms, extending to the knee; neck, shell-formed; chest, circular and full, with auspicious marks; body, hyacinthine; with eyes and lips of sanguine hue; the lord of the world; a moiety of Vishnu himself; the source of joy to Ikshwaku's race.' He is also called...blue-bodied, an appellation of Krishna, as well as of the prototype of both—Vishnu."²

In fine, then, we are not entitled to say with Lassen that Megasthenes clearly shows the worship of Krishna to have attained the highest eminence in India three hundred years before our era; but what is certain is that the whole group of the legends with which Krishna is connected had at that date already a high religious standing; and that an important Krishna cultus, resting on these, existed before and spread through India after that period, but certainly flourished long before the advent of Christian influences.

X. WEBER'S THEORY.

The early vogue of Krishna-worship being thus amply proved, it remains to consider the argument, so long persisted in by Professor Weber, as to the derivation of certain *parts* of Krishnaism from Christianity, keeping in view at

¹ Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, p. 194. Diodorus tells (ii. 39) that in India Hercules has the club and lion's skin as among the Greeks.

² Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, p. 195.

the same time, of course, the more extensive claims made by the partizans of Christianity. With these Professor Weber is not to be identified: there is no reason to doubt that, even if he be mistaken, he is perfectly disinterested in his whole treatment of the subject. This is not to say, of course, that he has approached it from the first in a perfectly scientific frame of mind. I should rather say that his criticism represents the effects of the *general* European prepossession as regards Christianity on a candid truth-seeker who has not independently investigated Christian origins: that his attitude belongs to the period of criticism in which Christianity was not scientifically studied. It is only fair to mention that besides seeing Christian elements in Krishnaism he finds Homeric elements in the Râmâyana, the next great Hindu epic after the Mahâbhârata. That theory, however, seems to have met very small acceptance among Indianists,¹ and need not be here discussed, any more than his old argument as to the influence of Greek art on India after Alexander, which stands on a different footing. One passage will serve to show his general position, which includes a frank avowal that there is evidence of Hindu influence on Christianity just about the time at which he thinks Christianity influenced Krishnaism:—

“Still more deep [than the Grecian] has been the influence of Christianity, also chiefly introduced by way of Alexandria, to which is to be attributed the idea of a personal, individual, universal God; and the idea of Faith, which is not to be found in India before this time, but which from this epoch forms a common type of all Hindu sects. In the worship of Krishna, an ancient hero, which now takes an entirely new form, even the name of Christ seems to stand in direct connection with it, and several legends of Christ, as well as of his mother the Divine Virgin, are transferred to him.—In an opposite manner, Hindu philosophy too exercised a decided influence upon the formation of several of the Gnostic sects then rising, more especially in Alexandria. The Manichæan system of religion in Persia is very evidently indebted to Buddhistical conceptions, as the Buddhists in the freshness of their religious zeal, carried on by their principle of universalism, had early sent their missionaries beyond Asia. The great resemblance which the Christian ceremonial and rites (which were forming just at that time) show to the Buddhistic in many respects, can be best explained by the influence of

¹ See it ably criticized in K. T. Telang's *Was the Râmâyana copied from Homer?* Bombay, 1873.

the latter, being often too marked for it to be an independent production of each faith; compare the worship of relics, the architecture of church towers (with the Buddhistic Topes), the monastic system of monks and nuns, celibacy, the tonsure, confession, rosaries, bells, etc.”¹

I do not suppose that, after the banter he has bestowed in *Krishna's Geburtsfest* on the Father Giorgi order of etymology, Professor Weber would now stand to the above suggestion about the name of Christ; or that he would give a moment's countenance to the preposterous argument of the *Athenæum* critic that the name Krishna, = black, might mean “anointed” because the root might mean “to tinge.” Apart from that, the argument for a reciprocal action of the two religions is on the face of it plausible enough; and it becomes necessary to go into the details.

In the above extract Professor Weber indicates only two respects in which Krishnaism was in his opinion modified by Christianity—the doctrines, namely, of “a personal, universal God,” and of “Faith.” In his treatise on the Krishna Birth-Festival he posits a number of concrete details: in particular, the Birth Festival itself; the representation of Krishna as a child suckled by his mother; the curious item that, at the time of Krishna's birth, his foster-father Nanda goes with his wife Yasoda to Mathura “to pay his taxes” (a detail not noted by the *Athenæum* critic); the representation of the babe as laid in a manger; the attempted killing by Kansa; the “massacre of the innocents”; the carrying of the child across the river (as in the Christian “Christophoros” legend); the miraculous doings of the child and the healing virtue of his bath water (as in the Apocryphal Gospels); the raising of the bereaved mother's dead son, the straightening of the crooked woman; her pouring ointment over Krishna; and the sin-removing power of his regard.² These concrete details I will first deal with.

§ 1. A most important admission, it will be remembered,

¹ *Modern Investigations of Ancient India.* A Lecture delivered in Berlin, March 4th, 1854, by Professor A. Weber. Translated by Fanny Metcalfe, 1857, pp. 25–6. (*Indische Skizzen*, p. 28.)

² Work cited, pp. 328–9.

has already been made by Professor Weber in regard to the story of King Kansa; which he admits to be now proved a pre-Christian myth. So important, indeed, is that withdrawal, that but for the Professor's later restatement I should have surmised him to have lost confidence in his whole position, of which, as it seems to me, the central citadel has fallen. If the story of Kansa be admittedly a pre-Christian myth, and the Christian Herod-story be thus admittedly a redaction of an old Eastern myth; what becomes of the presumption of Indian imitation of other Christian stories which, on the face of them, are just as likely to be mythical as the story of Herod and the massacre of the innocents? Did it ever occur to Professor Weber to consider how the Christian stories in general really originated? It would seem not. His argument simply assumes that the Gospel stories (whether true or not, he does not say) came into circulation at the foundation of Christianity, and so became accessible to the world. But as to the source of these stories—as to how these particular miraculous narratives came to be told in connection with Jesus—he makes (save on one point) no inquiry, and apparently feels no difficulty; though to a scientific eye, one would think, the clearing-up in some way of the *causation* of the Christian legends is as necessary as the explaining how they are duplicated in Krishnaism.

The one exception to which I refer in Professor Weber's investigation is his very straightforward allusion to the likelihood that the representation of the Virgin Mary as either suckling or clasping the infant Jesus may have been borrowed from the Egyptian statues or representations of Isis and Horus. For citing this suggestion from previous writers he has been angrily accused by Mr. Growse, a Roman Catholic Anglo-Indian, of "a wanton desire to give offence";¹ an imputation which the scholar has indignantly and justly resented.² Mr. Growse's pretext for his splenetic charge was the claim, cited by Professor Weber himself from De Rossi, that the earliest representations of the

¹ *Indian Antiquary*, iii. 300.

² *Id.* iv. 251.

Madonna in the Roman catacombs, recently brought to light, follow a classic and not an Egyptian type. Says De Rossi:—

“The paintings of our subterranean cemeteries offer us the first images of the Holy Virgin with her divine child; and they are much more numerous and more ancient than is indicated by the works hitherto [before 1863] published on the Catacombs of Rome. I have chosen four, which seem to me to be as the models of the different types and of the different periods which one meets from the first centuries to about the time of Constantine.” And again (a passage which Weber does not cite): “The frescoes of our illustrations and the monuments cited by me here, demonstrate that in the most ancient works of Christian art the Virgin holding her child is figured *independently of the Magi and of any historic scene.*”¹

Now, even if it be decided that the earliest “Madonnas” in the Catacombs have a classic rather than an Egyptian cast, nothing would be proved against the Egyptian derivation of the cult of the Virgin and Child. It does not occur to Commendatore De Rossi, of course, to question whether these early Madonnas were really Christian—whether they did not represent the almost universal vogue of the worship of a child-nursing Goddess apart from Christianity. There is no artistic or documentary evidence whatever of Christian Madonna-worship in the first century; and De Rossi’s “*premiers siècles,*” and his final claim that his series of images “goes back to the disciples of the apostles,” leave matters very much in the vague. The whole question of the antiquities of the Catacombs needs to be overhauled by some investigator as devoted as the Catholics, but as impartial as they are prejudiced. There might indeed be Christian, but there were certainly non-Christian, “Madonnas” of a “classic” cast before the time at which the absolute images of Isis were transferred to Christian churches, and black images of Mary and Jesus were made in imitation of them.² The very name Iacchos, one of the special titles of Dionysos,

¹ *Images de la T. S. Vierge, Choisies dans les Catacombes de Rome*, Rome, 1863, pp. 6–7, 21.

² See above, p. 142. Cp. Simrock, *Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie*, 6te Aufl. pp. 314, 381; and Maury, *Légendes Pieuses du Moyen Age*, 1843, p. 38.

originally meant a sucking infant;¹ and in the myths he is either suckled by or actually the child of Dêmêtêr,² "The Earth Mother," or Ceres *Mammosa*,³ "the many-breasted," who in turn bore in Greece the name *κουροτρόφος*,⁴ the boy-rearer. In ancient art she is often represented as suckling the Babe-God, especially on Athenian coins.⁵ Ino Leucothea, called *Mater Matuta* by the Romans, mother of Melicerta or Palæmon (= Melkarth and Baal-Ammon),⁶ the Roman Portumnus, was represented with her child in her arms,⁷ whence a presumption that among the Semites Melkarth and Baal-Ammon were represented as carried infants. Gaia, again, was sculptured holding the infant Dionysos or Erichthonios.⁸

Nor was the appellation of "The Virgin" any more unfamiliar before than after Christianity in connection with Madonna-worship. In Etruscan and Græco-Roman statuary, Juno (Hêrê), who was fabled to become a virgin anew each year,⁹ was represented as suckling a babe—Hercules or Dionysos.¹⁰ On Roman coins, Venus, who also

¹ Bochart, *Geographia Sacra*, ed. 1674, pp. 480–1 (*Chanaan*, l. i. c. 18); Suidas, *s.v.* Ἰακχος. Cp. Preller, *Griech. Myth.* 2nd. ed. i. 614. So the Latin *Liber*.

² Diodorus Siculus, iii. 62; Plutarch, *Julius Cæsar*, c. ix.; Strabo, b. iii. c. iii. § 16. Otherwise Dionysos is the child of Persephone—*Korê*, "the Maiden," who, like her mother, was "the Virgin." Diodorus, iii. 64; iv. 4.

³ Lucretius, iv. 1162.

⁴ Pausanias, i. 22; Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, i. 599. Leto had the same title. *Id.* p. 184, note 3. But it was given to Artemis, the most virginal Goddess of all. Pausanias, iv. 34.

⁵ K. O. Müller, *Ancient Art*, Eng. trans. pp. 438–441; Winckelmann, *Monuments Inédits*, i. 28, 68, 71.

⁶ Cp. Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, p. 326; and Brown, *The Great Dionysiac Myth*, i. 251 sq.; ii. 100.

⁷ K. O. Müller, *Ancient Art*, pp. 493, 538.

⁸ *Id.* p. 493.

⁹ Pausanias, ii. 38. This myth often recurs. Hêrê bears Hephaistos "without having been united in love" (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 927); and in the same way bears Typhon (Homerid. *Hymn to Apollo*). So, in Rome, Juno was identified with the *Virgo Coelestis* (Preller, *Römische Mythologie*, 1865, pp. 377, 752). The idea is ubiquitous. Cybele, the mother of *all* the Gods, was also styled the *Virgo Coelestis* (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, ii. 4), and was revered as a virgin, though the mate as well as the mother of Jupiter, and "seized with a love without passion for Attis" (Julian, *In Deorum Matrem*, c. 4). Equally transparent was the mysticism which made Ceres, the earth mother, a virgin too.

¹⁰ Preller's *Griechische Mythologie*, 2nd ed. i. 135; Pausanias, ix. 25; Müller, *Ancient Art*, pp. 430, 554.

was identified with the *Virgo Coelestis*,¹ was represented both as carrying a child and as having one before her, with the sceptre and ball—a form adopted by Christian art.² There were abstract Divine Mothers, too, who could be called Virgins without any sense of anomaly, since there was no “male of the species.” We know that in Rome in the time of the Republic a special worship was paid by matrons to the image of a nursing mother, Fortune giving suck to the Child Jupiter, and holding at the same time the Child Juno.³ Similarly the Greeks had statues of the abstract Virgins Peace and Fortune, each carrying Wealth (Plutus) as a child in her arms.⁴ For the rest, we know that in old Assyria or Chaldæa there was a popular worship of a child-bearing Goddess. It is agreed that the Goddess Alitta was represented by such images;⁵ and there are many specimens of similar ancient Eastern effigies of small size, which were evidently cherished by multitudes. In a case of “Miscellaneous Objects from Assyria and Babylonia,” in the Assyrian basement of the British Museum, may be seen⁶ old Chaldæan figures of this kind, one of which is described merely as a “female figure holding a child,” while another female figure is unhesitatingly labelled “female deity,” though the deity of the former is to the full as certain as that of the latter. In another case of “Antiquities from Dali” upstairs, at the outer end of the Egyptian Hall, are a number of similar figures, in the labelling of which officialdom ventures so far as to write “Figure of Female or Aphrodite,” “holding smaller figure or child.” Beyond question these popular “Madonnas” of the East are much older than Christianity;

¹ K. O. Müller, *Ancient Art*, p. 474; Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, i. 268; Firmicus, *De Errore Profan. Relig.* iv.

² K. O. Müller, as last cited.

³ “*Is est hodie locus septus religiose propter Jovis pueri, qui lactens cum Junone Fortunæ in gremio sedens, mammam adpetens, castissime colitur a matribus.*” Cicero, *De Divinatione*, ii. 41.

⁴ Pausanias, i. 8; ix. 16; Müller, p. 547.

⁵ Layard’s *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 1853, p. 477; Rawlinson’s *Herodotus*, i. 257. See the figure reproduced also in Lundy’s *Monumental Christianity*, p. 212.

⁶ Written in 1889.

and it is even possible that they represent a Chaldæan cultus earlier than the Egyptian worship of Isis.

This being so, the course of surmising a Christian origin for Indian effigies of Devakî nursing Krishna is plainly unscientific, since it passes over an obvious, near, and probable source for a remote and improbable one. To argue that India remained ignorant of or indifferent to all *Asian* presentments of child-nursing Goddesses for many centuries, and at length, when she had a highly-evolved religious system, administered by an exclusive priesthood, suddenly became enamoured of the Christian presentment of Mary and Jesus—this is to set aside all reasonable probability on no better pretext than a guess. Even if there were no old Asian cultus, no multitude of portable Asian images, of a child-bearing Goddess, the idea might obviously have been derived from the Isis-figures of Egypt before Christianity came into existence. Even from the engravings appended to his paper by Professor Weber, it appears that other divine personages than Devakî and Krishna were figured as mother and child in Hindu art and mythology; and the usage might perfectly well have prevailed in India before Krishnaism became anything like universal. In this connection Professor Tiele, one of the sanest of hierologists,¹ passes an unanswerable criticism on Professor Weber's argument in the Dutch *Theologisch Tijdschrift*:—

“One of the weakest points of his [Weber's] demonstration seems to me to be that in which he compares the delineations of Krishna at the breast of his mother Devakî with Christian pictures of the *Madonna lactans* (the Madonna giving suck), and both with that of Isis and Horos. For in the first place it is not proved that the Indian representations are imitations of Christian models: they might equally well be borrowed from the Egyptian, seeing that India was already in

¹ Let me offer a plea, as well as an excuse, for this most necessary term, which Professor Tiele himself has fathered. It is in the preface to his *Outlines* that he suggests the word “hierology” as a substitute for the cumbrous phrase, “Science of Religions.” If this term be adopted, we might when necessary say “Comparative Hierology” instead of “Comparative Mythology,” and so satisfy conservatives without having recourse to the question-begging “Comparative Theology,” or to the solecism of “Comparative Religion,” which is no more justifiable than “Comparative Words” for “Comparative Philology.”

communication with Egypt before our era. The Horos sitting on the lotos was certainly borrowed by the Egyptians from Indian pictures; and in return the Isis with the child Horos at her breast may well have been transported to India. Moreover, the Indian illustrations given by Weber, and equally the Christian, are of very late date; and further, it is very doubtful whether they all represent Devakî and Krishna. [Note.—Under one of the four is inscribed the name Lakshmi. Another is held to stand for Lakshmi or Maya with Kamadeva. In both the Goddesses have by them a lotos, the emblem of Lakshmi. And a third gives the whole legend, Devakî and Yaçodha each lying on her bed, the first strongly guarded, while the father of Krishna, under the protection of the serpent with seven heads, carries the child through the river, to place it in safety. Hardly one of the four recalls a *Madonna lactans*; but, indeed, Weber acknowledges that that is of very late date.]”¹

I cannot, with my limited knowledge, speak with Professor Tiele’s certainty as to the Horos-on-the-lotos being borrowed from India;² but I would suggest that if that were so borrowed, the Isis nursing Horos might be so likewise. We have really no solid ground, that I know of, for assuming that the Indian cult, in some form, was not as old as the Egyptian. We have the decisive testimony of Jerome that in the fourth century the Hindus were known to teach that their Buddha was born of a Virgin³—a clear proof that the Virgin myth was current in India long before. Such a dogma could not have gained such vogue in the short time between Jerome and the beginning of Mary-worship. If then Buddha was so early reputed Virgin-born, Krishna, who ranked as an incarnation of Vishnu before him, may reasonably be held to have had the same distinction. In any case, it is clear that, as Professor Tiele urges, the Hindus could perfectly well have borrowed, if they did borrow, from Egypt before Christianity was heard of.

¹ Art. *Christus en Krishna*, in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1877, p. 65.

² In his *History of the Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. p. 52, Dr. Tiele puts this view tentatively, as that of Dr. Pleyte.

³ *Adversus Jovinianum*, i. 42 (Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus*, xxiii. 273). Professor Rhys Davids, in a letter to Mr. W. S. Lilly (printed in the latter’s *Claims of Christianity*, 1894, p. 30), makes a remark as to the Buddha birth-story which sets up some risk of misunderstanding. “The Buddhists,” he writes, “did not ascribe to Gotama any divine birth in the Christian sense. Before his descent into his mother’s womb he was a *deva* . . .” But Christ also was held to exist from all eternity before his incarnation. The essential point is that the birth was held supernatural. Professor Davids, of course, rejects the notion that Buddhism borrowed from Christianity.

There being thus so little reason for surmising Christian influence in the matter, and so much for discarding any such surmise, there is *a fortiori* a presumption against Professor Weber's final contention as to the precise time of borrowing. There is a Krishnaist custom in India of "name-giving" on the festival day of Krishna's supposed birth; and in answer to criticism the Professor writes¹ that "it is because the custom of the Egyptian Church of celebrating the birth and the baptism of Christ on the *same day* prevailed only from the second half of the fourth century till the year 431, when the celebration of the *birth alone* took its place," that he dates the Krishnaist borrowing of the Birth Festival from Christianity "at the very time during which that custom peculiar to Egypt prevailed." Here we have perhaps the most striking example of Professor Weber's uncritical treatment of Christian origins. Why, one asks, does he not inquire as to how the Egyptian Christians came to adopt that peculiar usage of celebrating the birth and baptism of Christ on one day, for only the short period he speaks of? Was it a mere freak? And if it were, is it reasonable to suggest that this mere temporary provincial ecclesiastical freak in Christendom somehow impressed the remote Brahmans so much that they determined to adopt it, and succeeded in grafting it on the Krishna cultus ever since? Surely it is more reasonable to surmise that the Egyptian Christians were the borrowers, that they borrowed their peculiar usage from some other cult, and that it was rejected by the rest of the Church just because it was so obviously alien in its origin.

To be sure, the usage of the rest of the Church was itself an unquestionable adoption of a current Pagan one. The Western Church, long after the time when the possibility of ascertaining any facts as to the birth of the alleged Founder had ceased, adopted the ancient solar festival of the 25th of December, then specially connected in the Empire with the widespread worship of Mithra.² But the Eastern Churches, influenced by the Egyptian and other pre-Christian systems,

¹ *Indian Antiquary*, iv. 249; *Ueber die Krishnaj.* pp. 299, 337.

² Julian, *In Regem Solem*, c. 20. Cp. Preller, *Römische Mythologie*, p. 755.

adopted and for some time adhered to another date, equally solar and Pagan in its character. The facts are collected by Bingham, who points out that it is "a very great mistake in learned men" to say that Christ's birthday was always celebrated on 25th December by the churches:—

"For, not to mention what Clement Alexandrinus (*Stromata*, i.) says of the Basilidian heretics, that they asserted that Christ was born on the 24th or 25th of the month which the Egyptians call Pharmuthi, that is, April; he says a more remarkable thing (*Id.*) of some others, who were more curious about the year and the day of Christ's nativity, which they said was in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus Cæsar, and the 25th day of the month Pachon, which... signifies the month of May, as Mr. Basnage (*Exercit. in Baron. an. 37*, p. 216) has at large demonstrated. But what is more considerable in this matter is that the greatest part of the Eastern Church for three or four of the first ages kept the feast of Christ's nativity on the same day which is now called Epiphany, or the 6th of January, which denotes Christ's manifestation to the world in four several respects which were all commemorated upon this day"—*i.e.* (1) his nativity or incarnation; (2) the appearance of the star, = Epiphany or manifestation to the Gentiles; (3) the "glorious appearance" at Christ's baptism; (4) the manifestation of his divinity at Cana.... "And Cassian (*Collat. x. c. 2*) says expressly 'that in his time all the Egyptian provinces under the general name of Epiphany understood as well the nativity of Christ as his baptism.'... But before the time of the Council of Ephesus, anno 431, the Egyptians had altered the day of Christ's nativity.... It was not long before this that the Churches of Antioch and Syria came into the Western observation."¹....

All which is abundantly proved from Epiphanius and Chrysostom. Now, only a supernaturalist criticism can here fail to see that the usages of the Egyptian and Syrian Churches were imitative of pre-existing Eastern astronomico-theological cults; and if we are driven to this conclusion, what right have we left to suppose that India borrowed just such a usage all of a sudden from a short-lived borrowed practice of Eastern Christendom? We have a distinct record that in connection with the ancient solar worship of Hercules among the Sicyonians, who sacrificed lambs to the God, "the first of the days of the Feast which they keep to Hercules they call *Names*, and the second *Hercules' Day*";² and there is surely good reason to presume that similar usages prevailed among

¹ *Christian Antiquities*, ed. 1855, vii. 280-2.

² Pausanias, ii. 10.

other solar cults long before Christianity. In the old Persian system, in which the festival of the autumn equinox was originally connected with Mithra, after whom the first autumn-month (then current) is named, it was “*auspicious at this season to name children and wean babes.*”¹ Here we have a close correspondence to the Hindu festival, for the month of Mihr is the seventh from the beginning of the Persian year, as the month of Krishna’s birth is the seventh in the solar year, counting from the winter solstice. Is it pretended that the Persians borrowed *their* usage from the Christians? If not, why should the Hindu usage not be as old as the Persian and the Greek? The Christian theory is hopeless. If it is good for anything, there is no need to restrict it to the chronological scheme of Professor Weber. As a matter of fact, the usage of *general baptizing on Epiphany* did not disappear from the Christian Church after the Council of Ephesus. It has been preserved down to modern times in the Church of Abyssinia, which has continued to receive its primate from the Church of Alexandria, and which practises general circumcision as well as general baptism on the day in question.² Why should not then the Hindu usage have been borrowed from Abyssinia at a much later time than that at which the Alexandrian Church regarded Epiphany as the day of the Nativity? Why indeed should it not have been suggested by the much more general custom in the early Church of reserving all baptisms for Easter-day?³ And why, finally, should it not have been suggested by the Catholic “Festival of the Name of Jesus,” which stands in the Calendar for August 7th, close on the date of the Krishna Birth-Festival? Any one of these hypotheses would be as reasonable as that on which Professor Weber has fastened—as reasonable, and as unreasonable. The whole theory is a mistake.

¹ Wait, *Jewish, Oriental, and Classical Antiquities*, 1823, p. 194, citing the *Berhan-ī Kattēā*.

² Geddes, *Church History of Ethiopia*, 1696, pp. 32–33. Cp. Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church: Patriarchate of Alexandria*, 1847, ii. 347.

³ Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, as cited, iv. 69–70.

§ 2. A more instructive part of Professor Weber's argument concerning the Krishna Birth-Festival, as now observed in India, consists in showing that no trace of it is to be found even in such late literature as the Purânas. An attempt to find authority for it in the Bhâgavat Purâna, he declares, entirely fails, except as regards quite modern MSS.; and this he considers the more curious because this Purâna, and in particular the tenth book, is the peculiar text-book of the Krishna sect. There is there no suggestion of a Birth-Festival. The time of the God's birth, he mentions, is told in detail in Book x. 3, 1-8, but without a date, save what is implied in the statement that it was under the star Rohinî, and at midnight; and he raises the question whether the Birth-Festival existed at the time of the composition of the Purâna. He decides that it must have done, not on account of internal evidence proving the lateness of the book, but because the grammarian Vopadeva, to whom Colebrooke, Wilson, and Bournouf ascribe the composition of the Purâna as it now stands, was contemporary with Hemâdri, the author in whom we first find specific mention of the Festival. That was about the end of the fourteenth century of our era—about a thousand years after the period at which the Professor thinks the Hindus borrowed their Festival usage from Alexandria. He might thus well decide that the usage existed before Vopadeva; and he offers an explanation of the silence of the Purâna on the subject:—

“In the Bhâgavat Purâna is presented the modern development of the Krishna cult, which is chiefly concerned with Krishna's love affairs, and in which the Mother of the God passes progressively into the background. In the Birthday Festival, on the other hand...the Mother comes very prominently into the foreground, playing a principal rôle, while of the love affairs of Krishna no notice is or indeed can be taken, for he is here represented as still a suckling at his mother's breast. I do not hesitate here to recognize a quite peculiarly ancient phase of the Festival, the more so because...even in that there appears in time a tendency to suppress this side, and to give the tribute of the Festival to the God alone, without his mother.”¹

That is to say, the Purâna overlooks the Festival because

¹ *Ueber die Krishnajammâshtamî*, pp. 240-2.

it preserves the old practice of honouring the Mother of the God, while at the time the Purâna was written the cult ran to the glorification of the God himself, and the celebration of his exploits. To this explanation I do not think there can be any objection. It is conceived in the historical spirit; and the only perplexity is that Professor Weber, while thus recognizing that the Festival preserves an old *popular rite*, which changed much more slowly than the poetic recitals of the God's exploits, should yet decide that even the popular rite was originally borrowed from the new Western religion of Christism by a people who rated their own religious and historic antiquity high before Christianity was heard of.

I have implied that the Purânas represent the literary development of mythic lore; but this does not mean that even their contents are not mainly made up of matter that in some form long antedates our era. On this subject, it may be well to point out that the absolute preservation of an ancient document in its integrity, unless it be a matter of rote-learned ritual like the Vedas, is not to be looked for in a state of civilization in which manuscripts are not abundant and the knowledge of reading general. There is overwhelming internal evidence of the manipulation of the Christian Gospels: and the reason why, after a certain time, their text became substantially fixed, was just the multiplicity of the copies, and the ecclesiastical habit, derived from old Greek political usage, of meeting in Councils. And even as it was, we know that so late as the fifth century the text of the "three witnesses" was fraudulently inserted in 1 John v., and that this one forgery was ultimately accepted by the entire Western Church from about 1550 down to last century, when earlier copies were authoritatively collated. Now, in India down till recent times, the frame of mind in regard to narratives of the lives of the Gods would be exactly that of the early Christians who manipulated the first and second Gospels, and compiled the third and fourth. There was no such thing as a canon or a received text: there was no "apostolic" tradition; there were no religious councils;

no scholars whose business it was to compare manuscripts. Besides, no manuscript lasted long; Professor Weber has pointed out how unfavourable is the Indian climate to any such preservation.¹ In fine, the *re*-composition of sacred narratives would be a perfectly natural course. But it would be fallacious in the extreme to argue that a late redaction meant late invention; on the contrary, there is good reason to believe that late redactions would often take in floating popular myths of great antiquity, which had merely missed being committed to writing before. For this view, modern research in Folk Lore should have prepared all investigators. Our every-day nursery fables are found to be in substance as old as the art of story-telling, older than literature, as old as religion.

Now, it is a general rule in ancient mythology that the birthdays of Gods were *astrological*;² and the simple fact that the Purâna gives an astronomical moment for Krishna's birth is a sufficient proof that at the time of writing they *had* a fixed date for it. The star Rohinî under which he was born, it will be remembered, has the name given in one variation of the Krishna legend to a wife of Vasudeva who bore to him Râma, as Devakî (sometimes held to be the mother of Râma also) bore Krishna. Here we are in the thick of ancient astrological myth. Rohinî (our Aldebaran) is "the red," "a mythical name also applied now to Aurora, now to a star."³ We have seen in the case of Christianity how a universal astrological festival, of immemorial antiquity, came to be specialized for Christians;

¹ *Ind. Ant.* iii. 246; Berlin lecture, p. 30; and *History of Indian Literature*, Eng. tr. pp. 181-2. Cp. Macaulay, *Trevelyan's Life*, 1-vol. ed. p. 323. A friend in Burma, to whom I had sent a book, writes me that it has to be locked up in an air-tight box during the wet season, otherwise it would be destroyed.

² This holds good even if we recognize in myths of menaced divine children an idea of the dangers run by the planted seed before it ripens. Some such idea is suggested in the myth that Ino, the second wife of Athamas, sought to destroy the children of the first wife Nephelê (the Cloud), by telling the women of the land to dry the wheat before sowing it. On the failure of the harvest she planned that the messengers sent to consult the oracle should bring the answer that Phrixus, the son of Nephelê, should be sacrificed (Apollodorus, I. ix. 1). But the story of the dried seed-wheat looks like a late fancy framed in elaboration of Ino's plot.

³ Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 173.

and it is clearly not only possible but likely that every astrological festival of Krishnaism was in vogue in other Indian worships before Krishnaism prevailed. In these matters there is really no invention: there is only readjustment. But that a Hindu festival connected with the star-name Rohinî and the birth of Krishna should be borrowed from Christianity, where the birth connects with the rise of the constellation *Virgo*, there is no shadow of reason for supposing. The very fact that no account is given in the older Purânas of the rise of the festival tells in favour of its antiquity. Suppose the festival to be the oldest datum in the case, the omission to date its beginning in the record is just what would happen—just what happened in Christianity. It would have been a simple matter for the early Christians to insert 25th December in their records as the date of their God's birth; but they did *not* do so, just because that was so notoriously a festival of extreme antiquity.¹ And the birthday of Krishna may have been that of another God before him.

But the most singular matter in regard to Professor Weber's argument is the fact that the date of the Krishna Birth-Festival is neither in December nor in January, but in the month of *July*.² That is to say, it corresponds not with Christmas but with the Egyptian festival of "the Birthday of the Eyes of Horus, when the Sun and the

¹ It is worth while in this connection to recall the statement of Ovid in his *Fasti* (i. 657) that he went three or four times through the official list of festivals, in vain, looking for the date of the old *Sementivæ* or Festival of Sowing, which was not written down. See Ovid's explanation and that of Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, i. 16), cited by Keightley in his ed. of the *Fasti*. There were fixed and unfixed festivals, *Stativa* and *Conceptiva*, of which the latter were "annually given out, for certain or even uncertain days, by the magistrates or priests." Cp. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i. 303, note.

² According to Professor de Gubernatis (*Zool. Myth.* i. 51) it is customary "towards the end of December" to give presents of cows "in celebration of the new solar year, or the birth of the pastoral God Krishna"; but this appears to be an error, probably resulting from Professor Weber's omission to lay stress on the date in his standard treatise. But doubtless Gubernatis could explain the midsummer birth of the black Sun-God in terms of solar mythology. It is the white Sun-God who is born at Christmas. But on this head it should be noted that the *death* of the Sun-God Tammuz (Adonis) was celebrated in different climates at different times. See Max Müller, *Natural Religion*, 1889, pp. 529-530; and Frazer, as last cited. And see hereinafter, Sec. xv.

Moon are come into one straight line ”¹—a festival held on the 30th day of the Egyptian month Epap or Epiphi or Emphi = 24th July, which was the last day of the Egyptian year. Yet it never occurs to Weber to connect the Krishnaite Birth-Festival with this purely Pagan and pre-Christian festival. Indeed one may go through Weber’s treatise without discovering what the date in question is. As he says in answer to a criticism, “The date itself (December or July, midwinter or midsummer) *plays no part at all in my discussion*, and is only spoken of incidentally” in a parenthesis.² So the proposition is that the Hindus celebrated the birthday of Krishna in July by way of imitating the Christian fashion of celebrating Christ’s nativity in January. One is at a loss to understand how Professor Weber can thus make so light of such an important item. If the Krishna Birth-Festival were borrowed, why should the borrowers select a midsummer instead of a midwinter date for their importation? Why, indeed, should they not place their God’s birthday, if it only occurred to them late in the day to give him a birthday, on one of the other Krishnaist festivals? I have not noticed that Professor Weber theorises on the origin of these; but their probably astronomical origin is surely important to the argument. As the historian Elphinstone has pointed out, “Even Mr. Bentley, the most strenuous opponent of the claims of the Hindus” to an extremely ancient knowledge of astronomy, “pronounces in his latest work that their division of the ecliptic into twenty-seven lunar mansions (which supposes much previous observation) was made 1442 years before our era”³—that is, centuries before the first traces of systematic astronomy in Greece. Supposing the division in question to have been derived by the Hindus from the Akkadians, the argument remains the same. Astronomical festivals, in any case, the Hindus must have had from a very remote antiquity;⁴ and every argument from analogy

¹ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 52.

² *Indian Antiquary*, iv. 249.

³ *History of India*, ed. 1866, p. 140.

⁴ On Vedic festivals see Professor Max Müller’s *Natural Religion*, pp. 524–5.

in history goes to support the view that their now popular seasonal festivals are prehistoric, and that some of them may even be derived from Dravidian or pre-Aryan practice. And when we compare a few of their usages with those of Christianity, it becomes plain that we must either suppose them to have borrowed a great deal more than Professor Weber says, or give up his theory altogether and look for, if anything, a reverse historic process. The points of resemblance are numerous and suggestive.

“The new year of the luni-solar computation now in use [in India] begins with the first of Chaitra, which falls somewhere in the course of March, and in solar reckoning is said to agree with the entrance of the sun into the sign Mesha, or Aries”¹—

that is, the sign of the Ram or Lamb, which in the Mithraic system was the “new day,” the creation day, and the greatest festival,² and in Christianity is associated with the sacrifice of the God, symbolized as a Lamb, on a luni-solar and therefore variable date connected with the vernal equinox.

“There was, however, a period at which a different principle was followed³...the new year then commenced on the first of the solar month Māgha, the date of the Makara-Sankranti, or the sun’s entrance into the sign Capricornus, identical with the Uttarāyana, or return of that luminary to the regions of the north, or, in fact, to the winter solstice.”⁴

The Indian and European dates do not actually correspond: with us 21st December is the time of the sun’s entering Capricorn, the sign of the Goat, while the Hindus put it on the first of their solar month Magha=12th January. But the astronomical *motive* is explicit; and when we note that this old festival, still in force, lasts three days, and that the day after the sun’s entering Capricorn is termed Māttu Pongal, or the feast of cattle, we see a new confirmation of the argument of Dupuis⁵ that the myth of a Christian God being born in a stable (which

¹ H. H. Wilson, *Religious Festivals of the Hindus*, Works, ii. 159.

² Wait, as cited, p. 189.

³ Note by Wilson. According to Bentley, this was 1181 B.C. *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy*, p. 30.

⁴ Wilson, as cited.

⁵ *Origine de tous les Cultes*, ed. 1835-6, vii. 104.

corresponds so strikingly with many other myths of Gods—as Krishna, Hermes, Hercules—born or brought up among cattle) is really at bottom or by adaptation astronomical or zodiacal, and is properly to be traced to the relative position of the figures in the fuller zodiac or celestial sphere. Of course the solar element is manifest in the Hindu usage. “The day of the Makara Sankranti, or Perum Pongal, is dedicated to the sun, and the day of the Máttu Pongal to Indra; they are both comprised in the term Pongal, which is an anniversary festival of a week’s duration.”¹ Now, several of the usages in this and other Hindu festivals are traceable in Europe in non-Christian as well as in Christian times. “The Greeks had a festival in the month Poseidon, or January, in which they worshipped Neptune, or the Sea, in like manner as the Hindus [at the same time] worship the ocean.”² But there is no more remarkable correspondence than that between the Hindu practice of honouring the cattle at this time and the strange Catholic function of blessing the cattle—cows, horses, goats, asses, etc.—at Rome on St. Anthony’s day (January 17th). Let Professor Wilson testify:—

“The time of the year, the decorating of the cattle, the sprinkling of them with water, and the very purport of the blessing, that they may be exempt from evils, are so decidedly Indian, that could a Dravira Brahman be set down of a sudden in the Piazza, and were he asked what ceremony he witnessed, there can be no doubt of his answer; he would at once declare they were celebrating the Pongal.”³

Now, no student can well believe that the Roman Catholic usage really originated, as the fable tells, in the fact that St. Anthony tended swine. These are the theories of the Dark Ages. To-day even semi-orthodox scholarship decides that “So far as myths consist of explanations of ritual their value is altogether secondary; and it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case *the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth*; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable; the

¹ Wilson, as cited, p. 172.

² *Id.* p. 175.

³ Wilson, as cited, pp. 178–9.

ritual was obligatory, and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshipper."¹

This holds true for every religion ; and if we apply the principle in the case of Christianity we shall make an end of more pretences than that as to the borrowing of Christian practices by Krishnaism. It is not argued, of course, that Roman Christianity borrowed its ritual usages direct from India ; on the contrary, the presumption is that these usages were even more widespread than the "Aryan race" in pre-historic times. The Roman Catholic celebration of St. Anthony's day probably derives from the ancient Paganalia or Feriæ Sementivæ, agricultural festivities in which the cattle were garlanded at this very season of the year ;² and it is possible that even the modern name came from that of one of the Antonines. But if Christianity is thus seen deriving its festival days from immemorial custom, what reason is there to surmise that conservative and custom-loving India came to Alexandria for the hint to celebrate the astrological birthday of Krishna ? Krishnaism has a number of festivals of which no proper account seems yet to be accessible in England, that given in Balfour's *Indian Cyclopædia* being so inexact that one is at a loss to know whether in some cases different festival-names do not apply to one and the same feast. But it is clear that there is one great Dolu or Dola Yâtrâ festival, the "swinging festival," which begins about the middle of March (Phalguna) and lasts as a rule fifteen days. In the

¹ Professor Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 1889, p. 19. This maxim of interpretation dates back to Creuzer (*Symbolik*, 1810-12), and to K. O. Müller: *Orchomenos*, 1820, p. 161 ; *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology* (1825), Eng. tr. 1844, pp. 171, 175, 195, 206 ; *History of Greek Literature* (Eng. tr. pp. 287-8). See it also laid down by Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt*, 1850, i. 411, 413 ; A. Bertrand, *Etudes de Mythologie et Archæologie grecques*, Rennes, 1858, p. 35 ; and Grote, end of ch. i. Cp. Miss Harrison, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, 1890, pp. xxvi. xxxiii. ; and Mr. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, passim. "No people ever observed a custom because a mythical being was said to have once acted in a certain way. [An unwarranted negative, by the way.] But, on the contrary, all peoples have invented myths to explain why they observed certain customs." "A myth is never so graphic and precise in its details as when it is a simple transcript of a ceremony which the author of a myth witnessed with his eyes" (Work last cited, ii. 128, 246).

² Ovid, *Fasti*, i. 663. Cp. Middleton, *Letter from Rome*, ed. 1741, pp. xv.-xix. and 141-143.

large British towns it is or was restricted to three days on account of the liberties taken ; but among the Rajputs it is or was the practice to celebrate it for forty days,¹ with more or less licence. Now this practice has certainly an astronomical or seasonal origin ; and is as certainly akin to, or as old as, the ancient celebration of the Dionysia or Liberalia in honour of the Sun- and Wine-God among the Greeks and Romans. There was a "swinging festival" in ancient Greece ;² and this too has survived to modern times.³ The 17th of March was the date of the Liberalia in Rome ; and licence was the note of the festival. It would be just as reasonable to derive the Indian "swinging festival"⁴ of the vernal equinox from the Christian celebration of the rising of Christ from the dead, as to argue that the Krishna Birth-Festival is similarly derived.

XI. THE SOLAR-CHILD MYTH.

The further we collate the main Christian myth-motives with those of Krishnaism, the more clearly does it appear that, instead of the latter being borrowed from the former, they are, not indeed the originals from which Christianity borrowed, but always presumptively the more ancient ; and in one or two cases they do appear to be the actual sources of Gospel stories. We have seen how Professor Weber

¹ Rev. W. O. Simpson's ed. of Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, 1864, pp. 139-144.

² Athenæus, xiv. 10.

³ Miss Harrison, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, pp. xxxix.-xliii.

⁴ So called because of the ritual practice of swinging an image in a chair. But this practice, according to Balfour's *Ind. Cyc.* (art. Krishna), would appear to obtain also at another Krishnaite festival of three or five days' duration in the month Shravana = July-August ; which I take to be either the Birth Festival proper or the special form of it called *Jayanti*, which depends on a particular conjunction of the star Rohinî (Weber, p. 221 ; cp. pp. 262-3). On this I can find no exact information. In the month Kartika = October-November, there is yet another festival, celebrating the Gopî revels. In a note to Wilson's *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (1835, ii. 264), citing the Bhavishyottara Purâna, it is explained that many of the Hindu festivals have been displaced. Thus a festival once named the Holikâ is now termed the Dola Yâtrâ (or "swinging of the Gods") ; and "the Dola Yâtrâ and Rath Yâtrâ have also been displaced, and in Bengal, at least, transferred to festivals appropriated to Krishna alone, in the months of Jyeshth and Asharh, June-July."

concedes that the story of King Kansa's killing of Devakî's earlier children in the attempt to kill Krishna is not only pre-Christian but of old mythic standing, and that it was the subject of *dramatic representations* before our era. Now, the myth-motive in question is at bottom one that is extremely familiar in ancient legend; and nothing is more unsatisfactory in the modern discussion of Krishnaite origins than the way in which this fact has been overlooked. About a hundred years ago Maurice¹ called attention to the parallel between the story of Krishna's infancy and that of the infancy of Cyrus the Great, as told by Herodotus,² four hundred years before our era. The story about Cyrus is briefly as follows. Astyages, king of the Medes, having had a remarkable (and Rabelaisian) dream about his daughter, which portended great things of her progeny, gave her in marriage to a Persian of private station, named Cambyses. A year after her marriage, when she was pregnant, he had a still more alarming if less unmentionable dream, whereupon he sent to Persia for her and put her under a guard, resolving to destroy whatever should be born of her; the Magi having signified that his dream meant that her offspring would reign in his stead. The officer (Harpagus) whom he entrusted with the task, however, shrank from the act, sent for one of the king's cowherds, Mitrdates, and ordered him to expose the child on a mountain abounding in wild beasts. All the same, the child was clothed in "gold and a robe of various colours." When the herdsman got home, his wife had just been delivered of a still-born child; and they agreed to give up its body to Harpagus as that of the young prince, dead from exposure, while they actually reared the prince as their own child, giving him another name than Cyrus. When the child grows to boyhood, he of course reveals royal qualities; and while "playing in the village in which the ox stalls were" he is chosen by the other boys as their king, and causes a disobedient play-fellow to be scourged. This Astyages discovers, and the

¹ *History of Hindostan*, ii. 478.

² B. i. 107-130.

story comes out. Astyages punishes Harpagus by causing him unknowingly to eat the flesh of his own child; but is told by the Magi that as his dream has been already fulfilled in the coronation of Cyrus by the village children, he may safely let him go. Later, of course, Harpagus secretly helps Cyrus to make an insurrection; Astyages impales the Magi, but gives the command of his troops to Harpagus, who betrays him; and Cyrus reigns, but without killing his grandfather. Of Cyrus' death, Herodotus tells, there were many accounts; and in one of these¹ he is declared to have been *crucified* by an Amazon queen of Scythians.

Here, then, we have an old myth,² in which already, however, certain primeval mythical details are seen modified to suit history. The name Cyrus, in its Persian form, was or stood for that of the sun,³ and the historic Cyrus simply had fathered on him the popular sun-legend, with modifications. Thus the herdsman's wife's name means "the bitch"; and it is explained that this is how the story arose of Cyrus being suckled by a bitch—a myth which at once recalls the story of Romulus and Remus, suckled by a she-wolf; and of Jupiter, suckled by the she-goat Amalthea.⁴ Again, the secret message from Harpagus in Media to Cyrus in Persia is sent enclosed in the body of a hare—an animal which in early mythology repeatedly plays the part of a message-bringer.⁵ And the robe "of many colours" is, like Joseph's coat, plainly the many-tinted cloud-drapery of the Sun. Apart from these details, the story of the exposure of the infant hero is plainly cognate with the legends of the exposure of Romulus and Remus, of Æsculapius, of Attis, of Semiramis, of Cybele, of Téléphos, of Ion, of Iamos, of a dozen other myth-heroes, including Moses, the circumstances of whose exposure are so strikingly recalled by the

¹ Diodorus Siculus, ii. 44.

² A similar story appears to have been told of the hero Gilgames in the old Assyrian mythology. See Ælian, *De nat. anim.* xii. 21; and cp. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, i. 6-7.

³ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, beginning.

⁴ Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 49.

⁵ Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, ii. 77, 79.

Jesuit story of the massacre of the innocents; and parts of the tale are found closely paralleled in the northern legend of British Arthur, as well as in that of Œdipus.¹ The child Arthur, like Cyrus, is robed in gold, and like him is secretly sent to be suckled by one not his mother.² In the older mythology Æsculapius, exposed as a child,³ is found by Autolaus and nursed by Trygon (= "the turtle-dove"); or, in another myth, suckled by a she-goat and protected by a watch-dog;⁴ or, in yet another, reared by the Magnesian centaur. Attis, whom his mother, the river-nymph Nana, bears after impregnation by a miraculous pomegranate, for which her father seeks to starve her to death, is exposed by the father's orders, and is found and nourished by a goatherd,⁵ or a goat.⁶ Semiramis ("Istar in another guise"⁷) was fabled to have been exposed for a whole year in the desert and nourished by doves, as Elijah is nourished for many days by ravens in the Hebrew myth.⁸ Cybele, daughter of Maion and Dindyma, is exposed as an infant by her father on the mountain Cybelus, and is suckled by panthers and other wild beasts.⁹ Antiope, bearing the twins Zethos and Amphion to Zeus and Epopeos, leaves them in a grotto in swaddling clothes, and they are found by a shepherd.¹⁰ Téléphos, son of Hercules, is born secretly, and his mother Augê hides him in the temple of Athênê, of which she is priestess. Aleus, her father, finding the child, causes him to be exposed on the Parthenian (Virgin) Mount, where he is nourished by a doe, or a goat, or by shepherds; and at the same time Aleus gives Augê to Nauplius to be sold or drowned.¹¹ In a composite version, Augê and the child, like Danaë and Perseus, Semelê and Dionysos, are put to sea in a chest.¹² Ion is placed by his

¹ Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, ed. 1882, pp. 134, 312.

² Malory's *Mort d'Arthur*, chap. iii.

³ Pausanias, viii. 25.

⁴ *Id.* ii. 26. Pindar, *Pythia*, iii. 64.

⁵ Arnobius, v. 6, citing Timotheus.

⁶ Pausanias, vii. 17.

⁷ Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures on the Babylonian Religion*, p. 271.

⁸ 1 Kings xvii. 6.

⁹ Diodorus Siculus, iii. 58.

¹⁰ Pausanias, i. 38; ii. 6.

¹¹ Pausanias, viii. 48, 54; Apollodorus, ii. 7, 4; iii. 9, 1; Ælian, *Var. Hist.* xii. 42.

¹² Pausanias, viii. 4.

mother in the rock-cave, a possible prey to beasts and birds.¹ So Phialo, after bearing Aichmagoras to Hercules, is exposed on the mountain Ostracina, with her child, by her father, Alkimedeon, who dwelt there in a cave; and the call of a jay draws to them the attention of Hercules, who saves them.² So the prophet-child Iamos, son of Apollo, is left by his mother Evadnê, hidden in the rushes, where two azure-eyed dragons feed him with honey.³ And so Priam's son Alexander was nourished by a she-bear, and Ægisthus, son of Thyestes and Palopea, by a goat.⁴ Very rarely is the divine child slain, as happens to the babe borne to Apollo by Psamathe, daughter of Crotopus. Exposed by her for fear (as usual) of her father, it is found by sheep-dogs and killed.⁵

The wish of the bad king to slay the hero-child, again, is the specific subject of many more myths.⁶ In an Arab legend of Abraham, his mother hides him at birth because the astrologers and wise men have declared that according to their books a child is to be born who will destroy the worship of idols and overthrow King Nemrod; and the king accordingly gives orders to destroy all the male children who may be born. Hiding him in a cave, she puts a stone at the mouth and there suckles him, without the knowledge even of her husband Azer.⁷ The same story is told by the Arabs concerning Daniel,⁸ as by the Jews concerning Moses; and it was told at once of John and of Jesus by the early Christists,⁹ who were in all likelihood merely freshening up two immemorial forms of

¹ Euripides, *Ion*. 17, 18, 27.

² Pausanias, viii. 12.

⁴ Ælian, as cited.

³ Pindar, *Olymp.* vi. 60, ff.

⁵ Pausanias, i. 43.

⁶ See Mr. Lang's admission in regard to the Moses myth, cited above, p. 87. At times, as in the case of Saturn, the father himself is the would-be slayer. Even Herakles, in frenzy, slays the children borne to him by Megara. Apollodorus, ii. 4, 12.

⁷ *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. xxii. No. 1, p. 57 (1890. Juil.-Août). As showing the medley of ideas in mythology, it may be noted that in this story the world is ruled at the time by four sovereigns: two unbelievers, Nemrod and Bacht en Naser (Nebuchadnezzar); and two believers, Zoul Qarnein and the prophet Solomon. Nemrod rules "the seven zones," and dwells at Babylon.

⁸ Bochart, pt. i. *Hierosolyma*, l. ii. c. 3.

⁹ See the *Protevangelion*, cc. 22, 23.

popular religion in Syria. As the Moses myth is duplicated in the myths of Cyrus¹ and Horus, and unquestionably preceded by the myth of Sargon, it would seem sufficiently idle to suppose later variants to be derived from the New Testament. But with all this parallelism to account for, Professor Weber and the Christian partizans have assumed out-of-hand that the story of Krishna's nativity was just taken from the Gospels, leaving the Gospel story to stand by its own sacrosanctity.

In point of fact there is hardly a leading detail in the Krishna birth legend which is not variously paralleled in other early non-Christian mythology. In the Greek pantheon, God after God, hero after hero, is found to have been reared under difficulties. "Neither in pictures nor in story," says the chorus in the *Ion* of Euripides,² "have I heard that the children sprung from the Gods among mortals have a happy life." Ino, mother of Melicerta (Melkarth), leaps into the sea with her child, to save him from his furious father Athamas, who has killed her previous child Learchus; and the two are saved by Nereïds, and changed by Poseidon into sea-deities.³ Leto, pregnant with Apollo, is driven from place to place by the jealous hate of Hêrê.⁴ The infant Dionysos, son of Ammon and Amalthea, is sent by his father to a secluded island, and guarded by the virgin Goddess Athênê from the jealous wrath of Rhea, the wife of Ammon.⁵ In another version, Semelê, who bears Dionysos to Zeus, is spirited away with her child in a chest by Cadmus: the chest is thrown in the sea and cast ashore; Semelê, found dead, is buried; and the wandering Io (who in the common

¹ There is a further echo of it in the story of the infant Cypselus, concerning whom the oracle warned the oligarchs of Corinth that he would be dangerous to them, and who, they having failed to kill him, finally becomes tyrannos of Corinth (Herodotus, v. 93). As the story further makes the mother hide Cypselus in a chest (*κυψέλη*), it is pretty clear that his name had pointed the myth-makers to a current myth in which a child so figures.

² *Vv.* 506-8.

³ Pausanias, i. 44; Ovid, *Fasti*, vi. 489-550; *Metam.* iv. 511-541. Apollodorus, I. ix. 2.

⁴ Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, 55 ff. Homeric. *Hymn to Delian Apollo*.

⁵ Diodorus Siculus, iii. 68, 70.

myth is a cow) rears the child in a cave.¹ In another legend, he is excited by Hêrê to go against the Tyrrhenian pirates, who capture him.² Similarly, Zeus himself in his infancy is stolen away by the Curetes from fear of his father Kronos (Saturn) and nursed by the nymphs Ithome and Neda;³ while in the more familiar story Kronos devours his children successively, fearing they will dispossess him, till Rhea his wife gives him a stone wrapped in cloth, which he swallows in place of the new-born Jupiter, whom she brings forth in a distant place and rears in a cave, and who in turn overthrows his father, as Cyrus overthrows Astyages.⁴ Yet again, when Arcadian Rhea bears Poseidon, he is "deposited with the flocks and fed with the lambs"; and in this case she gives Kronos a foal to eat.⁵ Hêrê in one story exposes the child Hephaistos.⁶ In yet another story, Æsculapius narrowly escapes being burned alive with his mother Coronis.⁷ Needless to speak of the serpents sent by Hêrê against Apollo and Artemis⁸ and the infant Hercules,⁹ and the battling of the young Horus against Typhon: the myth is universal. The idea passed, as we have seen, from mythology to regal biography. Ages before Cyrus, it was applied to Sargon, in whose epitaph we have: "My mother the princess conceived: in a secret place she brought me forth. She placed me in a basket of reeds.....She gave me to the river which drowned me not.....";¹⁰ and again we have it in the myths of Horos and Moses. And yet we are asked to believe that an Indian variant of this myth, closely resembling one current in Persia ages before Christ, is wholly or partly borrowed from the Christian Gospels, canonical and apocryphal.

¹ Pausanias, iii. 24.

² Euripides, *Cyclops*, 11.

³ Pausanias, iv. 33.

⁴ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 477-491; Pausanias, viii. 8.

⁵ Last cit.

⁶ Pausanias, i. 20.

⁷ Pausanias, ii. 26. Pindar, *Pythia*, iii. 54-63. Callisto, bearing Arcas to Jupiter, is turned into a she-bear by Artemis; and Hermes has to be sent to save the child. Pausanias, viii. 3-4.

⁸ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 17; Hyginus, fab. 140.

⁹ Pindar, *Nem.* i. By M. Clermont-Ganneau this myth is accounted for as a Greek attempt to explain an Egyptian vase-picture of Horus holding the two serpents.

¹⁰ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 26.

Carrying the comparison further, we note a variety of parallels in regard to which there can be no pretence that Christianity is borrowed from. For instance, Krishna,¹ Apollo,² Hermes,³ and Jesus,⁴ all alike speak immediately after birth. Again, the story of the God being born in a cave⁵ is anticipated in the case of Hermes and Dionysos, and in the cave-worships of Adonis and Mithra.⁶ So thoroughly did this particular notion possess the human intelligence in antiquity that it was grafted on the biography of the philosopher Confucius, of whom it is told that his mother, in obedience to a vision, went to a cave on Mount Ne, where she gave him birth; that genii had announced to her the honour her son would bring her; that the events were heralded by miraculous portents, and that fairies attended at his nativity.⁷ In the Greek myth

¹ *Vishnu Purana*, Wilson's trans. p. 502.

² Hom. *Hymn to Delian Apollo*, 103-32. Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, 86-7, makes Apollo speak *in the womb*.

³ Hom. *Hymn to Hermes*, 17, 18, 29.

⁴ Korân, Sura xix. (lviil.)—"Mary": *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*, c. i. In Pseudo-Matthew, c. 13, Jesus at birth stands on his feet.

⁵ *Protevangelion*, 18, 21 (xii. 14; xv. 9). *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*, 2, 3, 4, 5 (i. 6, 8, 9, etc.). Pseudo-Matthew, cc. 13, 14.

⁶ See the essay on *Mithraism*, hereinafter.

⁷ Douglas's *Confucianism*, p. 25. Compare the following native account, given by a Chinese scholar to the "Parliament of Religions":—"I once looked up the derivation of the word 'sing' (surname), which is given by Hsu She, the philologist, to be 'the product of man.' He adds that in ancient times the holy mother conceived a child by heaven, who was called the Son of Heaven; on this account the character 'sing' is made up of two parts—'me' (woman) forming the one part, and 'shang' (born) the other. In the historical sketches of ancient times are recorded many instances of wonderful birth. It was not confined to men of wisdom and virtue. There is an ancient saying that remarkable men have remarkable circumstances attending their births. Tradition has handed down many marvellous circumstances connected with the birth of Confucius. It is said that two dragons wound their bodies round the house where he was born; that five men, venerable with age, representing the five planets, descended unto the open court; that the air was filled with music; that a voice came out of the heavens, saying: 'This is a heaven-born, divine child, hence the sound of melodious music descends'; that a unicorn threw out of its mouth a book of jade, upon which was engraved this inscription: 'Son of the essence of water, who shall succeed to the kingdom of the degenerate house of Chan.' It is also said that the Duke of Chan, who lived five hundred years before Confucius, on coming to the place where Confucius was to be born, said: 'Five hundred years hence, on this sacred spot, shall a divine character be born.' As Confucius appeared at the time predicted, the Duke of Chan is therefore considered to have had a previous knowledge of the coming of Confucius. The fact that Confucius, during his lifetime, often dreamed of the Duke of Chan is also attributed to this circumstance. Tales of this

of Ion, again, the mother Creusa, after bearing the child to Apollo, carries him, swaddled and cradled, "to the same cave where she had been united to the God."¹ Yet further, the account of Jesus as being chosen king by his play-fellows,² is clearly based on or akin to the Cyrus legend, above recapitulated; and the various accounts of his games with his comrades, which seem to be regarded as having suggested the Gopî revels of Krishna, are similarly indicated in Herodotus; the killing of boys by Jesus³ being mildly paralleled in the chastising of a boy by Cyrus, as again more completely in the killing of an Egyptian by Moses.⁴ What is the precise historic relation between the Krishna and the Cyrus⁵ legends is still uncertain, though the connection is undoubtedly close;⁶ but on any view the Christian claim is out of the question. The obviously mythical Christian story of the massacre of the innocents

character were scattered broadcast during the Han Dynasty by men who delighted in the mysteries of geomancy, priestcraft, and soothsaying. Though Confucianists do not reject such stories altogether, they do not set much value on them. Marvellous tales have always exerted a sort of fascinating influence over the minds of the Chinese people both in ancient and in modern times." The Hon. Pung Kwang Yu, in paper written for the Parliament of Religions. See Report, 1893, vol. i. p. 426. It should be noted that the "two dragons" occur also in the myths of Ion and Iamos.

¹ Euripides, *Ion*, 16-18. Later (949) she says she bore him in the cave.

² *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*, cc. 41, 42 (xviii. 1, 7).

³ *Id.* 46, 47 (xix. 21, 24); *Gospel of Thomas* (1st Greek form), 3, 4 (ii. 4, 9).

⁴ Exodus ii. 12.

⁵ This name, so much altered by our pronouncing the "C" as "S," is in the Greek (*Kypos*) and the Persian (Cosroe or Koresh, identified or interchanged, as above noted, with *Khor*, the Sun) sufficiently like Krishna to be at least as capable of connection with that as the name Christ. It may be worth noting that whereas Krishna is a serpent-slayer, in the Persian system the serpent is to be killed "at the end of days" by Keresaspa. M. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, ed. 1880, ii. 172-3.

⁶ "As Laios [father of *Ædipus*] in the Theban myth is the enemy, Dasyu, of the devas or bright Gods, so is Astyages only a Græcised form of Ashadag, the Azidahaka, or biting snake of Hindu legend and the Zohak of the epic of Firdusi." Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, p. 324; cp. M. Müller, *Chips*, ed. 1880, ii. 172-4. The view that Astyages = Azidahaka, which appears to have been first advanced by Lenormant, is scouted by Tiele, *Outlines*, p. 179. "Azhi dahâka is a purely Aryan demon, and Astyages has nothing to do with him." This view, however, will have to be tested by the reconstructed theory of Aryan derivation; and in any case it is not clear why Astyages should not rank as "purely Aryan." Cp. Taylor, *Origin of the Aryans*, pp. 190, 319-321; Sayce, *Ancient Empires of the East*, p. 242; and Spiegel, *Erânische Alterthumskunde*, i. 531.

by Herod¹ was doubtless concocted by blending the legend of the child massacre by Pharaoh² with the legend of the quasi-Messianic, doom-escaping, and finally crucified Cyrus, who stood high in Jewish esteem as a liberator of the captive race and a believer in their God;³ and adding the prophecy of Zoroaster.⁴

The item of the God being hastily transported or born on a journey, again, is plainly a phase of the universal and presumably astronomic myth;⁵ and though the myth-necessity of taking Jesus to Bethlehem might account for that detail, the flight into Egypt is mythically gratuitous from the purely Messianic point of view; the motive "out of Egypt have I called my Son" being plainly an after-thought. The journey is really made because of invariable mythic precedent. In the old stories, Mandanê comes from Persia to be delivered in Media; Rhea goes to bear Zeus in Crete; Latona wanders far to bear Apollo, and Themis⁶ nurses him; Cyrênê is carried by Apollo athwart the sea,

¹ It is erroneously stated by the Rev. Mr. Maurice, *Hist. of Hindostan*, ii. 298-9, that the argument of Origen with Celsus shows that the Jews of that day did not dispute the story of the massacre. The fact is that Origen explicitly says (i. 61) that "the Jew of Celsus" denies the story. It may be interesting to note the probable mythological explanation of this story in all its forms, which is, according to the solar school, that the massacred innocents are the stars which disappear as the sun is about to enter, the destroyer being the Power of Darkness. The same idea is turned to very different account in the slaying of Argus by the Day-God Hermes; and yet again in the slaying of Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins. On the other hand, when Krishna steals the milk of the cow-maids, it is the sun who takes away the light of the stars (Cox, p. 369). See below, Section xv. § 2, as to the killing of the six children before the Divine One.

² Exod. i. 15-22.

³ Ezra i.; iii. 7; iv. 3; v. 13; vi. 3; Isaiah xlv. 28; xlv. 1; Daniel vi. 28; etc.

⁴ Arab. Gospel, c. 7 (iii. 1).

⁵ It could be wished that Mr. Frazer, in his careful and ingenious analysis of the myths of Vegetation Gods, had paid more heed to the differentiating clue of the manner of *birth* of the different species of deity. Dionysos, for instance, is born under difficulties equally with the more strictly solar Apollo and Herakles. It is conceivable that such stories may at times have been understood of the sprouting of a seed in despite of the enmities of cold and of animals. In some cases, too, a wandering mother who bears a child to the God, or is taken by the God over seas, means just the founding of a colony under the God's auspices. But only an astronomic idea can well explain the idea in the case of indisputable Sun-Gods; and in nearly all cases we are led to surmise a customary child-carrying rite, which the myth is framed to explain.

⁶ Homerid. *Hymn to Apollo*, 124; Callimachus, as cited.

to Libya, garden of Jove, to bear to him the immortal child Aristæus;¹ Augê (the Shining) in one version flies, in others is sent, from her father's land, after her amour with Herakles, to bear Téléphos (the Far Light);² Evadnê (herself sent afar for nurture by her mother Pitânê, who bore her to Poseidon) goes away secretly to bring forth under dark bushes the inspired son, Iamos, whom she bears to Apollo;³ Danaë, like Augê, is sent far by her father to bear Perseus, begotten of Zeus; and Zeus conveys the daughter of Opus to Locrus, there to bear Iapetos;⁴ Myrrha has to fly far and be transformed into the myrrh-tree before her child Adonis, the Lord, can be born;⁵ Rhœo, with child by Apollo, is locked in a chest, thrown into the sea, and cast on Delos, where she bears the child Anios, who is then taken and hidden by his father;⁶ and Hêrê goes "far away" from Zeus and men to conceive and bear Typhon—or Mars—or Dionysos.⁷ Under all disguises it seems to be the Sun-Child, or Day-God, who is so born; and the purple zone and violet hair of Evadnê, the Dawn or Sunset Goddess, are as significant as the violet colour of her babe. But the motive does duty for all manner of cases. Hagar goes into the wilderness to bear Ishmael; the daughter of Phlegyas follows her roving father far to bear Æsculapius;⁸ the mother of the deified Apollonius of Tyana is told in a dream to go into a meadow, and there she is delivered of her child;⁹ and in the Buddha legend, Maya (who becomes pregnant at the age of forty-five, a period about as late for India as that of the pregnancy of Sarah would be for Westerns), bears her holy child under a palm-tree (as Latona bears Apollo,¹⁰ and as Mary does

¹ Pindar, *Pythia*, ix. 90 (55); Diodorus Siculus, iv. 81.

² Pausanias, viii. 4 and 48.

³ Pindar, *Olymp.* vi. 49 ff.

⁴ *Id. Ol.* ix. 84, ff.

⁵ Ovid, *Metam.* xi.

⁶ Diodorus Siculus, v. 62.

⁷ Hom. *Hymn to Apollo*, 326–331; Ovid, *Fasti*, v. 231–258; Diodorus Siculus, iii. 66.

⁸ Pausanias, ii. 26.

⁹ Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, i. 5. Compare the odd legend of the Epidaurians near the temple of Æsculapius, whose women till the time of Antonine must be delivered in the open air (Pausanias, ii. 27).

¹⁰ Hom. *Hymn to Apollo*, 117; Theognis, l. 5; Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, 208; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xiv. 44.

Jesus in the Koran)¹ on her way to her father's house.² Of course there are variations. Maya dies, as Semelê dies, and Buddha is suckled by her sister, as we have seen so many of the Greek Gods were suckled by nurses; whereas Mary lives and keeps her child; but when Professor Weber assumes that the carrying of Krishna across the river is borrowed from the "Christophoros" legend, he not only overlooks the mythological significance of the river, elsewhere mentioned by himself, but the whole legend of Cyrus, which presents the close parallel of the herdsman's wife being delivered at the same time as Mandanê, as Yasoda bears a child simultaneously with Devakî, and Elizabeth simultaneously with Mary. And, as he himself points out twice in his treatise,³ the river figures in the Krishnaite ritual as the serpent or "serpent-prince," Kaliya, a motive not found in the gospels.⁴ On the other hand, however, when the Professor would derive from the third Gospel⁵ the item of Nanda's journey to Mathurâ to pay his taxes, we are entitled to meet him with the converse proposition, that here at least it is the Christian Gospel that borrows from the Hindu drama.

The gospel story of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem to be taxed under the edict of Augustus is obviously myth: there was no such practice in the Roman world; and in any case Galilee was still independently governed by Herod-Antipas when Quirinius went to tax Jûdea. Only the late third Gospel tells the story: the narrative in Matthew, added late as it was to the original composition,

¹ Sura xix.—"Mary." Rodwell's trans. 1861, p. 129.

² Professor Rhys Davids seems disposed to treat this episode as historic (*Buddhism*, p. 26); and writes that it was "in accordance with custom" that Maya went to be delivered in her father's house. It is evident, however, that the journey is one of the "details" which he admits (p. 27) may be due to the mythopoeic tendency.

³ *Ueber die Krishnajanmâshtamî*, pp. 249, 280. It is further noteworthy that the Yamunâ (*i.e.*, the Jumna) has long had the poetic name of *Kâlindî*, = "daughter of Kalinda," which last is a name of the sun (Wilson, *Theatre of the Hindus*, 1835, i. 302; ii. 90).

⁴ Among the Gnostics, however, the serpent-worshippers viewed the serpent as "a moist substance"; and the symbolism of serpent and river is obvious (Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, bk. v. c. 4).

⁵ The only canonical Gospel, be it observed, which has the story of Elizabeth giving birth to John when Mary bears Jesus.

which obviously began at what is now the third chapter, has no hint of the taxing, but implies that Joseph and Mary lived at Bethlehem; the Gospel of Mary gives the visit without the taxing; and so loosely was the myth credited that in the Protevangelion (c. 17) the statement is that it was decreed "that all should be enrolled, who were in Bethlehem of Judea." In that story, Jesus is born on the journey, in the cave, three miles from Bethlehem (c. 17); and it is after being taken from the cave that he is laid by his mother at Bethlehem "in an ox-stall."¹ Now, if the Krishna legend is clearly bound up with the long pre-Christian legend of Cyrus, why should we here suppose that its taxing-journey motive is borrowed from Christianity, instead of *vice versa*? The latter is plainly the reasonable hypothesis. In the Purâna story, Vasudeva, crossing the river Yamunâ, whose waters are stilled and lowered, with the babe Krishna in his arms, sees on the bank "Nanda and the rest, who had come hither to bring tribute due to Kansa."² The Bhagavat Purâna version "more consistently makes Vasudeva find Nanda and the rest fast asleep in their houses; and subsequently describes their bringing tribute or tax (*Kara*) to Kansa."³ Again, in the Vishnu Purâna, the liberated Vasudeva goes "to the waggon of Nanda";⁴ and in the Bhâgavat he "does not quit Mathurâ, but goes to the halting ground of Nanda, who has come to that city to pay his taxes." On the exhortation of Vasudeva to go, "Nanda and the other cowherds, their goods being placed in their waggons, and their taxes having been paid to the king, returned to their village." Here is a detailed and circumstantial narrative, which, with its variations, we may with considerable confidence assume to have formed part of those dramatic representations of the birth of Krishna that are established, on the evidence of Patanjali's Commentary, as having flourished before our era. The Hindu story is detailed and dramatic, though

¹ Ch. 22. In the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, which follows Luke for the enrolment story, Mary brings forth Jesus "in Bethlehem, in a cave near the tomb of Rachel" (ch. 7).

² *Vishnu Purâna*, Wilson's trans. p. 503.

³ *Id.* Note by Wilson.

⁴ *Id.* p. 506.

of course grounded on a myth motive: the Christian story, given in one only, and that the latest, of the Synoptics, is either a mere myth-echo or is introduced in order to give a basis for the mythical birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, which the second Gospel, the fourth, and the first as it originally stood, do not assert at all. On what explanation can we fall back save that the knowledge of the Indian religious drama, or of some Asian tale of the same mythological origin, had been conveyed to Egypt or Syria, either by travelling Hindus or by Westerns who visited Asia; and that the compilers of the third Gospel got it in that way? How should such a hopeless story have been invented for such a purpose if the hint were not already in circulation?

As for the old attempt of the self-frustrative Maurice¹ to derive the item of Devakî's imprisonment by Kansa within seven gates, from the Christian legend, preserved by the Mohammedans,² that Mary during her maidenhood was guarded by Zacharias in the sanctuary within seven doors, the answer here is still more easy. M. Senart,³ without any thought of Maurice's contention, of which probably he never heard, gives a Hindu antecedent for the story in an utterance of Indra in the Vedas: "Being still in the breast of my mother, I saw the birth of all the devas: a hundred fortresses of brass enveloped me; I escaped with violence in the form of a falcon" (Rig Veda, iv. 27, 1). And we may further point to the close parallel in the Cyrus legend,⁴ in which Astyages puts his daughter under a guard, just as Kansa does his sister Devakî; and to the familiar myth of the imprisonment of Danaë in the brazen tower—which in one version becomes an underground chamber.⁵ Is it likely that the Hindu imagination would need to come to Christianity for the detail of the seven gates? Is it not much more likely that the Christian-Mohammedan legend and the Hindu drama alike were derived from forms of the ancient myth which makes the

¹ *History of Hindostan*, ii. 314.

² Sale's *Koran*, note on chap. iii. (ed. 1734, p. 39 b).

³ *Essai sur la Légende du Buddha*, p. 314.

⁴ Herodotus, i. 108.

⁵ Pausanias, ii. 23.

Goddess Ishtar pass through the seven gates of Hades,¹ to and fro, to reach and bring back her lover? This, like so many other details of the myth, may well have been pre-Aryan; and it may point mythically either to the notion of the "seven zones," or climates, or seasons, or to the seven planets of ancient astronomy.² Alcmênê, who with her husband Amphitryon had come away from her own home,³ like so many other mothers of Gods, bears Herakles to Zeus and the twin Iphiclus to Amphitryon in seven-gated Thebes;⁴ and a similar myth may have been taught in the Dionysiak, the Mithraic, the Osirian, or any other mysteries. Of myth there is no "original," save mankind's immemorial dream.

XII. THE STABLE AND MANGER.

After what has been thus far seen of the correspondences between the Christian legends and prior myths, it is unnecessary to lay much stress on the mythical character of the birth in a stable, which corresponds with, and is thought by Christians to have suggested, the legend of the placing of Krishna in a basket, and even, apparently, his upbringing among the Gopîs. We have seen that an orthodox English Sanskritist identifies the basket with the Gospel manger; and Professor Weber lays stress⁵ on the representation of the birth of Krishna in a cow-shed in the elaborate and dramatic ritual service of the Krishna Birth-Festival, which here departs from the Purânic legend, that making the birth take place in Kansa's fortress. On this head a sufficient answer is given out of hand by M. Senart:—

"The confusion, in certain sources, of the *sûtikâ-griha* (lying-in room) with a *gokula*, a stable, contrary to the strict details of the recital,

¹ *Records of the Past*, i. 141; Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, pp. 221–227.

² In modern Brahmanic ritual occurs the formula:—"Fire! seven are thy fuels; seven thy tongues; seven thy holy sages; seven thy beloved abodes; seven ways do seven sacrificers worship thee. Thy sources are seven" (Colebrooke in *Asiatic Researches*, vii. 273). The number had early become a fixed idea.

³ Hesiod, *Shield of Hercules*, 1–2.

⁴ *Id.* 49.

⁵ Treatise cited, p. 269.

seems to him [Weber] one more sign of Christian imitation. But it must be remembered that the sûtikâ-griha must, in the terms of the ritual, contain not only Devakî with her son and Vasudeva, but also, and all together, the images of the shepherds, of the servants of Kansa, the guards of Devakî, of the Apsaras and the armed Dânavas, of Yasoda and Rohinî, without reckoning the representations of all the exploits attributed to the child Krishna [Weber, pp. 268, 280, ff.]. The intention then was not to give a faithful picture of the facts reported in the legend, but to group in a single frame all the personages included in it. How, on that footing, could separation be made of the new-born and the mother, or distinction between the prison and the dwelling of the shepherd? And of what weight is the novelty, illogical if it be, of the arrangement? The idea of representing the young God at the breast of his mother is really too simple to prove anything: there are not wanting examples of it in the religious representations of the Greeks.”¹

But not only is the suckling motive, as we previously saw, pre-Christian; the items of the basket-manger and the stable are equally so. Not only is the Greek *liknon*, or twig basket, used to this day for corn and for cradling children, as in the old Christian pictures, but we know that the infant Dionysos, in the processions of his cult, was represented among the Greeks as being carried in such a basket, which again is represented as being the cradle of Hermes² and of Jupiter.³ In the ancient Greek lexicon of Hesychius (which at this point the Christians certainly did not interpolate, though they did so at others) the word *Λικνίτης* is defined as *ἐπίθετον Διονύσου· ἀπὸ τῶν λίκνων, ἐν οἷς τὰ παιδία κοιμῶνται*, “an epithet of Dionysos, from the *liknons* in which children are cradled.”⁴ Now if, as our Christian apologist argues, a basket is a manger (as it is in the East, and as it is in the well-known picture of the Nativity by Botticelli), it clearly follows on his own reasoning that the Christian story is derived from the

¹ *Essai*, p. 335. Compare our preceding Section X. § 1, and K. O. Müller's *Ancient Art and its Remains*, Eng. tr. p. 493.

² *ἱερῶ ἐνὶ λίκνῳ*, “in the sacred basket.” Homerid. *Hymn to Hermes*, 21. *λίκνῳ ἐνὶ χρυσέῳ*, “in a golden basket.” Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 48. Cp. *Hymn to Demeter*, 127; and Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, bk. xi. concerning the *auream vannum congestam ramulis*.

⁴ Compare Liddell and Scott, *s. v.* *λικνίτης*, *λίκνον*, and *λικνοφόρος*; and Servius on Virgil, *Georg.* i. 166.

previous Dionysiak cultus.¹ In actual fact we find the God-Child represented, on a sarcophagus in the Catacombs, as cradled in a basket, standing under a shed, as in Botticelli's picture, with an ox and an ass looking on at his feet, in the fashion in which he is to this day represented at Christmas-time, throughout France and Italy.² This bas-relief, which includes the father and the mother, and three figures coming with gifts, is claimed as primarily Christian by Christian scholars, who see in it the adoration of the Magi. It has been argued, on the other hand,³ that the sculpture is originally Mithraic; a view I am much inclined to share; since there is really no other way of explaining the entrance of Magi into the Christian legend. But in any case, Christian or Mithraic, this bas-relief, which probably belongs to the fourth century, proves that a God-Child was early represented as lying swaddled in a basket, with an ox and an ass looking on, or else lying on his mother's knee while the ox and ass eat out of the basket, in circumstances which irresistibly suggest the Gospel legend of the birth of Jesus; and that legend is

¹ Dionysos would be carried in the cradle-basket on Christmas day. The rural or lesser Dionysia, the oldest of all, took place in the Attic month of Posidaon, which would correspond nearly to our December. Again, the great biennial festival, the Trieterika, was celebrated on Parnassus at the time of the shortest day (Müller, *Lit. of Ancient Greece*, Eng. tr. p. 288, following Boeckh). The Bœotians, further, began their year at the winter solstice; and in Bithynia the month beginning on December 24th was known as Dionysos. Under different names, the month began then in the Cretan calendar, which was "the same as that used by most inhabitants of Asia Minor"; while in the Roman period the month Posidaon was in some calendars made to begin on December 25th. Schmitz in *Smith's Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antiq.* following Clinton, Hermann, and Bergk.

² See the reproduction in Northcote and Brownlow's *Roma Sotteranea*, ed. 1879, ii. 258; also in Lundy's *Monumental Christianity*, 1876, Fig. 85, as copied from Nork's reproduction (in Scheible's *Kloster*, vol. vii. pt. i. p. 30); and in an article by Dr. Carus in *The Open Court*, Chicago, December, 1899, p. 723. See also p. 712 for a copy of a less elaborate design on a sarcophagus of the year 343, after Kraus—that given in *Roma Sotteranea*, ii. 235.

³ First, apparently, by Seel (*Die Mithrageheimnisse*, 1823, pp. 436, 475), cited by Von Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*, i. 258. Von Bohlen lays it down that Mithra's birth was "dramatically represented at the winter solstice; the Sun-Child rests with a nimbus, and surrounded by the sacred animals of Ormuzd." The thesis is urged later by a Dutch rationalist, Dr. H. Hartogh Heijs van Zouteveen, in his *Over den Oorsprong der Godsdienstige Denkbeelden*, p. 56, citing Nork's *Mythen der alten Persen*, which I have not been able to see. But the point is put in Nork's *Die Weihnachts und Osterfeier erklärt aus dem Sonnencultus der Orientalen*, 1838, p. 30.

thus clearly imitative of, for one thing, the old Greek usage of carrying in a basket the infant Dionysos, whose typical animals are the bull and ass. The cradle of Dionysos is a "long basket"¹—exactly the description of that in the scene in the Catacomb sculpture and the Botticelli picture; as it is of the "basket of bulrushes" in which the sacred child Moses is sent floating on the Nile. A "woven basket-cradle" again figures in the myth of the birth of Ion, whose mother takes him in it to the rock-cave, whence he is carried by Hermes, "cradle, swaddle-clothes, and all," to the temple of his father Apollo.² And if it be argued that the stable story is something special to Christianity, the answer is that it is one of the oldest motives in Aryan mythology.

The frequency with which Greek and Indian deities are associated with cows is sufficient to indicate to any student unmesmerized by religion that a nature-myth underlies every case.³ That the cow is the foremost myth-animal in the Vedas, nobody disputes. The clouds, the firmament, the moon, the earth, all have that aspect in turn; and to the last the idea holds its ground. In the Vishnu Purâna the clouds, the "cattle of Indra," "deluge the earth with milk"; "the cows and the bulls bellow as loud as roaring clouds";⁴ and the cow is to the Hindu to-day as sacred as ever, and preserves its cultus. In ancient Egypt and in

¹ Smith's *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Ant.* ed. 1849, p. 411.—Art. *Dionysia*. That this is the *mystica vannus Iacchi* would seem to be implied by Liddell and Scott, and is asserted by Müller (*Ancient Art*, as cited, p. 494). Cp. Ramage, *Nooks and Byways of Italy*, p. 157. The "mystic winnowing fan" was indeed a basket, but was it not also the *Kaneon* of the *Canephoræ*? Cp. Spanheim, *Obs. in Hymn. in Cererem Callimachi*, v. 127; and in *Hymn. in Jovem*, v. 48. (Ernesti's ed. ii. 43-4; 822-5.) In Hindu ritual "the winnowing fan, the *mystica vannus Iacchi*, is always used in the rites of Cal, Cali, and Durga; but the Hindus at present affix no other idea of mystery to it than its being an appendage to husbandry. They use it as a tray, on which they place before the image of the Deity the....articles used in the ceremony....On all solemnities the rituals prescribe exclusively the use of this fan, which they call Surp." Patterson, in *Asiatic Researches*, viii. 52.

² Euripides, *Ion*, 31-39, 1596.

³ In Norse cosmogony a cow plays an important part in the creation of man (Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*, Stallybrass' trans. ii. 559. Cp. p. 665; and Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 263, 391, 497).

⁴ Wilson's trans. pp. 525, 529.

Phœnicia it had the same pre-eminent sacredness.¹ But the myth of cow and stable spread world-wide with the race, so that we find the solar Hercules and Mercury fabled as living with shepherds or dealing with cows; and the thievish "night-awaiting" Mercury, who on the evening of the day of his birth steals the (cloud-) cows of the Day-God Apollo² (who himself was a cowherd³), was just such a figure as the black Krishna, playing among the cows with the cowherds, untrammelled by commonplace moral principles.⁴ So have we seen the solar Cyrus playing among the ox-stalls of his foster-father's home: the sun-child disporting himself in the stable of the sky. In the Homeridian Hymn to Aphrodite, again, the love-sick Goddess comes to Anchises "in the stalls," while the shepherds and the cows and sheep are absent; and he disrobes her; but when these return she breathes sleep into her lover, and herself puts on beautiful garments. Here the myth is that of the Sun-God meeting the Twilight-Goddess in the sky vacant of clouds. Her garments are the returning clouds, coloured by the sun as he sinks to rest—a grace of poetry which tells of a literary civilization that only slightly retains the primitive fancy of cloud-cows and sky-stable. But as we come nearer Christianity the plot thickens. In the worship of Isis, the sacred cow (herself a virgin, supernaturally impregnated by a flash of lightning or by the rays of the moon⁵) was carried seven times round the

¹ Herodotus, ii. 41; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, ii. 11.

² Homerid. *Hymn to Hermes*, 22 ff. It is noteworthy that in ancient sculpture, as in the Hymn, the child Hermes is represented as lying *in swaddling-clothes*, defending himself from the charge of cattle-stealing, and as "cattle-stealer *in the cradle*" (Müller, *Anc. Art*, as cited, p. 487). Here we have the swaddled and cradled child-God, the Greek *Logos*, figured in connection with cattle.

³ *Iliad*, xxi. 446-8.

⁴ The antagonism between Hermes and Apollo, as well as that between Indra and Krishna, may be plausibly explained as occurring between a new and an old deity, or the deities of different races. Assuming with Müller that Apollo was the deity of the conquering Dorians, Hermes may be, as above noted, just a solar deity of the native race they conquered; as on the other hand Krishna's superseding of Indra has been above conceived as the final triumph of an aboriginal cult over a Brahmanic. Cp. Renan, as cited above, p. 144.

⁵ Herodotus, iii. 28; Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 43; Pomponius Mela, i. 9.

temple upon the eve of the winter solstice,¹ when the sun-child rose from the lotos;² and cow-headed Isis bears the Sun-God Horos, as in Indian legend the sun is born of the cows.³

And still closer comes the parallel. We know from Macrobius⁴ that the Egyptian priests exhibited a babe to the people on a certain day as being the new-born Sun-God; and from Plutarch we know that the infant Horos was figured on the lotos at the time of the winter solstice. But there is documentary evidence that in the Egyptian system a Babe-Saviour was in pre-Christian times worshipped in a manger or crib, in connection with a virgin mother. The proof is furnished by the remarkable record in the *Christian Chronicon Paschale* (formerly but improperly called *Alexandrium*): "The same Jeremiah gave a sign to the Egyptian priests that their idols would be shaken and overthrown by a *child Saviour*, born of a virgin, and laid in a manger (*φάτνη*). Wherefore they still deify a child-carrying virgin, and adore a child in a manger. And to the inquiry of *King Ptolemy* as to the cause, they answered that they had received this mystery from a holy prophet who gave it to their fathers."⁵ The *Chronicon Paschale* dates from the seventh century, and would not by itself suffice to prove the cultus alleged, seeing that a Christian might—though this in the circumstances would be extremely unlikely—invent such a story to support his own faith, that being evidently the purpose with which the chronicler cites it. But read in connection with Macrobius and Plutarch, and the ritual of the birth of Amunoteph, it may be taken as certainly resting on a usage in ancient Egyptian religion. The Virgin and Child must of course have been Isis and Horos, whose worship was much older than Jeremiah. And the expression "Child Saviour" clearly points to a child-worshipping ceremonial, and not to the Christian idea of salvation by the crucified adult. It is needless to remark on the

¹ Plutarch, as cited, c. 52.

² c. 11.

³ *Zoological Mythology*, i. 51.

⁴ *Saturnalia*, i. 18.

⁵ Migne, *Patrolog. Curs. Comp., Series Gr.*, T. xcii. col. 385.

possibility that the ox-and-ass myth came from the same quarter, seeing that the temples of the sacred bull, Apis, and of the sacred cow, Isis, were already mystically, and in the former case literally, stables. But for the ox and stable there is yet another precedent. In the worship of Mithra, on the testimony of a Christian writer,¹ the lowing of the sacred heifers was part of a festival ceremony, evidently that of Christmas eve. Now, it has been shown² that in a multitude of points the Christian myths are simply based on previous ritual, as myths so often are: shall we then suppose that this primitive myth of the Christian God-born-in-a-stable, which only after a time passed current even with his own worshippers, and which early takes the form of representing him as being born between cow and ass, whose cries, in the popular Catholic fable, hide his,³ as the cries of the infant Zeus were covered in order to prevent Kronos from hearing them⁴—that this is anything but a variation of the myth-motive of pagan antiquity? The mimic presentment of the scene is one of the immemorial features of the Christmas festival in Southern France and Italy: who can finally doubt that the usage was there before the Christian creed?

That the ox and ass in the Mithraic-Christian birth-scene have a mythic significance is very certain. They are not merely inmates of the "stable"; they are from of old symbolic animals; and they were the two of all the talking beasts who had the widest prophetic reputation.⁵ The bull or ox, again, is one of the symbol-animals of the Sun-God; while the ass is not only of phallic repute, but "carries mysteries,"⁶ is constantly associated with the Sun-God Dionysos, and is probably at bottom the night-sun,⁷ as is

¹ Firmicus, *De Errore*, v. See the treatise on *Mithraism* hereinafter.

² *Id.* and in the treatise on *The Gospel Myths*.

³ *Zoological Mythology*, i. 361. ⁴ Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 53-54.

⁵ For ox and cow, see Livy, iii. 10; xxiv. 10; xxvii. 11; xxviii. 11; xxxv. 21; xliii. 13. For the ass, see the legend of Liber in Lactantius, i. 21; also Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, where the ass's name, *Nikon*, "Victory," predicts to Augustus the triumph of Actium; and the Hebrew legend of Balaam—all widely circulated stories. Cp. Gubernatis, *Zool. Myth.* i. 247, 398. For the talking horse, see Grimm, as cited, i. 392.

⁶ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 160; and note in Bohn trans.

⁷ Gubernatis, vol. i. ch. 3, *passim*.

Dionysos himself, in contrast to Apollo, the day-sun.¹ In the Jewish ritual² the red heifer plays an important part; and the rite, of which the Rabbins seem to have lost the explanation,³ evidently connects with the similar usage in Egypt, which was associated with the solar cult of Typhon,⁴ the Night-God or Winter-God and Principle of Darkness, one of whose symbolic animals was the ass.⁵ The latter animal, again, evidently had a special significance for the Jews, since the firstling of the ass was specially redeemable, and on that ground bracketed with humanity.⁶ In the sacred processions of Isis, the ox and the ass were the principal if not the only animals, the latter being sometimes adorned with wings.⁷ Now, in the Krishna ritual the ox and the ass figure very much as they do in the birth scene of the Catacombs; and Professor Weber decides that this is one of the details borrowed from Christianity. On that view, it would be borrowed from the Apocryphal Gospel of Matthew. The narrative of that document, late in its present form, is doubtless in part based on much older originals, and challenges attention by its peculiarity:—

“And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ the most blessed Mary went forth out of the cave, and, entering a stable, placed the child in the stall, and the ox and the ass adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Isaiah the prophet, saying: The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib. The very animals therefore, the ox and the ass, having him in their midst incessantly adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Abakuk the

¹ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 18. Plutarch, *I. and O.* c. 28. Dionysos, it will be remembered, was pre-eminently the God of the winter months. Preller, *Griech. Myth.* i. 539–541.

² Numbers xix.

³ Spencer, *De Legibus Hebræorum*, l. ii. c. 15, vol. i. p. 340, ed. 1686.

⁴ Plutarch, *I. and O.* cc. 31, 41, 52. Cp. Tobit i. 5, as to “the heifer Baal.” Red cattle, again, as well as black (*ante*, p. 146), were a special sacrifice to Poseidon (Pindar, *Pythia*, iv. 339). Mr. Frazer plausibly argues (i. 401–2) that the red-haired victim and the red cow were symbols of the Corn-God, and were meant to promote the ripening of the corn.

⁵ Plutarch, *I. and O.* 30, 31. The ass in turn was “red” for the Egyptians (*ib.*), and also for the Hebrews. Pleyte, *La religion des Pré-israélites*, 1865, p. 150.

⁶ Exodus xxxiv. 20. The legend that the Jews worshipped an ass-headed God doubtless derives from the fact that the Samaritan God Tartak (2 Kings xvii. 31) was so figured. Pleyte, as above, citing the Talmud, *Sanhedrim*, fol. 63. Cp. Pleyte, p. 186, and Pl. ix. x.

⁷ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, B. xi.

prophet, saying: Between two animals thou art made manifest. In the same place Joseph remained with Mary three days" (c. 14).

Here we have a forced combination of the two myth-motives of cave and stable, both bound up with the worship of the Sun-God, who is cave-born as the offspring of the Earth-Mother, and stable-born for the reasons we are now considering. The reference to Habakkuk (iii. 2) is not to the Hebrew as commonly rendered, but to the Septuagint, in which, by a slight variation in the vocalisation of one Hebrew word and the spelling of another, the words "years" and "make alive" (the marginal reading in the Authorized Version is "preserved alive," the text reading "revive") are made to read as "two living creatures,"¹ so that we have the Greek version ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γνωσθήσῃ, "between two living creatures thou shalt be known." Here then rises the interesting question, Does the Septuagint proceed upon an Egyptian or other version of the ox-and-ass myth? Let us see what the commentators have to say:—

"There is a double reading of these words in the Septuagint version of them, and both very different from the Hebrew text. The one is, *in the midst of two lives thou shalt be known*.... The other, by a change of the accent, is, *in the midst of two animals thou shalt be known*; so the Arabic version. Theodoret makes mention of both, and inclines to the former; 'some [he says] by two animals understand angels and men; some the incorporeal powers near the divine Glory, the cherubim and seraphim; others the Jews and Babylonians; but to me it seems that the prophet does not say animals, but lives, the present and future....' The latter reading is followed by many of the ancients, whose different senses are given by Jerome on the place; some interpreting them of the Son and Spirit, by whom the Father is made known; others of the two cherubim in Exodus, and of the two seraphim in Isaiah; and there were some who understood them of the two Testaments, the Old and New....; and others of Christ's being crucified between two thieves....; but besides these different sentiments many of the ancients concluded from hence that Christ lay in the manger between two animals, the ox and the ass, and to which they refer in their ancient hymns. [*Cognovit bos et asinus Quod puer erat Dominus*]...."²

The rest is modern Talmudism—the ancient "demoniacal possession" of verbalism over again. Nothing is to be

¹ Note in the "Ante-Nicene Library" ed. of the Apocryphal Gospels, p. 23.

² Gill's *Exposition of the Old Testament*, Doudney's ed. iv. 777.

gathered save that the Septuagint somehow adopted the reading of "two creatures," a formula unintelligible on Biblical grounds, but explicable in all likelihood by the ancient ritual-usage under notice. For the rest, the context in the Septuagint, "thou shalt be acknowledged when the years draw nigh; thou shalt be manifested when the time is come," was well fitted to serve as a Messianic prophecy for the Hellenic Jews. But that a merely accidental reading or misreading of the Hebrew text could be the *origin* of the myth of the stable and the adoring ox and ass, as later found in the apocryphal Gospel, is incredible. The stable, as we have seen, was an established myth, and the ox and ass were at home in the stable. If the translator of Habakkuk in the Septuagint was influenced by an Egyptian or Oriental mystery-doctrine, then we trace to pre-Christian times the entrance of the ox-and-ass myth into Judaic channels; if, on the other hand, the "two animals" was a quite fortuitous reading, we are left to what we otherwise know of the mythological standing of the animals in question. Justin Martyr, who was pretty close to the myth-sources, has a statement that "David predicted that he [Christ] would be born from the womb *before sun and moon.*"¹ The reference is to the corrupt passage Ps. cx. 3; and the translators of the Ante-Nicene Library version have this note: "Justin puts 'sun and moon' instead of 'Lucifer.' Maranus says David did predict, not that Christ would be born of Mary before sun and moon, but that it would happen before sun and moon that He would be born of a Virgin." Whatever "David" said, we have here the glyph of the symbolic ox and ass at the Nativity.

And the passage in Pseudo-Matthew is singularly suggestive of just such a process of legend-making from old ritual as has been above contended for. Here, as in the Protevangelion, the laying-in-the-manger is entirely dissociated from the birth, and is therefore the more confidently to be looked upon as a piece of narrative framed to

¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 76.

meet a purpose; just as the pragmatic account of the lightless cave is evidently intended to have a doctrinal significance. The *need* for such a doctrine lay in the pre-existence of cave-worship, especially in Mithraism, from which Christianity so largely borrowed in other regards, and in the actual practice of a Pagan ritual in which a Child-God (as Ion) was exhibited as born in a cave; and the need for the laying in a manger in presence of ox and ass can be explained only in a similar way. Thus established, the myth would easily reappear in the form of the animation by the child Jesus of figures of oxen and asses,¹ and in the appearance of oxen and asses in the fabulous cortège of the family in Egypt.²

Is it then reasonable, is it plausible, to assume that this certainly derivative legend, never accepted as canonical, suddenly captured the Hindus late in our era in its Christianized form? Are we not, on the contrary, driven irresistibly to ask, Is not the Christian ox-and-ass legend one of immemorial antiquity?

And here, at least, the Hindu sacred books and ritual offer something like a decisive answer. To begin with, Agni in the Rig Veda is constantly addressed as a new-born infant, he being primarily the Fire, which is generated afresh every time the *aranis*, the fire-sticks, are rubbed together, a process conserved for religious purposes (as the sacred fire was rekindled in Mexico and elsewhere) for ages after that laborious process had become practically unnecessary. Thus, for one thing, the ever new-born Agni of the Veda is associated with the crossed sticks, which on one theory are the origin of the cross symbol. But not only is Agni repeatedly adored as the new-born by his worshippers, he is held to be similarly adored by the forces of Nature, as is the luminous Christ-child in the Protevangelion,³ and by the Devas or divinities in general:—

“Agni, the bright-bodied, as soon as born, fills all dwellings with shining light. When born, thou, O Agni, art the embryo of heaven and

¹ *Arabic Gospel of Infancy*, c. 36.

² Pseudo-Matthew, c. 19.

³ c. 19. Cp. *Arabic Gospel of Infancy*, c. 3.

earth, variegated, infantine, thou dispersest the nocturnal glooms. Therefore the genetrices (of all things, the herbs) the cherishers (of all) with food, wait on thee who art the augments of food, with the sacrificial viands."¹

"The Vedic Gods render homage to Agni when he is born, and when he passes resplendent from his parents the *aranis*."²

"He [Agni] diffuses happiness in a dwelling like a son newly born."³

"He [Agni] it is whom the two sticks have engendered like a new-born babe."⁴

"Thou [Agni] art born unobstructed of two mothers [*i.e.*, either the fire-sticks or the heaven and earth] they have augmented thee with butter."⁵

So in the western world is Dionysos hailed *ignigenam, satumque iterum, solumque bimatrem*, "fire-born, twice-born, the only one with two mothers."⁶ And this transparent infant-myth is curiously interwoven in the Veda with the other primeval myths of cow and cave.

"Agni, as soon as born, blazes brightly, destroying the Dasyus" [demons] "and (dispersing) the darkness by his lustre; he has discovered the cows, the waters, the sun."⁷

"In this world our mortal forefathers departed after instituting the sacred rite, when, calling upon the dawn, they extricated the milk-yielding kine, concealed among the rocks in the darkness (of the cave).

"Rending the rocks they worshipped (Agni) and other (sages) taught everywhere their (acts): unprovided with the means of extricating the cattle, they glorified the author of success, whence they found the light, and were thus enabled (to worship him) with holy ceremonies.

"Devoted (to Agni) those leaders (of sacred rites) with minds intent upon (recovering) the cattle, forced open, by (the power) of divine prayer, the obstructing compact solid mountain, confining the cows, a cow-pen full of kine. . . .

"The scattered darkness was destroyed: the firmament glowed with radiance; then the sun stood above the undecaying mountains, beholding all that was right or wrong among mankind."⁸

This last extra-obscure passage well exemplifies the frequent

¹ Wilson's trans. of *Rig Veda Sanhita*, vi. (1888), pp. 1-2.

² Senart, *Essai*, p. 292, citing *Rig Veda*, vi. 7, 4.

³ Wilson's trans. i. 184. ⁴ *Id.* iii. 253-4.

⁵ *Id.* iii. 256-7. Elsewhere, Agni is *thrice* born—in the air, in the earth, and in the water—the last, doubtless, being on account of the sun's reflection there. Cp. Wilson's tr. iii. 21, 34; vi. 119; and Grassmann's, pp. 45, 73.

⁶ Ovid, *Metam.* iv. 11; Diodorus Siculus, iii. 61; iv. 4, 5.

⁷ Wilson's trans. iii. 261.

⁸ *Id.* iii. 115-6.

difficulty, avowed by the best scholars,¹ of making out what the Vedas mean—a difficulty further deducible from a comparison of the renderings of Wilson and Langlois with those of later German translators, and of these last with each other. But the association of Agni with cattle and cave seems certain from that and the previous extract, and there is no great obscurity in these further passages:—

“Both the auspicious ones (day and night) wait upon him [Agni] like two female attendants, as lowing kine (follow their calves).”²

“The night and the day, mutually effacing each other’s complexion, give nourishment, combined together, to one infant [Agni] who, radiant, shines between earth and heaven.”³

Of these two extracts the first is thus rendered from the original in the German metrical version of H. Grassmann :⁴ “To thee, Agni, shout for joy (*jauchzen*) Night and the Dawn, as in the stalls cows cry to calves.” Is it going too far to surmise that, seeing Agni himself, Fire-God and Sun-God, was in the Veda said to have been, “in the olden time, the bull and the cow,”⁵ the symbols of the Night and the Morning, here represented as saluting him, may even then have been the Ox and Ass?

It is idle to seek to force the solution of such a problem ; and in so far as the Vedic evidence goes, I leave the matter to the judgment of the reader, merely adding that when we compare the notion of the instantaneous growth of the new-born Agni (who “as soon as born fills heaven and earth with light,” and “*fractures, as he advances, the solid*

¹ See Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, ii. 214. It should be noted that Wilson’s translation, which is here primarily used, follows the commentary of Sayana, as to the merits of which see Max Müller, pref. to 1st ed. of trans. of Vedic Hymns, *S. B. E.* On comparing the passages here cited with the later renderings of Oldenberg, I find no vital differences. In any case, we want in this connection to have the text *as understood* by the later Brahmans.

² *R. V.* I. ii. 2. Wilson’s trans. i. 246. Oldenberg translates:—“For thee Nights and Dawns have been lowing, O Agni, as milch-cows in the folds for their calf” (*S. B. E.* xlvi. 193).

³ *R. V.* I. xevi. Wilson’s trans. p. 252. Oldenberg’s version runs: “Night and Dawn, who constantly destroy each other’s appearance, suckle one young calf unitedly. The piece of gold [= Agni] shines between Heaven and Earth” (*S. B. E.* xlvi. 119).

⁴ Leipzig, 1876, p. 8.

⁵ Wilson’s trans. vi. (1888), p. 11.

cloud";¹ and who is further the "archer" and the "lord of night"²), the Vedic address to Indra as having "discovered the cows hidden in the cave,"³ and the legend that these cows were stolen by the Asuras⁴—when we compare these data with the Greek myth of the night-waiting, cattle-stealing infant Hermes, it is difficult to doubt that the latter fable derives from the Aryan original preserved in the Veda. Whether the "two mothers" were suggested by the common myth of the suckling of the child-God by another than she who bore him, or whether the latter notion grew out of the misunderstood symbol of the two fire-sticks, or the mystic doctrine that the Sun-God was born of both Heaven and Earth,⁵ we need not attempt to decide. But as regards the Indian origin of the ox-and-ass myth we get a fresh light when we connect the Vedic myths of the infant Agni (who, by the way, was specially invoked at the vernal equinox⁶) with the Krishnaite ritual of the Birth Festival. In the *Jayantî* form of the festival, *the erecting of a shed*, the watching by it through the night, and *the distribution of images*, are important items.⁷ Now, in the Catacomb sarcophagus, the basket containing the child, and the ox and ass, stand *under a sloping shed-roof*, standing on two posts, while none of the other figures do. Here there is neither cave nor inn-stable; there is only a scenic shed, exactly answering to the shed of the Krishnaite ritual; and to the right of that two palm trees, between which the mother sits. Remarkably enough, one of those trees *bends*, as do the palms in the Koran legend of Mary, in the Buddhist legend of Maya, and in the account in Pseudo-Matthew (c. 20) of the wanderings of Mary and Joseph *after* the birth. The trees clearly cannot be reconciled with cave or stable.

How then came this shed to appear in early Christian or semi-Christian sacred art, unauthorized either by the

¹ Wilson's trans. iii. 120.

² *Id.* i. 186, 188.

³ *Id.* i. 16.

⁴ *Id. ib.* Wilson's note.

⁵ Oldenberg leaves open both views, citing Bergaigne, *Religion Védique*, i. 28, 238. Elsewhere (S.B.E. xlvi. 51) he notes that "Agni, as is well known, is the son of the two worlds."

⁶ *Id.* i. 157, note.

⁷ Weber, p. 223.

generally received cave legend or by the story in the third Gospel? What possible conclusion is open to us save that it represents a usage in the dramatic ritual of some other cultus; and that it was this usage that was in view in the peculiar version of the story in the Apocryphal Gospels? And, apart from the familiar myth of the births of Apollo and Buddha under a palm tree, what ritual usage do we know of that comes so close as that of Krishnaism? Either the scene is Christian or it is Mithraic. If the latter, we have a phase of complete identity between the Persian and the Hindu cult, which need not surprise us; and in that case Mithraism would be the channel through which the myth of ox-and-ass, stable-and-manger, came into Christianity. But if we suppose the bas-relief to be non-Mithraic, then it must be held to be a close imitation of a ritual usage previously existing in India—the usage which survives in our own day. For the ass appears in Indian mythology as early as the Vedas, where already he has two characters, divine and demoniacal, being at one time the symbol of Indra, Krishna's predecessor, and at another his enemy.¹ As the friend of the black and once demonic Krishna, he corresponds, with reversal of colour, to the ass of Egypt, who was the symbol of the evil Typhon.² Again, curiously, one of his Vedic epithets is "childlike."³

When, therefore, we find in the art of Buddhism, as in the Gandhâra sculptures,⁴ a representation of a Nativity scene, in which a woman lays a child in a manger-basket, it is quite out of the question to look for the suggestion to the Gospels. In the scene in question, *horses'* heads appear in the place of those of the familiar ox and ass; and here we are doubtless dealing with another solar symbol; for the horse was in Persia specially associated with the sun. The babe in this case may very well have been Agni, who in the Veda is driver of the white horses of the sun; and though, as we shall see, the Buddha myth has borrowed a

¹ *Zool. Myth.* ii. 370-4.

² Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, cc. 30, 31.

³ *Zool. Myth.* ii. 364.

⁴ Fergusson and Burgess, *The Cave Temples of India*, 1880, p. 138.

good deal from that of Krishna, it could also draw directly from the Vedic store.

And if Western borrowing there were on the Hindu side—which will hardly now be argued—it could perfectly well have been pre-Christian. The ass might be the ass of Typhon, “who was the chief God of the Semites in Egypt,”¹ though in ill repute with the Christians; and it may have been from this source that the Christians derived it. It is also possible that they made a not uncommon confusion between the ass of Typhon and the *jackal*-headed Anubis, the Egyptian Hermes, “both infernal and celestial,” who was held to represent *Time*,² and who figured as the attendant of Osiris. And when we are discussing origins, we should not forget the suggestion of Dupuis and Volney,³ that the birth of the Sun-Child between the ox and the ass is simply a fable based on the fact that in the zodiacal celestial sphere the sun would come, at the winter solstice, between the Bull and the Ursa Major, sometimes represented by the ancients as a Boar, sometimes as the Hippopotamus, sometimes the Ass, of Typhon. But the conception may well be older than the zodiac: the fundamental idea of the stable being, as we have seen, the sky as the home of the cloud-cows. The Sun-God is in this primary sense born of two mothers, Earth and Sky—of the Earth in the cave, of the Sky in the stable.

Another detail comes in to extend the proof that the Christian legend borrows from the East. In the Catacomb fresco representing the (supposed) adoration of the Virgin and child by *two* Magi, as reproduced in large and in colour in De Rossi's *Imagines Selectae Deiparae Virginis*,⁴ the dish tendered to the babe or mother by the right-hand man bears a *small human figure*. What is the Christian explanation of that? What hypothesis is more likely than that this is one of the Krishnaite images?

¹ Professor Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 449. Cp. Tiele, *Hist. of the Egypt. Relig.* Eng. tr. p. 48.

² Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 44; Sharpe, *Egyptian Mythology*, pp. 8–9.

³ *Les Ruines*, note on ch. xxii. § 13.

⁴ Rome, 1863, pl. v. Cp. *Roma Sotteranea*, as cited, ii. 140, 170.

That, of course, remains a hypothesis. And, indeed, we are bound to keep in view that the manifold Egyptian ritual *may* have included just such a ceremony as that under notice. In the procession of Isis, as described by Apuleius, the ass is accompanied by a feeble old man—exactly the aged Joseph of the Apocryphal Gospels. And we know that the solarized Amunoteh III., who here seems to typify customary royal ceremony, figures in Egyptian sculpture as supernaturally announced, conceived, and born, very much as is Jesus in Christian legend.¹ The messenger-God, Thoth, announces to the maid-mother the coming birth; the Spirit-God Kneph miraculously impregnates her; and the priests kneel and adore the new-born babe, holding up the cross of life. This must have been a matter of ritual. In the Catacomb bas-relief and frescoes, again, the adorers, the “Magi,” both in the picture with two and in that with four,² wear the Phrygian or Mithraic cap; but, instead of representing the venerable sages of modern Christian fancy, they are all young and beardless. The juvenile angel, again, exactly corresponds to that which figures in the admittedly Mithraic remains in the Catacombs, as reproduced by Father Garucci and accepted by Canons Northcote and Brownlow. On the other hand, in the fragment of the earliest-dated Catacomb sarcophagus³ held to be Christian, representing the ox and ass, the swaddled child, and two adorers, the men are rather of Western figure; though at the end behind them a hand appears grasping a palm tree or branch. Thus there is the suggestion of the East as well as of Western assimilation. We cannot yet decide with certainty as to the myth’s line of travel; we can only decide that all Christian myth is an adaptation of previous myth.

The case, I think, is thus far clear. The Krishna birth

¹ See the woodcut and explanation in Sharpe’s *Egyptian Mythology*, pp. 18–19.

² *Roma Sotteranea*, as cited, ii. 169: *Imag. Sel.* pl. iii.

³ It bears the names of the consuls of 343 C.E. See the cut in *Roma Sotteranea*, ii. 235, and in *Open Court*, as before cited.

myth is at bottom primeval ; and it is highly probable that the Birth-Festival ritual, which Professor Weber supposes to have been based on Christianity, preserves prehistoric practice. At the midnight hour of the God's birth there is a ceremony of a "pouring out of riches"¹ (*ein Guss Reichthums*) which it is a wonder the Professor does not hold to represent the offerings of the Magi. In all probability it *does* point to the *origin* of that myth. The "riches" are symbolic, an offering of melted butter and sugar—surely the "nectar and pleasant ambrosia" with which Themis fed the babe Apollo;² and with which the Hours feed the deathless child Aristæus, son of Apollo and Cyrene, and by some called Shepherd, Jove, and chaste Apollo, God of flocks;³ the milk and honey on which Dionysos and the child Jupiter⁴ were nourished; the "butter and honey" that in the Hebrew prophet⁵ are named as the food of the child Immanuel to be born of the "virgin" of that time, and that were used in their rites (with milk for butter) by the early Christians, especially in the "Mystery of Infants," till the Council of Trullo (held at Constantinople, in 691) forbade the usage,⁶ doubtless because its pagan origin was recognized. And surely the ancient adoration of the ever-new-born Agni was either the origin or the parallel of the offering of butter to the new-born Krishna. Does not the whole mass of data go to suggest that a more or less dramatic ritual has preserved a Babe-Sun-God worship from immemorial antiquity? In pre-Christian India it became actual drama, which the Festival ritual, with its multitude of images, appears to preserve as far as may be; and I am much inclined to suspect that the form of part of the Protevangelion⁷ comes of a semi-dramatic ritual, as the adoration of the Magi must have done, and as the legends

¹ Treatise cited, p. 299.

² Hom. Hymn, 124.

³ Pindar, *Pythia*, ix. 97-106; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 81; Athenagoras, *Apol.* xiv.

⁴ Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*, 49; and note in Bohn trans. p. 123.

⁵ Isaiah vii. 14-15.

⁶ Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*, xv. 2, § 3 (ed. 1855, vol. v. 242-3).

⁷ Chs. xiii. xiv.

of the Lord's Supper and the rock-tomb burial certainly did.¹ Be that how it may, the theory that Krishnaism borrowed either its myths or its rites from Christianity is now evidently enough untenable.

XIII. THE MYTH OF ST. CHRISTOPHER.

The study of a few of the minor myths of Christianity in connection with Krishnaism will be found no less instructive than the comparison of the central myth-motives of the two creeds. Always the lesson is that the mythology of Christianity was derivative; and at times, though there can be no certainty, there is a curiously strong suggestion of direct Christian adoption of Hindu details. I have spoken of the item of the visit of the foster-father of Krishna to the holy city to pay his taxes, which in the Krishna myth is as it were naturally embedded in the narrative, while in the Christ myth it is grafted on loosely and precariously. But the same statement may be made even more emphatically in other regards. Professor Weber² has assumed the priority of the "Christophoros" legend, in which St. Christopher under miraculous circumstances carries the rejuvenated Christ, the Christ-child, on his shoulders across a river by night. The Professor does not ask how it was that the idea of regarding Christ *still as a child* came to persist in the Church through so many centuries, and that only gradually did he come to be pictured as a young man, and finally as a man of middle age. We can see what preserves the child image in Krishnaism—the ancient usage of dramatic ritual, which is only partially overruled by the literary presentment of the stories of the God's career. Now,

¹ See hereinafter, *Mithraism*, § 4.

² Here adopting a thesis of the pre-scientific Giorgi—cited by Von Bohlen, *Das Alte Indien*, 1830, i. 232. Von Bohlen states that Kleuker held the Christophorus story to be of Indian origin; but I cannot find such a remark in the place cited. Kleuker did, however (*Abhandlungen*, as before cited, ii. 234), argue that it was probably the Christians who borrowed from the Hindus, and that the apocryphal Gospels show distinct traces of Indian influence.

by far the most probable hypothesis of the origin of the Christophoros myth is either that it was framed to explain a Pagan sculpture, or that, like so many others, it was invented late to explain some dramatic or other representation—that there was a ritual in which the Christ-child, like the infant Dionysos in Greece, and the infant Horos in Egypt, was carried on a man's shoulder, long before the legend of the colossal Christ-bearer was framed.

For this hypothesis we have the most convincing evidence in the plural term *Christophoroi*, found applied to martyrs in an alleged letter of the third century quoted by Eusebius.¹ This term every orthodox authority I have seen deduces from the epithet "Theophoros," said to have been applied to Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch; and the usual explanation is that it means "full of Christ," as Theophoros meant "full of God."² The Bohn translator, Mr. Crusé, however, insists on the etymological meaning of the word, writing that "the martyrs were called, by a strong figure, Christophori, because they bore; and Ignatius was called Theophorus for the same reason." This, I suspect, is nearer the truth than Mr. Crusé was aware of. The name Theophoros would not have been attached to Ignatius had it not been in existence before. It literally meant, in classic usage, one "bearing or carrying a God";³ and would naturally be applied to those who carried statues of the Gods in ceremonial or procession.⁴ There were a score of such names in connection with the Greek rituals. Not to speak of the soldiers and police officers called after the weapons they carried, as the *doryphoroi*, *aichmophoroi*, *mastigophoroi*, *rhabdophoroi*, etc., there were the *liknophoroi*, the women who carried the cradle-basket of Dionysos in his processions; the *kanephoroi*, women who bore sacred baskets of another sort; the *oschophoroi*, noble youths who, in the disguise of women, carried branches of vine in the

¹ *Eccles. Hist.* iii. 10.

² So, in effect, Bingham, i. 6; Riddle, *Christian Antiquities*, p. 134; Migne, *ad loc.*; Smith and Cheetham's *Dict. of Christ. Antiq. sub voce*; etc.

³ Liddell and Scott, *s. v.*, citing Æsch. Fr. 224.

⁴ In such cases as those mentioned by Pausanias, ii. 7, 11; vii. 20, 21, etc., or in civic or royal processions.

festival from which came the name; the *deipnophoroi*, women who, as mothers, carried food for the youths; the *arrephoroi* (or *ersephoroi*), maidens who carried the mystic chest with nameless contents in the festival of Panathenaea; the *lampadophoroi*, who carried torches in the torch-races; and so on. Always the meaning is the literal *carrying* of something. Hermes with the ram on his shoulders (the admitted origin of the Christian image of the Good Shepherd¹) is Hermes *Kriophoros*, the ram-bearer. Only secondarily and indirectly could the word come to have the meaning of "possessed by the God"; and the instance cited by Liddell and Scott,² in which the phrase is "pains of *inspiration*," is clearly in close connection with the primary meaning. In all probability the name *Theophoros* at times became a family one, just as that of *Nikephoros*, "Victory-bearer,"³ which continued to subsist long after Pagan times among Christians. The generic name *Christophoroi* must have had some solid basis than an analogy from a metaphor.

That the Christian myth of the Christ-birth is a concoction from previous myths, we have already seen; and that the borrowing was first made by way of "mystery" or ritual, the Catacomb remains go far to prove. We know too that in the Egyptian system, apart from the practice of carrying the new-born Sun-Child to exhibit him to the people,⁴ there was a whole order of *Pastophoroi*, bearers of the *pastos*, who according to one theory bore a shawl in the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, but "according to another interpretation"—and a much more tenable one—"were so denominated from carrying, not a shawl, but a shrine

¹ See Smith and Cheetham's Dict. under "Good Shepherd." Cp. Lundy, *Monumental Christianity*, ch. vii.; Didron, *Christian Iconography*. Eng. tr. i. 339, 341, and the figures copied in Dr. Carus's art. in *Open Court*, December, 1899. This type also appears in Buddhist sculpture.

² From Æschylus, *Agam.* 1150.

³ See Athenæus, v. 27.

⁴ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 18. It is important to remember that Macrobius says the child is carried *ex adyto*, out of the innermost sanctuary of the temple. The adytum "was almost certainly in its origin a cave; indeed, in Greece it was often wholly or partially subterranean, and is called *μέγαρον*, which is the Semitic *מִצְרָה* and means a cave" (Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 183; cp. Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 115). Here once more the Christian myth is led up to.

or small chapel, *containing the image of the God.*"¹ These *Pastophoroi* were "a numerous and important body of men," who had allotted to them a part of the Egyptian temples, called the *pastophorion*—a term adopted by the Jews in describing the temple of Jerusalem.² And they spread beyond Egypt, having a "college" or brotherhood at Industria, a city of Liguria.³ Now, it may be argued that the term *Christophoroi* might be jocularly applied to Christians by analogy from these and other classes with the same name-suffix; but that the Christians should have adopted it without some real reason is hardly supposable. And when we look into the admitted remains of early Christian ritual, we see at least hints of what the reason was. In early frescoes the Christian hierophant bears a *pastos*, or a *kistê*,⁴ analogous to the sacred chest of Dionysos. They would hardly carry the serpent, as the *kistê* did; but their shrine or chest carried something.

It might be, then, that this was only the sacred *host*, which to this day is "the good God" in Catholic countries. But whence then came the idea of making the mythic Christophoros, giant as he was, carry the *child* Christ? I can see no explanation save one or all of three: (1) that the persistent Pagan charge against the early Christians of eating a child in their rites⁵ rested on a ritual custom of exhibiting or eating the baked *image* of a child,⁶ a rite to

¹ Smith's Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antiq., art. *Pastophorus*. Ed. 1849, p. 871. Compare Apuleius (*Metamorphoses*, bk. 11), who speaks of the *Pastophori* as carrying "the sacred images" and "breathing effigies" (*simulacra spirantia*). See also last par. of the book.

² 1 *Maccabees*, iv. 38.

³ Smith's Dict. as above, citing Maffei, *Mus. Veron.* p. 230. Apuleius locates a college of them at Cenchreæ.

⁴ See *Roma Sotteranea*, ed. 1879, i. 362. Pl. xi.

⁵ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 35; ii. 14; Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* v. 1; Athenagoras, *Apol.* c. 3; Origen, *Against Celsus*, vi. 27; Min. Felix, cc. 9, 10, 30, 31; Tertullian, *Apolog.* cc. 7, 8, 9.

⁶ Note the image on the platter of the "Magus," referred to in Sec. xii. Baked images were known in the sacrifices of the poor in antiquity (Herodotus, ii. 47); and in Mexico dough images of the God were eaten sacramentally. See H. H. Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, iii. 297-300, 389; ii. 321. A very extensive list of cases in which either a baked or an unbaked image of a child or adult is ceremonially eaten in ancient and modern times is given by Mr. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ii. 68, 79-84, and notes. Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, i. 7) gives accounts of the substitution of

which, as being a sacred mystery,¹ the Christians were unwilling to confess;² or (2) that in the Christmas celebration a real or dummy child was actually carried in the sacred basket, just as Dionysos was in his, or as Horos was represented in Egypt, and as a child *may* have been in the rites of Mithra; or (3) that the many representations of the carrying of a Divine Child by Hermes or by Hercules in Greek sculpture may have set illiterate Christians, after the

images for human heads as sacrifices to Hades, and again of heads of garlic and poppy for human heads in sacrifice to the Goddess Mania, mother of the Lares. Yet again, Ovid (*Fasti*, v. 621–31) tells of the substitution of rush or straw images for old men formerly sacrificed in the worship of Vesta. Mommsen, whose chapter (xii.) on the religion of Rome is a mosaic of incoherent generalizations, declares in his customary manner that “it is only an unreflecting misconception that can discover in this usage a reminiscence of ancient human sacrifices.” He then explains that the Romans acted in the spirit of their merchants, who were legally free to “fulfil their contracts merely in the letter”; that they in all seriousness practised “a pious cunning, which tried to delude and pacify” the deity “by means of a sham satisfaction.” Of what then was it a sham?

¹ The existence of secret mysteries among the early Christians after the second century is abundantly shown in Clarkson's *Discourse concerning Liturgies* (*Select Works*, Wycliffe Society's ed. 1846, pp. 266–277). And see Dr. Edwin Hatch's posthumous work, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 1890, pp. 292–305, where it is frankly admitted that the Christians imitated Pagan methods. In practising secrecy in particular the Christians only followed the general Pagan usage. Compare Clarkson's citations with Herodotus, *passim*.

² See Tertullian, *Apology*, c. 7, where the denial is anything but straightforward. We may rest content with an orthodox explanation: “The method of celebrating baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist; the nature and effect of these ordinances; the sublime doctrine of the Trinity; and the Creed and Lord's Prayer, were only communicated to converts about the time of their baptism. *Christians were absolutely prohibited from revealing this information to catechumens or infidels*; and whenever the early Christian writers speak on such topics (except when controversy compels them to a different course) there is usually some reserve in their manner, some reference to *the peculiar knowledge of the faithful*. . . . This primitive discipline is sufficient to account for the facts that very few allusions to the liturgy or eucharistic service are found in the writings of the Fathers; and that on the more solemn part of consecration, etc., they are almost entirely silent” (Rev. W. Palmer, *Origines Liturgicæ*, 4th ed. i. 14; cp. p. 33). See also the Rev. W. Trollope's edition of the Greek *Liturgy of St. James*, 1848, p. 15: “The Fathers in general, when speaking of the Eucharist, *enter as little as possible into detail*.” Mr. Trollope's explanation—that they feared to expose the mysteries to ribaldry—is clearly inadequate, and contains but a small part of the probable truth. He comes to the conclusion that no liturgy was published till late in the fourth century, when the Church was no longer in fear of its enemies. The just inference is that, when the popularity of the cult made the old secrecy impossible, its ritual was to a large extent shorn of the grosser usages derived from Paganism. If the eucharist ritual all along was just what was set down in the Gospels, why should the early Fathers have kept up any air of mystery?

fall of Paganism, upon the framing of an explanatory Christian tale. And all three theories are so probable, and so much implicated one with the other, that we are not free to reject any. As to what may seem to many readers the most unlikely of all—the eating of the baked image of a child—there is really most evidence. It is an admitted historic fact that in some of the churches, after the abandonment of the practice of eating an actual lamb in the eucharist at Easter, there arose the practice of eating a baked image of a lamb.¹ Without suggesting a similar process of substitution, we may reasonably surmise that the *infans farre contectus* of the Pagan charge² was really a model of a child in dough, after the manner of so many pagan cults in all ages. The more closely we look into Christian myth taken in connection with the distinct records of pre-Christian ritual, the more clear does it become that the accepted notions of the rise of the cult are hopelessly wide of the facts.

First as to the charge of ritual child-eating. On this obscure problem it has to be remembered that others than the Christians were accused of killing children in religious rites. Thus, to say nothing of the Carthaginians and other Semites, Juvenal³ alleges that the Armenian and Syrian haruspices at Rome would sometimes augur from the entrails of a boy; and, “according to Mohammedan accounts, the Harranians in the Middle Ages annually sacrificed an infant, and, boiling down its flesh, baked it into cakes, of which only freeborn men were allowed to partake.”⁴ Here, too, of course, there is room for doubt, as there is again in regard to the statement of Procopius⁵

¹ Hatch, as cited, p. 300.

² Minucius Felix, c. 9.

³ vi. 548–552. As to the sacrificing of boys, see the passage in Horace, *Epod.* v., which evidently preserves trace of an ancient usage.

⁴ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 348, citing the *Fihrist*, and Chwolsohn. Cp. the note of Elmenhorstius in Ouzel's ed. of Minucius Felix (1672, p. 87) as to the ancient eucharistic practice of making bread with the blood of a child, which might or might not die. And see in Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*, ii. 389, the story of how the people of Pergamos, when besieged by the Arabs in 717, took a pregnant girl, cut up the mother and the foetus, boiled them, and so made an unguent for the soldiers' gauntlets.

⁵ *Gothica*, i. 25. Cp. Mahon, *Life of Belisarius*, 2d. ed. p. 262.