

that he there found his own arrival anticipated by some who were acquainted with the Gospel of Matthew, to whom Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached, and had left them the Gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew, which was also preserved until this time. Pantænus, after many praiseworthy deeds, was finally at the head of the Alexandrian school.”¹

The statement of Chrysostom, again, is that “the Syrians, and the Egyptians, and the Indians, and the Persians, and the Ethiopians, and innumerable (*μυρία*) other peoples, were taught, though barbarians, to be philosophers, by his [John’s] teachings translated into their own language.”²

On this latter record Dr. Lorinser comments :—

“It may be argued that the significance of this testimony is weakened by the addition ‘and innumerable other peoples.’ This apprehension, however, disappears when we consider that all the translations here specified by name, with the single exception of the *Indian*, are both heard of otherwise and still in existence. In any case, Chrysostom would not here have explicitly named the Indians if he had not had positive knowledge of an existing translation in their language. Chrysostom died in the year 407 A.C. The Indian translation of which he had knowledge must have existed *at least* a hundred years earlier, for the knowledge of it to reach him in those days. Apparently, however, Pantænus, the teacher of Clemens Alexandrinus, of whom we know that he had himself been in India, had already brought this knowledge to the West. The origin of this translation may thus possibly go back to the first or second century after Christ.”³

The most surprising point about this argument is that Dr. Lorinser seems entirely unaware that the names “India” and “Indians” were normally applied by ancient writers to countries and peoples other than India proper. Yet not only is this general fact notorious,⁴ but it has

¹ *Eccles. Hist.* v. 10 (Bohn trans.).

² Comm. in S. Joann. Hom. ii. (i.) 2, in Cap. i. v. 1. (Migne, *Ser. Gr.* lix. 32).

³ Work cited, pp. 268–9.

⁴ “After the time of Herodotus the name India was applied to all lands in the south-western world, to east Persia and south Arabia, to Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya; in short, to all dark-skinned peoples, who in Homer’s time, as Ethiopians, were allotted the whole horizon (*Lichttrand*) of the South. Virgil and others signify by India just the East; but most commonly it stands for southern Arabia and Ethiopia.” (Von Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*, i. 9–10, citing Virg. *Æn.* viii. 705; *Georg.* ii. 116, 172; Diodor. iii. 31; Lucan, ix. 517; Fabric. *Cod. Apoc. N. T.* p. 669; Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichæisme*, i. 23, 40, 404; ii. 129.) Cp. Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, ii. 12; and Lucan, x. 29. Von Bohlen states that the name India first appears among the Greeks in Æschylus, *Supplic.* 282. There the reference is clearly not to India proper, the words running: “I hear that the wandering Indians ride on pannier packed camels fleet as steeds, in their land bordering on the Ethiopians.”

been made the occasion of much dispute as to what country it was that Pantænus visited, even orthodox opinion finally coming round to the view that it was not India at all. Mosheim wrote that most of the learned had held it to be Eastern India proper—an opinion countenanced by the statement of Jerome that Pantænus was sent *apud Brachmanas*.¹ But the name Brachman was, as he further pointed out, used as loosely by the ancients as that of India; and the evidence of Jerome further varies from that of Eusebius in stating² that the “Indians” had sent delegates to Alexandria asking for a Christian instructor, and that Bishop Demetrius sent Pantænus. That Indian Brahmans should have sent such a deputation is simply inconceivable. Vales, Holstein, and others, accordingly surmised that the mission was to Ethiopia or Abyssinia, which was constantly called India by the ancients. Mosheim, rationally arguing that the Hebrew translation of Matthew must have been used by Jews, decided that the delegates came from a Jewish-Christian colony, which he located in Arabia Felix, because he held that to have been the scene of Bartholomew’s “Indian” labours.³ It matters little which view we take here, so long as we recognize the absurdity of the view that the locality was India. Indeed, even if the “Indies” of Eusebius had meant India, the testimony is on the face of it a mere tradition.

The same arguments, it need hardly be said, dispose of the testimony of Chrysostom, who unquestionably alluded to some of the many peoples of Western Asia or Africa commonly dubbed Indians. If further disproof of Dr. Lorinser’s initial assumption be needed, it lies in the fact that even Tertullian, in his sufficiently sweeping

¹ *Epist.* 83, quoted by Mosheim.

² *Catal. Scriptor. Ecclesiast.* c. 36, cited by Mosheim.

³ *Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians*, Vidal’s trans. ii. 6–8, note (citing Tillemont, *In Vit. Barthol.* in *Mem. Hist. Eccles.* i. 1, 60–1). In the original, pp. 205–7. See also Murdock’s note in his trans. of Mosheim’s *History*, 2 Cent. part i. c. i. § 3. Compare the admissions of Kirchhofer (*Quellensammlung*, 1840, p. 110); and of Gieseler (*Compendium*, i. 79, 121, notes), who thinks Thomas and Bartholomew probably only went to Yemen.

catalogue of the nations that had embraced Christianity—a list which includes Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the people of “Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, and Pamphylia”—the whole Pentecostal series—does not say a word of India;¹ and that Irenæus in his allegation as to the spread of the faith does not do so either.² In any case, neither Chrysostom nor Eusebius, nor yet Jerome, pretends that the “Indians” had a complete translation of the books of the New Testament; and nothing less than a complete translation in an Indian tongue is wanted for Dr. Lorinser’s argument, as we shall see when we examine his “parallel passages.” He admits, in a piquant passage, that it is impossible to say in what dialect the translation was made, whether in one of those spoken by the people or in Sanskrit, then as now only known to the Brahmans. Dr. Lorinser observes that it is all one (*gleichgültig*) to him. No doubt!

§ 3. An argument for the derivation of the teaching in the Bhagavat Gîtâ from the New Testament has the advantage, to begin with, involved in the difficulty of fixing the time of the composition of the Gîtâ from either internal or external evidence. There can be no doubt that, like so many other Hindu writings, it was formerly dated much too early. Ostensibly an episode in the great epic, the Mahâbhârata, it stands out from the rest of that huge poem as a specifically theological treatise, cast in the form of a dialogue which is represented as taking place between Krishna and the warrior Arjuna on the eve of a great battle. I may say at once that I cannot regard it as having been composed at the same time as the portion of the poem in which it is inserted. Mr. K. T. Telang, the able Hindu scholar who has translated it for the “Sacred Books of the East” series,³ and who argues persuasively for its antiquity, confessedly holds “not without diffidence”—indeed, very doubtfully—to the view that it is a genuine “portion of the original Mahâbhârata.”⁴

¹ *Adversus Judæos*, c. 7. ² *Adv. Hæreses*, c. 10. ³ Vol. viii. 1882.

⁴ *Introd.* pp. 2, 5, 6. In the introduction to his earlier translation of the Bhagavat Gîtâ in blank verse (Bombay, 1875), Mr. Telang took up a stronger

Where he is diffident the rest of us, I fear, must be disbelieving. There is much force in Mr. Telang's contention that the Gîtâ belongs to a period before that of the system-makers; indeed, the flat contradiction, to which he alludes,¹ between Krishna's declarations on the one hand that to him "none is hateful, none dear,"² and on the other hand that a whole series of doers of good are "dear" to him³—this even raises a doubt as to the homogeneity of the document. But it is one thing to reckon the Gîtâ ancient, and another to regard it as a portion of the "original Mahâbhârata." It is not easily to be believed that a piece of writing in which Krishna is not only represented as the Supreme Deity, but pantheistically treated, can belong originally to the epic in which he is a heroic demigod. It must surely belong to the period of his Brahmanic supremacy.

Where *that* period begins, however, it is still impossible to say with any approach to precision; and, as Professor Weber remarks, Dr. Lorinser's thesis is thus far unhampered by any effective objections from Hindu chronology. It must, however, stand criticism on its own merits, and we have seen how abjectly it breaks down in respect of the patristic testimony to the existence of an "Indian" mission, and an "Indian" translation of part of the New Testament, in the first Christian centuries. It is morally certain that no such translation existed, even of the Gospels, not to speak of the entire canon, which Dr. Lorinser strangely seems to think is covered by his quotation from Chrysostom. His argument from history being thus annihilated, it remains to be seen whether he succeeds any better in his argument from resemblance. It is not, I think, difficult to show that, even if the Gîtâ were composed within the Christian era, it really owes nothing to Christianity.

position; but even there he declared: "I own I find it quite impossible to satisfy myself that there are more than a very few facts in the history of Sanskrit literature which we are entitled to speak of as 'historically certain'" (p. vii.). The earlier essay, however, contains a very able and complete refutation of Dr. Lorinser's arguments, well worthy the attention of those who are disposed for a further investigation of the subject.

¹ P. 12.

² Gîtâ, ix. 29.

³ *Id.* xii.

The derivation of the Gîtâ's teaching from the Christian Scriptures Dr. Lorinser claims to prove by about one hundred parallel passages, in which Gîtâ sentences are matched by texts selected from nearly all the New Testament books. He divides them into three classes: (1) passages in which, with differences of expression, the sense coincides; (2) passages in which a characteristic expression of the New Testament appears with a different application; and (3) passages in which expression and meaning coincide. The nature of these "coincidences" can be best set forth by a simple selection of about a score of them. I have made this quite impartially, taking the majority consecutively as they happen to stand at the heads of the sections, and picking out the remainder because of their comparative importance. It would be easy to make a selection which would put Dr. Lorinser's case in a much worse light:—

BHAGAVAT GITA.¹

NEW TESTAMENT.

(First Order.)

The deluded man who, restraining the organs of action, continues to think in his mind about objects of sense, is called a hypocrite. iii. 6.

But those who carp at my opinion and do not act upon it, know them to be devoid of discrimination, deluded as regards all knowledge, and ruined. iii. 32.

Every sense has its affections and its aversions towards its objects fixed. One should not become subject to them, for they are one's opponents. iii. 34.

[Arjuna speaks]: Later is your [Krishna's] birth; the birth of the sun is prior. How then shall I understand that you declared (this) first? [Krishna answers]: I have passed through many births, O Arjuna! and you also. I know them all, but you, O terror of your foes, do not know them. iv. 4.

I say unto you that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Matt. v. 28.

A man that is heretical [after a first and second admonition] refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned. Titus iii. 10-11.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof. Romans vi. 12. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, etc. *Id.* viii. 7.

The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? John viii. 57.

I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye [*i.e.*, the Jews] know not whence I came, or whither I go. *Id.* 14.

¹ I have followed throughout the prose translation of Mr. Telang; and I have occasionally given in brackets parts of a passage elided by Dr. Lorinser as not bearing on his point. The context clearly ought to be kept in view.

I am born age after age, for the protection of the good, and for the destruction of evil-doers and the establishment of piety. iv. 8.

He who is ignorant and devoid of faith, and whose self is full of misgivings, is ruined. iv. 40.

To me none is hateful, none dear. ix. 29.

To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. John xviii. 37. The devil sinneth from the beginning. 1 John iii. 8.

He that believeth [and is baptized] shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. Mark xvi. 16.

There is no respect of persons with God. Rom. ii. 11.

(Second Order.)

For should I at any time not engage without sloth in action [men would follow in my path from all sides, O son of Pritha!]. *If I did not perform actions*, these worlds would be destroyed. I should be the cause of caste interminglings. I should be ruining these people. iii. 23-4.

Even those men who *always act on this opinion of mine* full of faith, and *without carping* ["*die lästern nicht*" in Lorinser] are released from all actions. iii. 31.

....me....*the goal* ["*der Weg*" in Lorinser¹] than which there is nothing higher. vii. 18.

My Father *worketh even until now, and I work*. John v. 17. [*As against passage in brackets*]: If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. Matt. xvi. 24.

If a man *keep my word* [he shall never see death]. John viii. 51.

....that the word of God *be not blasphemed*. Titus ii. 5. [*Compare the preceding sentences of the epistle.*]

I am *the way*....No one cometh unto the Father, but by me. John xiv. 6.

(Third Order.)

To the man of knowledge I am dear above all things, and he is dear to me. vii. 17.

I am not manifest to all. vii. 26.

It [*i.e.*, divine knowledge] is to be apprehended directly, and is easy to practise. ix. 2.

He [that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that] loveth me....and I will love him. John xiv. 21.

No man hath seen God at any time. John i. 18.

Whom no man hath seen, nor can see. 1 Tim. vi. 18.

My yoke is easy, and my burden light. Matt. xi. 30.

¹ Dr. John Muir, than whom there is no higher authority in this country, rejected Dr. Lorinser's translation of "way" and anticipates Telang's:—"Here, as in many other passages of the Indian writings, [the word] certainly signifies 'the place reached by going,' 'resort,' 'refuge.'" *Indian Antiquary*, March, 1875 (vol. iv.), p. 80. To the same effect, Professor Tiele, in *Theolog. Tijdschr.* 1877, p. 75 n.

I am [the father of this universe, the mother, the creator, the grand-sire, the thing to be known, the means of sanctification, the syllable Om (= past, present, and future), the *Rik*, Saman, and Yajus also] *the goal* [the sustainer, the lord, the supervisor, the residence, the asylum, the friend], the source and that in which it merges [the support, the receptacle, and the inexhaustible seed]. I cause heat, and I send forth and stop showers. [I am immortality, and also death; and I, O Arjuna! am that which is and that which is not.] ix. 18, 19.

[That devotee who worships me abiding in all beings, holding that all is one], lives in me, however he may be living. vi. 30.

But those who worship me with devotion (dwell) in me, and I too in them. ix. 29.¹

I am the origin of all, and all moves on through me. x. 8.

I am the beginning, and the middle and the end also of all beings. x. 20.

I am the way [and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by me]. John xiv. 6.

I am the first and the last [and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades]. Rev. i. 17-18.

He maketh his sun to rise [on the evil and the good], and *sendeth rain* [on the just and the unjust]. Matt. v. 45.

[As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so] he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me. John vi. 57.

I in them, and they in me [that they may be perfected into one]. John xvii. 23.

For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. Rom. xi. 36.

I am the first and the last.² Rev. i. 17.

The first comment that must occur to every instructed reader on perusing these and the other "parallels" advanced by Dr. Lorinser is that on the one hand the parallels are very frequently such as could be made by the dozen between bodies of literature which have unquestionably never been brought in contact, so strained and

¹ As to the passage, "They who devoutly worship me are in me, and I in them," Dr. Muir writes: "In the Rig Veda some passages occur which in part convey the same or a similar idea. Thus in ii. 11, 12, it is said: 'O Indra, we sages have been in thee'; and in x. 142, 1: 'This worshipper, O Agni, hath been in thee: O son of strength, he hath no other kinship'; and in viii. 47, 8: 'We, O Gods, are in you as if fighting in coats of mail. . . . And in viii. 81, 32, the worshipper says to Indra, 'thou art ours, and we thine.'" (*Ind. Ant.* as cited, p. 80.)

² Dr. Lorinser also brackets the Christian "I am the Alpha and the Omega" with the Gîtâ's "I am A among the letters" (x. 33). But Mr. Telang points out (B. G. trans. in verse, *Introd.* p. lv.) that the Indian writer merely takes A as the principal letter. Note that the Deity is already "the first and the last" in Isaiah (so-called):—xli. 4; xliii. 10; xlvi. 12. Why should not the Brahmans have studied the prophets?

far-fetched are they; and that on the other they are discounted by quite as striking parallels between New Testament texts and pre-Christian pagan writings. Take a few of the more notable of these latter parallels, in the order in which the New Testament passages occur above:—

He who means to do an injury has already done it. SENECA, *De Irâ*, i. 3.

Though you may take care of her body, the [coerced wife's] mind is adulterous, nor can she be preserved, unless she is willing. OVID, *Amor.* iii. 4, 5.

Not only is he who does evil bad, but also he who thinks to do evil. ÆLIAN, *Var. Hist.* xiv. 28.

In every man there are two parts: the better and superior part, which rules, and the worse and inferior part, which serves, and the ruler is always to be preferred to the servant. PLATO, *Laws*, B. v. (Jowett's tr. v. 298).

[In B. iv. of the *Laws* (Jowett, v. 288–9) is a long sentence declaring that the contemner of right conduct is “deserted by God” and in the end “is utterly destroyed, and his family and city with him.”]

The unruly passions of anger and desire are contrary and inimical to the reason. CICERO, *Tusculan Questions*, iv. 5.

I [Cyrus] am persuaded I am born by divine providence to undertake this work. HERODOTUS, i. 126.

The Muses . . . whom Mnemosyne . . . bare, to be a means of oblivion of ills, and a rest from cares. HESIOD, *Theogony*, 52–5.

The Gods look with just eyes on mortals. OVID, *Metamorph.* xiii. 70.

God is verily the saviour of all, and the producer of things in whatever way they happen in the world. PSEUD-ARISTOTLE, *De Mundo*, 6.

Zeus, cause of all, doer of all . . . What can be done by mortals without Zeus? ÆSCHYLUS, *Agam.* 1461–5 (1484–8).

All things are full of Jove: he cherishes the earth; my songs are his care. VIRGIL, *Eclogues*, iii. 60.

The temperate man is the friend of God, for he is like to him. PLATO, *Laws*, B. iv. (Jowett's tr. v. 289).

Not to every one doth Apollo manifest himself, but only to the good. CALLIMACHUS, *Hymn to Apollo*, 9.

It is enough for God that he be worshipped and loved. SENECA, *Epist.* xlvii. 18. Cp. xcv. 50.

God, seeing all things, himself unseen. PHILEMON, *Frag.*

God, holding in his hand the beginning, middle, and end, of all that is. PLATO, *Laws*, B. iv. (Jowett, v. 288.)

Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be. *Ancient Song*, in PAUSANIAS, x. 12.

God comes to men: nay, what is closer, he comes into them. SENECA, *Epist.* 73.

God is within you. EPICETUS, *Dissert.* i. 14, 14.

Pythagoras thought that there was a soul mingling with and pervading all things. CICERO, *De Natura Deorum*, i. 11.

Such parallels as these, I repeat, could be multiplied to

any extent from the Greek and Latin classics alone; while the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" furnishes many more. But is it worth while to heap up the disproof of a thesis so manifestly idle? It is difficult to understand how a scholar, knowing the facts, can hope to prove such a proposition by such evidence; much more how he can bring himself to believe in his own case. More than half the resemblances are such as could be manufactured by the dozen between any two books dealing with similar questions. On Dr. Lorinser's principle, Jesus and his followers were indebted to pagans for very much of their ethical teaching—as indeed they were unquestionably indebted for a good many of their theological ideas, not to speak of the narrative myths. But surely a small endowment of common sense, to say nothing of scholarship, suffices to make it clear that certain commonplaces of ethics as well as of theology are equally inevitable conclusions in all religious systems that rise above savagery.¹ Four hundred years before Jesus, Plato² declared that it was very difficult for the rich to be good: does anyone believe that Jesus or any other Jew needed Plato's help to reach the same notion? Nay, does anyone even doubt that such a close coincidence as the comparison of the human soul to a team of horses in the Katha Upanishad and Plato's *Phaedrus*, pointed out to Dr. Lorinser by Professor Windisch,³ might not be quite independent of borrowing?

If all this were not clear enough *a priori*, it is sufficiently

¹ In Dr. John Muir's valuable little pamphlet, *Religious and Moral Sentiments freely translated from Indian Writers* (published in Thomas Scott's series), will be found a number of extracts from the Mahâbhârata and other Sanskrit works, which, on the Christian theory, must have been borrowed from the Gospels. Thus in the epic (v. 1270) we have: "The Gods regard with delight the man who . . . when struck does not strike again." If this be Christian (it is at least as old as Plato: see the *Gorgias*) whence came this: "The good, when they promote the welfare of others, expect no reciprocity"? (iii. 16796). It is plainly as native to the Indian poet as is the "Golden Rule," thus stated: "Let no man do to another that which would be repugnant to himself; this is the sum of righteousness; the rest is according to inclination." But most Christians are kept carefully in ignorance of the fact that the "Golden Rule" is common to all literatures, and was an ancient saw in China before Jesus was born.

² *Laws*, v.

³ Cited by Dr. Muir in *Ind. Ant.* as last cited, p. 78.

obvious from the context of most of the passages quoted from the Gîtâ, as well as from the general drift of its exposition, that the Hindu system is immeasurably removed from the Christian in its whole theosophical inspiration. We are asked to believe that Brahmans expounding a highly developed pantheism went assiduously to the (unattainable) New Testament for the wording of a number of their propositions, pantheistic and other, while assimilating absolutely nothing of distinctively Christian doctrine; choosing to borrow from the Christians their expressions of doctrines which had been in the world for centuries, including some which lay at the root of Buddhism—as that of the religious yoke being easy—though utterly rejecting the Christian doctrine of atonement and blood sacrifice and the Christian claim as a whole. Such a position is possible only to a mesmerised believer.¹ Even were Brahmanic India in doctrinal communication with Christendom at the time in question, which we have seen it was not, it lies on the face of the case that the Brahmanic theosophy was already elaborated out of all comparison with the Christian. It had reached systematic (even if inconsistent) pantheism while Christianity was but vaguely absorbent of the pantheism around it. The law of religious development in this regard is simple. A crude and *naïf* system, like the Christism of the second Gospel and the earlier form of the first, borrows inevitably from the more highly evolved systems with which it comes socially in contact, absorbing myth and mystery and dogma till it becomes as sophisticated as they. It then becomes capable in turn of dominating primitive systems, as Christianity supplanted those of northern Europe. But not even at the height of its influence, much less in the second century, was Christianity capable of dominating Hindu Brahmanism, with its ingrained pantheism, and its mass of myth and ritual, sanctioned

¹ It appears from Dr. Lorinser's notes (p. 82) that he thinks the author of the Gîtâ may have profited by a study of the Christian fathers, as Clemens Alexandrinus and Athenagoras. He further implies that the Hindu had read the book of *Wisdom* in the Septuagint!

in whole or in part by rote-learnt lore of the most venerable antiquity. Be the Gîtâ pre-Christian or post-Christian, it is unmingledly Hindu.

§ 4. When it is thus seen that all the arguments to prove imitation of the Gospels in the Bhagavat Gîtâ are baseless, it is hardly necessary to deal at any length with Professor Weber's favourite general argument as to the necessary derivation of the doctrines of *bhakti* and *sraddhâ* from Christianity. The very proposition betrays some of the "judicial blindness" laboured under by Dr. Lorinser. It has never occurred to either theorist to ask how the doctrine of salvation by faith came to be developed in Christism, or whether the same religious tendencies could not give rise to the same phenomenon in similar social conditions elsewhere. I cannot burden this already over-lengthy treatise with an examination of the development of the Christian doctrine of faith from the Judaic germs. It must suffice to say that the principle is already clearly indicated in the prophets;¹ that faith in divine protection is expressed in the early documents of other Eastern systems; and that the tendency to believe in the all-sufficiency of devotion, and the needlessness of personal merit, is noted by Plato (to name no other), and is in some degree really an inevitable phase of all systems at some stages. It found special development under Christism in a decaying society, in which the spirit of subjection had eaten away the better part of all self-reliance; and just such a state of things can be seen to have existed in many parts of India from the earliest historic times. It would be small credit to Christianity if it *were* responsible for the introduction into India of a doctrine so profoundly immoral in principle, so demoralizing in practice; but, as it happens, the historic facts discountenance the hypothesis. For though we cannot trace all the stages by which the doctrine of faith reached its full development, we do know that the germs of it lie in the Veda. Take first the testimony of Dr. John Muir:—

¹ Micah iii. 11; Isa. xxvi. 3; l. 7-10; Jer. vii. 14; Nahum i. 7; Zeph. iii. 12; Psalms, *passim*.

“Dr. Lorinser considers (p. 56) that two Sanskrit words denoting faithful and reverential religious devotion (*sraddhâ* and *bhakti*), which often occur in the Bhagavad Gîtâ, do not convey original Indian conceptions, but are borrowed from Christianity. This may or may not be true of *bhakti*; but *sraddhâ* (together with its cognates, participial and verbal) is found even in the hymns of the Rig Veda in the sense of belief in the existence and action of a deity, at least, if not also of devotion to his service. In pp. 103 ff. of the fifth volume of my *Original Sanskrit Texts* a number of passages are cited and translated in which the word occurs, together with a great variety of other expressions in which the worshipper's trust in, and affectionate regard for, the God Indra are indicated. He is called a friend and brother; his friendship and guidance are said to be sweet; he is spoken of as a father and the most fatherly of fathers, and as being both a father and a mother; he is the helper of the poor, and has a love for mortals.”¹

These remarks are endorsed by Mr. Telang, who cites other Vedic passages;² and again by Professor Tiele:—

“The opinion that not only did Christian legends find an entry among the Indian sects of later times, but that even peculiarly Christian ideas exercised an influence on their dogmatics or philosophy, that is to say, that the Hindus acquired from the Christians their high veneration for piety or devotion, *bhakti*, and faith, *sraddhâ*—as is contended by Weber (*Indische Studien*, 1850; i. 423), and after him by Nève (*Des Eléments Etrangers du Mythe et du Culte de Krichna*, Paris, 1876, p. 35)—seems to me unjustified. Already in the Rig Veda there is frequent mention of faith (*sraddhâ*) in the same sense as is given to that word later; and although we cannot speak actually of *bhakti*, which there as yet only means ‘division’ or ‘apportionment,’ yet this has already in very old sources the sense of ‘consecration’ (*toewijding*), ‘fidelity’ (*trouw*), ‘love resting on belief’ (*op geloof rustende liefde*).”³

Take, finally, the verdict of Professor Max Müller—in this connection certainly weighty. Noting that the *principle* of love and intimacy with the Gods is found in the very earliest portions of the Rig-Veda, he cites from the Svetâsoatara Upanishad⁴ a pantheistic passage which concludes:—

“If these truths have been told to a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion (*bhakti*) for God, and as for God so for his Guru, then they will shine forth, then they will shine forth indeed.”

¹ *Indian Antiquary*, iv. 81. Also in Dr. Muir's pamphlet *Religious and Moral Sentiments*, as cited, p. vi.

² Trans. of B. G. in verse, introd. p. lxxxii.

³ Art. *Christus en Krishna*, in *Theologische Tijdschrift*, 1877, p. 66.

⁴ Müller's trans. in *Sacred Books of the East*, xv. 260.

He adds :—

“Here then we have in the Upanishads the idea of *bhakti* or devotion clearly pronounced; and as no one has yet ventured to put the date of the Svetâsoatara Upanishad later than the beginning of our era, it is clearly impossible to admit here the idea of an early Christian influence.”¹

Further, the Professor observes that, “even if chronologically Christian influences were possible” at the date of the Gîtâ, “there is no necessity for admitting them.” “It is strange that these scholars should not see that what is natural in one country is natural in another also.”²

For the rest, we have already seen that the idea of the God entering into his worshippers existed in the Veda (as it notoriously did among the ancient Greeks), though that too was held by Dr. Lorinser to be of Christian derivation; and the one rebuttal reinforces the other. We have also seen how completely Professor Weber was mistaken as to the opinion of Wilson. It only remains to say that in the rejection of Weber’s own theory we are fully countenanced by M. Barth;³ and that Dr. Lorinser’s special proposition is scouted by M. Senart.⁴

XX. THE “WHITE ISLAND.”

There is, I think, only one more proposition as to the influence of Christianity on Krishnaism that calls for our attention; and that can be soon disposed of. Among the infirm theses so long cherished by Professor Weber, not the least paternally favoured is his interpretation of a certain mythic tale in the Mahâbhârata,⁵ to the effect that once upon a time Nârada, and before him other mythic personages, had visited the Svetadvîpa, or “White Island,” beyond the “Sea of Milk”; had there found a race of perfect men, who worshipped the One God; and had there received the knowledge of that God from a supernatural

¹ *Natural Religion*, p. 99.

² *Id.* p. 97.

³ *Religions of India*, pp. 218–220, 223.

⁴ *Essai*, pp. 342–3, n.

⁵ xii. 12702, ff.

voice. This, the only record that can be pretended to look like a Hindu mention of the importation of Christianity, is fastened upon by Weber and others as a piece of genuine history; and the "White Island" (which might also mean the "island of the white ones") is assumed to be Alexandria, for no other reason than that Alexandria seems the likeliest place whence the knowledge of Christianity could come.¹ Lassen, who followed Weber in assuming that the legend was a historic testimony, surmised on the other hand that Svetadvîpa would be Parthia, "because the tradition that the Apostle Thomas preached the gospel in that country is an old one." On the other hand, however, he thought it just possible that there had been an apostolic mission to India, though he admitted that it was not without weighty reasons that many ecclesiastical historians held the "India" of Bartholomew and Pantænus to be Yemen. We are thus left to believe, if we choose, that Christianity was very early imported by Christians into India, and yet that Brahmans went elsewhere to learn it: so loosely can a great scholar speculate. It is worth noting only as a further sample of the same laxity that Lassen thought the hypothesis about Svetadvîpa was put on firm ground (*eines festen Grundes*) by citing the fact that in the late Kûrma Purâna there is a legend about Siva appearing in the beginning of the Kali Yuga or Evil Age to teach the "Yoga" system on the Himalayas, and having four scholars, "White," "White horse," "White hair," and "White blood." In the Mahâbhârata legend the Yoga is represented as the source of the true knowledge; hence it follows that both stories refer to the same thing, which is Christianity!²

It will readily be believed that these assumptions find small favour with later investigators. Telang in India,

¹ Weber, *Ueber die Krishnajanmâshtamî*, pp. 318-321; *Indische Studien*, i. 400; *Indische Streifen*, ii. 21. Lorinser, as cited. Weber's view is shared by the French Catholic scholar, Nève, who says "It is even certain, at least highly probable, that the White Island... is Alexandria" (*Des Eléments Etrangers du Mythe et du Culte de Krichna*, Paris, 1876, p. 24, quoted by Tiele, *Theolog. Tijdschr.* as cited, p. 70). I have not been able to meet with M. Nève's book, which is not in the British Museum. It does not appear, however, to have added anything to the German arguments.

² *Indische Alterthumskunde*, ii. (1849), 1099-1101.

Tiele in Holland, Senart and Barth in France, all reject them. Mr. Telang's criticism is especially destructive:—

“I cannot see the flimsiest possible ground for identifying the Svetadvîp of the legend with Alexandria, or Asia Minor, or the British Isles [this has been done by Colonel Wilford, *Asiatic Researches*, xi.], or any other country or region in this world. The Dvîp is in the first place stated to lie to the north of the Kshîrasamudra; and to the northwest of Mount Meru, and above it by thirty-two thousand yojans. I should like to know what geography has any notion of the quarter of this earth where we are to look for the Sea of Milk and the Mount of Gold. Consider next the description of the wonderful people inhabiting this wonderful Dvîp. [Sanskrit quoted.] It will be news to the world that there were in Alexandria or elsewhere a whole people without any organs of sense, who ate nothing, and who entered the sun, whatever that may mean! Remember, too, that the instruction which Nârada receives in this wonderful land is not received from its inhabitants, but from Bhagavân, from God himself. Nor let it be forgotten that the doctrines which the deity there announces to Nârada cannot be shown to have any connection with Christianity. On the contrary, I think that it must be at once admitted that the whole of the prelection addressed to Nârada bears on its face its essentially Indian character, in the reference to the three qualities, to the twenty-five primal principles, to the description of final emancipation as absorption or entrance into the Divinity, and various other matters of the like character. Against all this what have we to consider? Why, nothing more than the description of the inhabitants as white, and as *ekânta*, which, Professor Weber thinks, means monotheists (*Sed quære*). It appears to me that the story is a mere work of the imagination.”¹

The details as to the supernatural character of the inhabitants of the White Island, be it observed, are ignored by both Weber and Lassen, who pursue the Evemeristic method. Professor Tiele emphatically endorses Telang:—

“With all respect for such men as Lassen and Weber, I can hardly conceive of such a species of historical criticism.

¹ *Bhagavat Gita trans. into Eng. blank verse*. Introd. pp. xxxiv.-v.

All the places and persons in the legend are purely mythological: Nârada can as little as his predecessors be reckoned a historical personage." [Quotes Telang.] "We are here in sheer mythology. Svetadvîpa is a land of fable, a paradise, a dwelling of the sun, such as we meet with in so many religious systems; and the white inhabitants, exalted above personal needs, are spirits of light. Nârada receives there a monotheistic revelation, not from the inhabitants, but from the supreme deity himself; but one only needs to glance at the words in which it is conveyed to perceive its Indian character. And whencesoever the poet may have derived this monotheism, at least the legend says nothing as to its being derived from Alexandria or any other religious centre."¹

Equally explicit is the decision of M. Senart:—

"It is certain that all the constituent elements of this story are either clearly mythological or, in the speculative parts, of very ancient origin: both belong to India, apart from any Christian influence. It is another matter to inquire if the use made of the materials, the manner of their application (the Kâtha Upanishad, i. sq. shows us, for instance, Nasiketas going to the world of Yama to seek philosophical instruction) betrays a Western influence, and preserves a vague memory of borrowings made from Christian doctrines. The question cannot be definitively handled save on positive dates, which we do not possess: inductions are extremely perilous. It has been sought to show (Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, iv., 248, ff.) that the Pandavas were the founders of the cult of Vishnu-Krishna. Who would venture to see in these 'white heroes,' whom Lassen holds on the other hand to be new comers from the West (*Ind. Alt.* i. 800, ff.), the representatives of a Christian influence on the religious ideas of India?"²

And M. Barth in turn, even while admitting that Brahmans may have early "visited the Churches of the East," and that there were probably Christian Churches in India "before the redaction of the Mahâbhârata was quite finished," regards the Svetadvîpa legend as a "purely fanciful relation."³

It is needless, for the rest, to go into the question of the

¹ *Theolog. Tijdschr.* art. cited, p. 70.
Relig. of India, p. 221.

² *Essai*, p. 342, n.

manner of the "introduction" of the monotheistic idea into India, or into the point raised by Professor Weber¹ as to the commemoration of the Milk Sea and the White Island, and the veneration of Nârada, in the Krishnaite ritual. The latter circumstance plainly proves nothing whatever for his case, though he professes to be placed beyond doubt by it; and the idea that Brahmans could derive the idea of monotheism from the Christians of Alexandria, after Athanasius, is on its merits nothing short of grotesque. It is strange that a disinterested scholar can be led by orthodox habit to see an exemplary monotheism in the Christian Trinity; and hardly less strange that he should not recognize how naturally the monotheistic idea tends to be evolved in all religious systems. In other connexions, moreover, Professor Weber assumes the Hindus to have been influenced by Greek thought at and after the conquest of Alexander: why then should they not have had the idea from Greek philosophy—not to speak of Persia or Egypt—before the Christian era? Even Lassen, while holding the Christian theory of Svetadvîpa, held that no practical influence on Indian religion could justly be attributed to the Christian missionaries in the early centuries, and rejects the view that the Hindus derived monotheism from Christianity.²

XXI. THE CRUCIFIXION MYTH.

While the Christian claim seems thus to collapse at all points, there incidentally arises, out of an equally mistaken countervailing claim, a problem of which I cannot pretend to offer a solution, but which calls for mention here. A strenuous freethinker of the early part of this century, Godfrey Higgins—a scholar whose energy and learning too often missed their right fruition just because his work was

¹ *Ueber die K.* as last cited.

² *Indische Alterthumskunde*, ii. 1102-3-5-9.

a desperate revolt against a whole world of pious obscurantism—unwittingly put rationalists on a false scent by adopting the view that Krishna had in an ancient legend been crucified, and that it was the missionaries who had contrived to withhold the fact from general European knowledge.¹ His assumption rested mainly on an oversight of the archæologist Moor,² who in collecting Hindu God-images had a Christian crucifix presented to him as a native “Wittoba”—a late minor Avatar commonly represented as pierced in one foot. Krishna is indeed represented in the Purânic legend as being slain by an arrow³ which pierced his foot, here comparing curiously with the solar Achilles of Hellenic mythology; but he is not crucified; and Moor later admitted that the figure in question was Christian. It is not at all certain, however, that a crucifixion myth did not anciently flourish in Asia, as we know one did in pre-Christian Mexico. The later missionaries no doubt have suppressed what they conveniently could; and it is far from certain that we yet know all the relevant modern facts. As long ago as 1626, the Portuguese Jesuit Andrade, in his letters from Tibet to the General of his Order, testifies to the existence of a crucifixion myth in that country. They believe, he tells, in the triune God, but give him absurdly wrong names; and

“They agree with us in saying that Christ” [*i.e.*, their Second Person, known as “the great book”] “died for the saving of the human race; but they do not know the manner of his death, knowing little or nothing of the holy cross, holding only that he died shedding his blood, which flowed from his veins on account of the nails with which he was put to death. It is very true that in their book the cross is represented, with a triangle in the middle, and certain mystic letters which they cannot explain.”

Andrade further testifies that there were three or four goldsmiths of the King of Tibet, natives of other countries, to whom he gave money to make a cross; and they told him

¹ *Anacalypsis*, 1836, i. 144–6 (ch. ii.).

² *Hindu Pantheon*, pp. 416–20, and pl. 98.

³ In the Mahâbhârata and the Vishnu Purâna the slayer is the hunter Jara (= “old age,” “decay”). In the Bhagavat Purâna the slayer is the forester Bhil. In both cases, the slaying is unintentional but predestined.

that in their country, two months' journey off, there were many such crosses as his, some of wood, others of metals. These were usually in the churches, but on five days in the year they were put on the public roads, when all the people worshipped them, strewing flowers and lighting lamps before them; "which crosses in their language they call Iandar."¹

This evidence is remarkably corroborated in 1772 by the Jesuit Giorgi, who, in the very act of maintaining that all Krishnaism was a perversion of Christianity, declares on his own knowledge of Tibet that in Nepal it was customary in the month of August to raise in honour of the God Indra *cruces amictas abrotono*, crosses wreathed with abrotonus, and to represent him as crucified, and bearing the sign *Telech* on forehead, hands, and feet. He appends two wood cuts. One is a very singular representation of a crucifix, in which the cross seems wholly covered with leaves, and only the head, hands, and feet of the crucified one appear, the hands and feet as if pierced with nails, the forehead bearing a mark. In the other, only the upper part of the deity's body is seen, with the arms extended, the hands pierced, the forehead marked, but without any cross.² Godfrey Higgins reproduced and commented on those pictures, but I find no discussion of the matter in recent writers, though it appears that the Nepalese usage in question still flourishes. Dr. H. A. Oldfield states that in the Indra festival in August-September at the present time "figures of Indra, *with outstretched arms*, are erected all about the city"³—*i.e.*, Kathmandu—but he gives no further details. Professor Weber would seem to have entirely overlooked the matter, since he makes no allusion to it. The *prima facie* inference is that we have here a really ancient and extra-Brahmanical development of the Indra cult; since it is hard to conceive how any Christian

¹ *Histoire de ce qui c'est passé au Royaume du Tibet*, trad. d'Italien en François, Paris, 1629, pp. 45-6, 49-50, 51. Cp. p. 84. Andrade will be found cited by M. V. La Croze, *Hist. du Christ. des Indes*, La Haye, 1724, p. 514. La Croze has a theory of Nestorian influences.

² *Alphabetum Thibetanum*, Romae, 1772, p. 203.

³ *Sketches from Nepal*, 1880, ii. 314.

suggestion should be grafted on that worship in particular, at a time when it had been generally superseded by the cult of Krishna. And there is no suggestion that any Christian doctrine connects with the usage described. When we note that the Persian Sun-God Mithra is imaged in the Zendavesta "with arms stretched out towards immortality,"¹ and that the old Persian symbols seem to explain this by a figure of the sun or the God with outstretched wings, it is seen to be perfectly possible that not merely the cross-symbol, which is universal, but a crucifixion myth, should have flourished in ancient India.

This, however, goes for nothing as regards Krishnaism, though Krishna was the supplanter of Indra. The only suggestions of the cross in Krishnaism apart from its appearance in late sculpture or pictorial art are in the curious legend² that the God was buried at the meeting point of three rivers—which would form a cross—and in the story of Yasoda binding the child Krishna to a tree, or to two trees. The trees opened, and there appeared two Brahmans—a tale which the indignant Giorgi held to be a perversion of the crucifixion of Christ between two thieves.³ The story given by Wilford⁴ of the holy Brahman Mandâvya, who was crucified among thieves in the Deccan, and afterwards named Sulastha, or "cross-borne," is stated by the narrator to be told at great length in the "Sayadrichandra, a section of the Scanda Purâna," and to be given briefly in the Mahâbhârata and alluded to in the Bhagavat Purâna "and its commentary"; but as the matter is never mentioned by Weber or other later Sanskritists it must be, I presume, one of the frauds practised on Wilford by his pandits.⁵ The Christian crucifixion story

¹ *Mihr Yasht*, 31.

² Balfour's *Ind. Cycl.* art. *Krishna*.

³ *Alphab. Thib.* p. 253. Giorgi held that the detail of Krishna's commending the care of his 1,600 wives to Arjuna was a fiction based on the records of the multitude of women who followed Christ from Galilee! (p. 259).

⁴ *Asiatic Researches*, x. 69.

⁵ On this see Professor Max Müller's article "On False Analogies in Comparative Theology," in the *Contemporary Review* of April, 1870, reprinted with his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 1st ed. 1873. I am not aware that there has been any detailed discrimination of the genuine and the spurious in Wilford's compilations.

falls to be studied in other lights, one of which is indicated above.

It may be that I have in my turn overstrained the possibilities of Christian indebtedness to Krishnaism as regards some minor myth motives; but at least I have in no way staked the argument on such suppositions. I have not even founded on the decision of Wilson (who is so often cited to other purpose by Professor Weber) to the effect that Gnostic Christian doctrines were borrowed from Hinduism in the second century.¹ That there was then "an active communication between India and the Red Sea" is indeed certain; and it is arguable that Christism borrowed from Buddhism; but the testimony of Epiphanius,² on which Wilson founds, is clearly worthless, were it only because he uses the term "India" at random, like so many other ancient writers. It is impossible to say what is the force of the reference of Juvenal³ to the "hired Indian, skilled as to the earth and the stars"; and though there is no great reason to doubt that India was visited by Apollonius of Tyana, and no uncertainty, for instance, as to the embassies sent by Porus to Augustus, and by the king of "Taprobane" to Claudius,⁴ it is one thing to be convinced of the communication, and another to know what were the results. I have made no attempt to build on the fact that the Christians made a sacred place of the Egyptian Matarea,⁵ which certainly suggests knowledge of Mathura. I simply insist on the proved error of the main Christian assumptions, on the utter illegitimacy of the others, and on the reasonable contrary hypothesis in certain cases.

In so far as I may have gone astray, I know I lay myself open to that kind of criticism which is bestowed on the mistakes of rationalism by writers whose customary frame of mind on religious matters is the negation of

¹ Trans. of *Vishnu Purâna*, Introd. p. viii.

² *Adversus Manichæos*, i. (*Hæreses*, xlvi. sive lxvi.).

³ *Sat.* vi. 585.

⁴ Strabo, xv. 1, 74; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vi. 24 (22). It is worth noting that Pliny in this chapter says of the people of Taprobane (doubtless Ceylon) that "Hercules is the deity they worship." This confirms our previous argument as to the antiquity of the hero-God worships.

⁵ 1 *Infancy*, viii.

reason. The believer lives for his own part in a thought-world of lawless credulity; but if the unbeliever should in his research deviate even unimportantly from strict historical or verbal accuracy, he is impeached on the instant as an ignoramus, or worse. And when he errs grossly, like the unfortunate M. Jacolliot, who, ill-fitted for exact study in any case, seems to have fared worse than Wilford at the hands of Hindu Shapiras, his religious critics point to his miscarriage as a sample of rationalist research in general. Jacolliot's *La Bible dans l'Inde*, which has misled freethinkers inexperienced in Indian matters, was contemptuously dismissed at the start by such critics as Professor Tiele and M. Senart, who are both "sceptics"; but the Rev. Dr. Ellinwood of New York, who seems to get his whole knowledge on the subject from the review article of Professor Max Müller, discusses Jacolliot's extravagances, with the candour of his profession, in a magazine paper under the heading of "The Credulity of Scepticism."¹ Jacolliot's follies are held to put in countenance the myths of Christianity. Leaving such criticism to play its part, I submit the present research to the good faith of serious readers.

XXII.—SUMMARY.

It may be convenient to sum up concisely the results, positive and negative, of the foregoing investigation. They may be roughly classed under these two heads. On the one hand,

1. The cult of Krishna is proved by documentary evidence to have flourished in India before the Christian era, though it has developed somewhat and gained much ground since.

2. In its pre-Christian form it presumptively, if not certainly, contained some of the myth elements which have been claimed as borrowings from Christianity—such as the

¹ *Missionary Review of the World*, New York, Feb. 1890.

myth of Kansa; and that myth was probably made the subject of dramatic representations.

3. Other leading elements in the myth—such as the upbringing of the God among herdsmen and herdswomen—are found long before Christianity in the solar legend which attached to Cyrus; while this myth and the story of the God's birth are found strikingly paralleled in the pre-Christian mythology of Greece and Egypt. There is thus an overwhelming presumption in favour of the view that these myth elements were Hindu property long before our era.

4. The fact that Krishna is in the Vedas a dæmon is rightly to be taken as a proof of the antiquity of his cult. Its mythology points clearly to an extra-Brahmanic origin, though it includes myth-motives which closely coincide with Vedic myth-motives, notably those connected with Agni. The attribute of blackness in a beloved deity, too, is a mark of ancient derivation, remarkably paralleled in the case of the Egyptian Osiris, to whom also was attributed a dæmonic origin. The same attribute is bound up with the conception of the God as a "hiding one," which is common to the oldest mythologies.

5. Ritual is far more often the basis of myth than the converse; and the Krishnaite Birth-ritual in itself raises a presumption in favour of the antiquity of the cult.

6. The leading elements in the Krishna myth are inexplicable save on the view that the cultus is ancient. If it were of late and Brahmanic origin, it could not conceivably have taken in the legend of the upbringing among herdsmen.

7. The ethical teaching bound up with Krishnaism in the Bhagavat Gîtâ is a development on distinctly Hindu lines of Vedic ideas, and is no more derived from the New Testament than it is from the literature of Greece and Rome.

8. The close coincidences in the legends of Krishna and Buddha are to be explained in terms of borrowing by the latter from the former, and not *vice versa*.

In fine, we are led to the constructive position that Krishna is an ancient extra-Brahmanic Indian deity,

in his earliest phase apparently non-Aryan, who was worshipped by Aryan-speakers long before our era, and, either before or after his adoption by the Brahmans, or more probably in both stages, was connected with myths which are enshrined in the Vedas. He acquired some of the leading qualities of Agni, and supplanted Indra, whose ancient prestige he acquired. All which positively-ascertained facts and fully-justified conclusions are in violent conflict with the hypothesis that Krishnaism borrowed mythological and theological matter from Christism.

On the other hand,

1. Such phenomena as the Birth-Festival ritual and the pictorial representation of the babe Krishna as suckled by his mother cannot reasonably be held to be borrowed from the Christians, any more than the myths positively proved to be pre-Christian. On the contrary, since the Christian Virgin-myth and Virgin-and-Child worship are certainly of Pagan origin, and of comparatively late Christian acceptance, and since the Virgin-myth was associated with Buddhism even for Westerns in the time of Jerome, the adoration of a Suckling-God is to be presumed pre-Christian in India (which had a Babe-God in Agni in the Veda); and it becomes conceivable that certain parts of the Christian Birth-legend are directly or indirectly derived from Krishnaism. It is an extravagance to suppose the converse.

2. It is equally extravagant to suppose that such a usage as the Krishnaite "name-giving" was borrowed from the short-lived usage of the Church of Alexandria in the matter of combining the Nativity and Epiphany. A similar usage prevailed in the pre-Christian cult of Hercules, and was presumably widespread.

3. Nor can we without defying all probability suppose that such motives as the "ox-and-ass," the "manger," the "tax-paying," and the "Christophoros," were borrowed by the Hindus from Christianity, which itself unquestionably borrowed the first two and the last from Paganism. The fair surmise is rather that the third was borrowed from India; and the necessary assumption, in the present state of our knowledge, is that the others also were ancient in

India, whether or not any of them thence reached Christism in its absorbent stage. It is further possible that the introduction of shepherds into the Christian Birth-legend in the late third Gospel was suggested by knowledge of the Krishna legend. The converse hypothesis has been shown to be preposterous.

4. The myth of the massacre of the innocents is the more to be regarded as pre-Christian in India because it connects naturally with the motive of the attempted slaying of the God-child, and is already found in Semitic mythology in the story of Moses, which is minutely paralleled in one particular in the Egyptian myth of the concealment of Horus in the floating island,¹ and related in others to the universal myth of the attempted slaying of the divine child. The natural presumption is that the Hindu massacre of the innocents is as old as the Kansa myth: the onus of disproof lies with those who allege borrowing from the Gospels.

5. The resemblances between certain Krishnaite and Christian miracles, in the same way, cannot be set down to Hindu borrowing from Christism when so many of the parallel myths² are certainly not so borrowed, and so many more presumably in the same case. For the rest, some of the parallels alleged on the Christian side are absurdly far-fetched, and bracketed with etymological arguments which are beneath serious notice.

6. The lateness of the Purânic stories in literary form is no argument against their antiquity. Scholars are agreed that late documents often preserve extremely old myth-material.³

Christianity so-called, in short, we know to be wholly manufactured within historic times: Krishnaism we have seen to have had a pre-historic existence. Thus every claim made in this connection by Christians recoils more or less forcibly on their own creed.

¹ Herodotus, ii. 156.

² It need hardly be explained that not a tithe of the mythical stories connected with Krishna have been mentioned above. They are extremely numerous, and are all either explicable in terms of the sun-myth or mere poetic adornments of the general legend.

³ Compare Mr. Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, 1st ed. i. 291.

PART III.

THE GOSPEL MYTHS.

PREAMBLE.

IF the foregoing pages in any degree effect their purpose, they have shown that a number of data, both miraculous and non-miraculous, in the Christian Gospels, held by Christians to be historical, and held even by some Naturalists to be either historical or at least accretions round the life and doctrine of a remarkable religious teacher and creed-founder, are really mere adaptations from myths of much greater antiquity; and that accordingly the alleged or inferred personality of the Founder is under suspicion of being as mythical as that of the demigods of older lore. It is not here undertaken to offer a complete demonstration of the truth of that surmise; but our survey would be unduly imperfect if the problem were not stated and to some extent dealt with. Broadly, the contention is that when every salient item in the legend of the Gospel Jesus turns out to be more or less clearly mythical, the matter of doctrine equally so with the matter of action, there is simply nothing left which can entitle anyone to a belief in any tangible personality behind the name.

I am well aware that this will still be commonly considered an extravagant position. When in my youth I first heard it put, I so considered it, though I already held the Naturalist view; and my later acquiescence has been the result of the sheer gradual pressure of the argument from analysis—a more thorough analysis, I would fain hope, than that which motivated the earlier proposition. I desire to avow, however, that I consider the first recoil

from that proposition to have arisen mainly from the mere force of psychological habit even on the plane of innovating criticism. A clear recollection of that psychological state may possibly make the present argument in a measure judicial, if not satisfactory.

The question as to the actuality of the alleged founders of ancient religions may best be approached by the comparative method. It is now agreed that the ancient deities who figure as coming among men to teach creeds, to convey useful knowledge, and to found religious institutions, are purely mythical creations. No student now believes in the historic actuality of Osiris or Dionysos or Krishna, any more than in the existence of Juno or Ashtaroth. The early rationalism of Evemerus, which traced all deities alike to historical personages, is exploded. The so-called Evemerism of Mr. Spencer in no sense reinstates that view; for the theory that primeval man reached his God-idea by way of ancestor-worship gives no shelter to the notion that Hermes and Mithra, for instance, were distinguished personages within the historical period, as was believed last century by Mosheim. Hermes, Mithra, Osiris, Dionysos, Herakles, Attis, Adonis, Horos, are seen to be as certainly mythic as Apollo and Zeus and Brahma and Vishnu.

How then is a line to be scientifically drawn between, on the one hand, the mythic personalities of Dionysos and Osiris and Krishna, and on the other those of Zarathustra and Buddha and Jesus? We all agree that, say, Mohammed is a real historical personage. Significantly enough, the incredibility of the lives of religion-makers is in almost the exact ratio of their historic distance. That circumstance is not, however, in itself decisive against the actuality of any given founder; for though all history becomes more and more clearly mythical the further we go back on any one line of tradition, it is still arguable that if Mohammed founded a religion somewhat in the fashion in which (supernaturalism apart) he is said to have done, a Jewish or an Asiatic prophet in earlier times may have done the same. It will not suffice merely to reply that there are

unquestionable myths in the stories of Jesus and Buddha; there are one or two such myths in the story of the life of Confucius, whose historic actuality is not doubted; there is one such myth in the life of Plato, whose historic actuality is no more doubted than that of Aristotle; and there is much myth in the life of Apollonius of Tyana, who appears to be at bottom a real historical personage. And a number of students still believe in the historic actuality of Zarathustra and Buddha, who compare so closely with Jesus as religion-founders, though in their ostensible biographies they are framed in clouds of myth.

Professor Rhys Davids, for instance, agreeing with M. Senart that the Buddha legend is substantially made up of myths from the older lore of Krishna and Râma and Agni, nevertheless cites M. Senart as admitting Buddha's historic actuality. "That the historical basis is *or once was there*, he does not doubt; and he holds that Buddhism, *like every other system*, must have had a human founder, and an historical origin."¹ Like every other system, be it observed: like the cults of Dionysos and Osiris and Herakles; all of which of course had an "historical origin." But what was that origin; and who was their human founder? Clearly there was no one "founder"; there was not even a group or school describable as collective founders: we are dealing with a long process of evolution. If then we reject as we do the pseudo-historical Osiris and Dionysos, why do we accept as historical Buddha and Jesus? Shall we say that behind the mythic figures of Osiris and Dionysos there may have been *some* remote actual man who communicated certain culture and was later worshipped by certain rites? The answer is that such a hypothesis is neither here nor there; it stands for nothing: it makes no impact on our perception. The accredited personalities of Buddha and Jesus, on the other hand, do make a very distinct impression. But is it more forcible than that made *anciently* on men's minds by the stories of Osiris and Attis, or than that made in India to-day by the story and the

¹ *Buddhism*, p. 193.

mystic teaching of Krishna? Is not the difference for us simply one of psychological habit? Is there any more evidence for a real cult-founding Buddha than for a real teaching Krishna?

Carrying the analysis further, we reach some such generalization as this: that where any alleged religion-founder is represented in what appear to be ancient accounts as uttering a coherent and impressive moral doctrine, our tendency is to believe in his actuality, even if he be otherwise quasi-mythical. It is on this account that men cling to the personalities of Moses and Zaratustra and Buddha; and it is because this is lacking in the myths of Dionysos and Osiris that the same men dismiss the notion of *their* actuality. Had the Jesus legend come down to us solely as it stands in the apocryphal Gospels, which give mere miracles without moral teaching, it could not to-day retain any hold among men of education and judgment; though a certain number of such men appear still to believe in the miracle stories of the canonical Gospels. Apart from the sheer force of habit and of partisanship, it is the teaching that to-day upholds any sincere faith in the tale.

Now, it is obvious that in a general way this is no sufficient ground for a critical belief. There are myths of doctrine as well as myths of action. Many fictitious teachings were ascribed to King Solomon, who is at most a historical possibility; and the same thing could easily happen with a pre-Christian Jesus. The story of the promulgation of the Ten Commandments is palpable myth. Even orthodox scholarship admits the late intrusion of doctrinal myth in the New Testament in such a case as the text of the Three Witnesses. Moderately heterodox criticism goes so far as to see a similar process behind the text, "Thou art Peter; and on this rock I will build my Church." Scientific criticism goes a great deal further, and sees, for instance, the same process behind the whole discourses of the Fourth Gospel; though these very discourses only a generation ago set up a special impression of actuality in two such men as the Arnolds, father and

son. Where then does the analysis logically stop? Careful comparative study resolves such discourses as the Sermon on the Mount into compilations of the gnomic sayings of many teachers; and the so-called Lord's Prayer is plainly pre-Christian. At what point do we touch biographical bottom?

The strongest way of putting the Christian case, from the rationalist point of view, is one which still passes with many believers for semi-blasphemy: the process, namely, of testing the synoptic Gospels down to an apparent nucleus of primitive narrative. Granting that there has been abundant interpolation, this method proceeds on the axiom that a nucleus there must have been; and argues that its disencumberment amounts to establishing a solid historical basis. Ere long, probably, that will be the position of those Christians who still continue to use the weapons of argument; though the interesting attempt of Mr. A. J. Jolley, in *The Synoptic Problem for English Readers*,¹ to set forth the conclusions reached by Dr. Bernhard Weiss in his works on Mark and Matthew, seems thus far to have attracted hardly any orthodox attention.

Even on the face of it, however, this new position is one of retreat, and is not permanently tenable. Accepting for the argument's sake the "Primitive Gospel" thus educed, we find it to be still a literary patchwork, made up of miracles and unhistorical discourses. The Birth myth and the Crucifixion are not there; but the Temptation Myth and the Transfiguration are. In the forefront stands the compiled Sermon on the Mount; the parables figure as public discourses; the predictions of the fall of Jerusalem, plainly written after the event, are admitted; the mythical Twelve Apostles are already installed; and there is not a single datum of a truly biographical quality. Nor does Mr. Jolley once face the problem, If such Jesuine teachings were actually current, how came it that Paul never cites a single one of them?

I do not here press the point that Dr. Weiss and Mr. Jolley retain obvious patches: for instance, the "except ye

¹ Macmillan & Co. 1893.

repent ye shall all likewise perish," in Luke xiii., where that formula completely stultifies the teaching of the context. Let the text be still further tested down, to the elimination of such evidently heterogeneous tissue, and the invincible difficulty will still face us: the theoretic beginner of the cult has eluded search; we are dealing with myths of doctrine and myths of action. The one tenable hypothesis left to us is still that of a preliminary Jesus "B.C.," a vague cult-founder such as the Jesus ben Pandira of the Talmud, put to death for (probably anti-Judaic) teachings now lost; round whose movement there may have gradually clustered the survivals of an ancient solar worship of a Babe Joshua son of Miriam; and round whose later composite cult, in which "Jesus" *not* of Nazareth figured for Paul as a mere crucified Messiah, a speechless sacrifice, there appear to have coalesced various other doctrinal movements, which perhaps incorporated some actual utterances of several Jesuses of Messianic pretensions, Nazarite and anti-Nazarite, but certainly also gathered up, generation after generation, many documentary compositions and pragmatic and didactic fictions.

The full presentment of this theory, which gradually conducts us from mythology, historically considered, into history, sociologically considered, is necessarily left for another treatise. What is here undertaken is the final step in the preliminary clearing of the mythological ground. In the previous pages we have traced a number of Christian myths to their Pagan origins. There remain a number of Gospel myths of action or narrative, of many of which the Pagan origin is no less clearly demonstrable; and there remain the mythic ascriptions of doctrine with which the other myths coalesced. Without professing to trace all the Gospel myths of either sort, I have attempted a *catalogue raisonné* of a score or more of the former, thus giving a connected and summary view of those already analysed and of a number of others, and I have added some of the proofs that the Gospel teachings, in so far as they purport to be utterances of a wandering and teaching Jesus with twelve disciples, are myths of doctrine.

In the opening treatise I have given reasons for thus bringing into the category of myths such literary fictions as ascribe certain doctrine to a famous personage under conditions which are clearly unhistorical. The myth of Osiris tells that he taught certain things¹ and did certain things; and no one disputes that the entire narrative is myth. It lies on the face of the case that no one man invented agriculture or vine culture or taught men to be civilised. When, however, we come to a legendary personage whose cult survives, or presents a parallel to others which survive, there is an instant recoil from such an admission. Men are fain to believe, even after giving up supernaturalism, that one Moses invented the Ten Commandments, and that one Jesus invented the Golden Rule and ascended a mountain to formulate doctrines of forgiveness and non-resistance. Shown that all of these doctrines were current before the period in question, some men persist in framing formulas about "essential originality," though the personage to whom the originality is ascribed is but an abstraction from the very utterances thus put in his mouth, every detail of the narrative in hand having the stamp of didactic fiction. One must evidently reckon with a certain average incapacity to assimilate more than a modicum of new truth, and look only for gradual psychological adjustments, taking generations to accomplish.

Capacity may be slightly quickened, however, by a survey of the adjustments made in the past. The course of thought, as we have seen, is by way of small concessions. First men seek naturalistic explanations for prodigies in the Old Testament: after a time some consent to see in such prodigies mere myths, based on no one historic episode whatever; the majority, however, still ascribing human personality to many mythical personages. At this stage the prodigies of the New Testament remain unchallenged even for some who see myth in those of the Old; and only gradually is the tentative critical process applied to the later stories also. Here the clinging to personalities

¹ Plutarch, *I. and O.* c. 13.

is strongest, simply because of the closer emotional relation. Much of the delay, however, comes of sheer failure to study the phenomena of comparative mythology. Dean Milman, for instance, was at pains to argue that the Massacre of the Innocents might well pass unnoticed by contemporary historians among the multitude of Herod's barbarities; when a candid glance at earlier forms of the same story might have made it clear to him that he was dealing with a common myth. So, only the other day, we have such a candid and scholarly inquirer as Dr. Percy Gardner repeating¹ once more the fallacious explanation, which has imposed on so many of us, that "an ass and the foal of an ass" represents a Greek misconception of the Hebrew way of saying "an ass"—as if Hebrews even in every-day life lay under a special spell of verbal absurdity—when a glance at the story of Bacchus crossing a marsh on two asses, and at the Greek sign for the constellation Cancer (an ass and its foal), would have shown him that he was dealing with a zodiacal myth.

Broadly speaking, it is by applying *all* the tests of traditional error, and by recognising that myth formerly so-called is only one form of such error, that we shall reach a just estimate of the historical value of the Gospels. Baur argued, on the whole justly, that Strauss's analysis, able as it was, reached only a negative result because it did not include a comparative criticism of the documents as such.² By "negative" he meant, not that the argument was unprofitable because it negated a popular belief—an inept commonplace of which Baur was incapable—but negative in the sense of leaving the question still open: that is to say, that while Strauss offered grounds for rejecting much, he could consistently show no grounds for retaining anything, though he claimed to do so. And the documentary criticism which Baur began or reorganized turns out only to carry Strauss's process further. Strauss clung to the view that while the early Jesuits had little knowledge of

¹ *Exploratio Evangelica*, 1899, p. 156.

² *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien*, 1847, pp. 71-73.

the life of the founder they had trustworthy knowledge of many of his teachings. But the effect of the documentary analysis which Strauss failed to make is to leave us no grounds whatever for ascribing any teaching in particular to any one teacher called Jesus; though it is historically possible, and not unlikely, that there were several Jesuses who claimed to be Messiahs. What is certain, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, is that the Gospels are no less absolutely untrustworthy as accounts of any man's teaching than as accounts of any man's deeds, because they gathered up both kinds of statement in the same way. Baur's position was that of an extremely sagacious critic—the acutest of his time, perhaps—who was moving on the true line of scientific inference, but did not live to complete the long journey. “While everything mythic,” he tells us, “is unhistorical, not everything unhistorical is mythic.”¹ This is the last stage of a pragmatic definition of myth.² But the way in which unhistorical statements get to be believed, and unhistorical conclusions to be drawn, is just the way in which myths got to be believed, added to, and pragmatized. The psychology of all such error is substantially the same, and, beyond convenience of descriptive arrangement, nothing is gained by the distinction under notice.

As has already been argued, the mythopœic process is possible to the human mind in all periods, and is actively carried on to-day. Emerson forcibly writes that Christianity “dwells with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus. The soul,” he protests, “knows no persons”; and he notes that ordinary Christian language “paints a demigod as the Orientals or the Greeks would describe

¹ *Kritische Untersuchungen*, pp. 72–3. Cp. p. 43.

² Strauss on this point took up a more scientific position. “Every unhistorical narrative,” he writes in reply to Baur in *Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet* (Einleit. iii. § 25, *end*: 3te Aufl. p. 159), “no matter how it arose, in which a religious community see an element of their sacred origins, because of its being an absolute expression of their constitutive feelings and ideas, is a myth.” The English translation (i. 214) makes a sad mess of this passage:—“Every *historical* narrative, however it may have arisen, in which a religious community recognizes a component part of their sacred origin as being an absolute expression of *constituent feelings and conceptions*, is a myth.” The principle had been put by Strauss in the first *Leben Jesu*, Einleit. § 14, *end*.

Osiris or Apollo.”¹ Yet Emerson himself had just been affirming that “Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul.Alone in all history, he estimated the greatness of man.....He said in the jubilee of sublime emotion, ‘I am divine.....’ ” All of which is absolute myth, as truly myth as the other version.

As against the later literary method of Renan and Arnold, which consists mainly in putting aside the miracles and accepting the narrative that is left, with the arbitrary exception of such teachings as seem unedifying, it may be well to show briefly the effect of the scientific recognition of all the forms of myth in the narrative. Our analysis shows that on the one hand the Twelve Apostles, and on the other hand such prominent teachings as the Sermon on the Mount, are just as mythical as the Virgin Birth, the Temptation, and the Resurrection. At the same time, the documentary analysis shows us that Jesus was at first without cognomen; there was no “of Nazareth” in the legend. In the same way the Johannine discourses fall to the ground. What then is left? What did “Jesus” teach? And who was Jesus? A Nazarite? And if there were no Twelve Apostles, who was there to report his doctrine? Seeing that Paul knew naught of it, how can we consent to suppose that later Christists had any real information? Nay, if these insuperable problems be set aside, how shall we, when delivered from the spell of customary acquiescence, continue to believe that any man ever made a popular movement by enouncing cryptic parables, most of which are proper only to the initiates of a fixed cult, and short strings of maxims some of which represent the last stretch of self-abnegating ethic for brooding men, and are utterly beyond the acceptance of any unselected populace in any age?

One realizes afresh the normal difficulty in even recognizing the problem, when one turns to the notable work of Dr. Percy Gardner, above cited. It marks at some points

¹ *Address to the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, 1838.*

an advance on even the positions of Dr. Hatch, and it frequently lays down sound caveats. Yet immediately after thus stipulating that "the life of the Master is not, in an objective sense, recoverable beyond a certain point,"¹ it affirms that Francis of Assisi "was like the Founder of Christianity in his gentle spirit, his boundless love for men, his joyful acceptance of poverty and self-denial. He was fond of appealing, like Jesus, to the facts of the visible world, and in hearty sympathy with life in all its forms."² Such language implicitly affirms that, however mythical be the Gospel narratives, we can rely on the genuineness of the *logia*. And yet even in the very act of affirming this, Dr. Gardner shows us that he has tacitly eliminated many *logia* for his purpose, since only by a careful selection of passages can we frame the conventional effigy of a Jesus of "gentle spirit," with "boundless love for men." Our explorer even expressly excludes certain Jesuine dicta as obviously mythical. Yet he tacitly founds with absolute confidence on certain others. Dr. Gardner, then, while setting himself the highest standards of historical method, has only repeated with a difference the procedures of Renan and Arnold, and has ignored Baur's reminder to Strauss.

That this is not done in a merely incidental way, or by passing oversight, is made quite clear by a passage in which, again, he pairs with Emerson:—

"The fact is that the life of Jesus was the occasion and the cause of an enormous development of the spiritual faculties and perceptions of men. He found us children in all that regards the hidden life, and he left us men. The writings of his immediate followers show a fulness and ripeness of spiritual feeling and knowledge, which makes the best of previous religious literature, even the writings of Isaiah and Plato, seem superficial and imperfect. From that time onward (!) men in Christian countries seem to have gained new faculties of spiritual observation...."³

For such an affirmation we want, above all things, evidence: we want to know on *which* of the Jesuine sayings the thesis is founded; and why those sayings in particular are held to be genuine. But Dr. Gardner offers no justification, no explanation: he fulminates his

¹ Work cited, p. 172.

² *Id.* p. 174.

³ Work cited, p. 119.

formula as did Emerson, and there an end. It may well be that even Dr. Gardner's measure of defection from the Myth will take long to win acceptance, and the present indictment of it much longer still; but I cannot conceive that, if men continue to argue the matter at all, criticism can thus sit between the two stools of psychological habit and judicial method. It must in time either surrender unconditionally to the myth or follow reason.

Meantime I can but repeat with insistence and with evidence that the teaching demigod is as essentially a myth as the wonder-working demigod. What Dr. Gardner describes is but an intellectual and psychological miracle: a breach of all evolution. If the apparition of one teacher could thus suddenly bestow subtlety of insight on a whole world before devoid of it, raising to manhood in a generation a humanity which had remained childlike through five thousand years of religious speculation, there need surely be no more hesitation over such trifles as human Parthenogenesis and raising the dead. It ought not to be necessary at this stage of thought to refute such a theory of psychological catastrophism, which really throws back the whole discussion, at this particular point, to a pre-scientific level. Before Dr. Gardner thus apotheosized the mythic Jesus in the name of the historic method, Newman, the foremost of the cultured and reasoning believers of the century, avowed that "There is little in the ethics of Christianity which the human mind may not reach by its natural powers, and which here or there.....has not in fact been anticipated."¹

But it will not suffice merely to counter authority with authority, even where the latter has a special weight. The scientific solution must lie in a fuller presentation of the proof that neither the hypothetic Jesus of the Gospels nor his immediate followers represented any special originality, whether of feeling or of fancy or of thought. A conspectus of that evidence is now submitted, with the claim that no

¹ Letter to Mr. W. S. Lilly, cited in the latter's *Claims of Christianity*, 1894, pp. 30-31.

verdict can be adequate which does not face it. Only, we must dispose effectually of the myths of action before we attempt to estimate the evidence for the doctrine. So little impression has been made on the general intelligence hitherto by the demonstration of mythical elements in the Gospels, that we find even a trained Naturalist, in the very act of applying mythological science to the Christian case, taking for granted the conventional "biographical" data. The late Mr. Grant Allen, in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, does the excellent practical service of bringing Mr. Frazer's theorem of the Vegetation-Cult in connection with the Christian doctrine of crucifixion and salvation—a step not previously ventured on in any book, though it had been made in Freethought journals. Yet Mr. Allen sets out with the dogmatic decision¹ that the Gospel Jesus was, "at the moment when we first catch a glimpse of him in the writings of his followers, a Man recently deceased, respected, revered, and perhaps worshipped by a little group of fellow peasants who had once known him as Jesus the son of the carpenter. On that unassailable Rock of solid historical fact we may well be content to found our argument in this volume. Here, at least, nobody can accuse us of 'crude and gross Euhemerism.' Or rather the crude and gross Euhemerism is here known to represent the solid truth."

It is difficult to understand how solid truth can be crude and gross Euhemerism, which means, and can only mean, the blundering application of a false mythological theory to a given problem of religious origins. I will not call Mr. Allen's Euhemerism (or Evemerism, as the word ought to be written in English) crude and gross; but I do maintain that he has fallen into Evemerism, in the sense of a fallacious theory of the origin of a cult, and that his assumption, instead of serving as a rock foundation for his application of Mr. Frazer's theory to the Christ cult, is really a mine which saps that. So little critical heed has he given to the problem that he actually

¹ Work cited, p. 16.

commits himself to the detail of "the carpenter," which even some supernaturalist critics have admitted to be an unhistorical addition, seeing that for Origen¹ the reading of Mark vi. 3, which makes Jesus himself a carpenter, was not canonical, and that there remains only the phrase in Matt. xiii. 55, for which there is no support in Luke or John. Both alike are excluded from the "Primitive Gospel" even by the school of Weiss; and the rationalistic criticism which dismisses Mary and Joseph as alike mythical must needs dismiss the myth of Joseph's avocation. Naturalism must find itself in a more scientific fashion than this if it is to hold its own against the eternal assault of credulity and organized ecclesiasticism. The following studies, then, are an attempt to clear the ground.

¹ *Against Celsus*, vi. 36, end.

cf. Saintyves: "Les Vierges-mères
et les naissances uniaurales".

FIRST DIVISION.

MYTHS OF ACTION.

§ 1. *The Virgin Birth.*

THOUGH the mystical character of the birth-legend is recognized by all who consent to apply rational tests to the Gospels, it remains important to keep in mind the nature and extent of the documentary proof that the myth is borrowed from Paganism. If that be lost sight of, the conditions of the composition of the Gospels cannot be properly realized. Strauss saw the birth-story to be myth, but failed to note how emphatically it belonged to the surrounding Pagan world, seeing there rather analogies than sources.

Now, the Virgin-Mother myth is universal in Paganism, and certainly has no recognized place in orthodox Judaism before the Jesuist period. The so-called prophecy of Isaiah (vii. 14) could never have been read as an announcement of a long-distant Parthenogenesis by the most insane Talmudism had not the myth of Virgin-birth first obtruded itself from the Pagan side. If, indeed, Judaism was to develop its slowly-formed Saviour-myth at all, it could scarcely avoid the datum that he be born of a Virgin-Mother. All the Saviour-Gods of Paganism were so reputed, either in respect of the mother being a mortal while the father was a God, or in that the mother too was a Goddess, and as such termed a virgin by way of adoring flattery, as all male Gods were termed beneficent, whatever might be the cruelty of their supposed deeds. It was perhaps in the same spirit that those Goddesses who were specially distinguished as virgin, Athênê and Artemis

and Persephonê, at times received the title of mother;¹ but the converse was a more familiar usage. Thus, as above noted, Hêrê, wife of Zeus and Queen of Heaven; Cybelê, the "mother of the Gods"; Leto, mother of Apollo and Artemis; Dêmêtêr, the Earth-mother, who, as such, equates with both Ceres and Vesta; and Venus herself, were all "Virgin"² as much as Isis, who was at once sister and wife (and in a late version the mother) of Osiris, and was fabled to have been deflowered in the very womb of her own mother.³ And Dionysos in particular came to figure indifferently as son of Dêmêtêr, the Mother, and of Persephonê, "the Maiden," styled ἄγνης, pure.⁴

All of these Goddesses in turn became associated with the *Virgo Cœlestis*, the Virgin of the Zodiacal sphere, who, with her extended branch or ear of corn, was, no doubt, with other ancient figures of fruit-holding Goddesses, the kernel of the myth of Mother Eve and her apple, besides lending herself to the Jewish "prophecy" of the Messianic "branch."⁵ Dêmêtêr was καρποφόρος, and ἀμαλλοφόρος, and χλοηφόρος, and ὠρηφόρος, the corn-bearer, the sheaf-bearer, the leaf-bearer, the fruit-bearer. And as regards the special machinery of the Joseph and Mary myth—the warning in a dream and the abstention of the husband—it is a simple duplication of the story of the relations of the father and mother of Plato, the former being warned in a dream by Apollo, so that the child was Virgin-born.⁶

¹ Strabo, x. 3, § 19; 6, § 9; Boeckh, *Corp. Inscr. Græc.* 3993; Aristotle, cited by Clement of Alexandria, *Protrep.* ii.

² See refs. above, p. 168, note 9. Cp. Firmicus, *De Errore*, iv.; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, ii. 32; Lucian, *De Sacrificiis*, c. 6; and the Latin inscription in Wright, *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon*, 4th ed. p. 321.

³ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 12. She is Virgin as identified with Athênê and Persephonê. *Id.* cc. 27, 62.

⁴ The association of Dionysos with Dêmêtêr is relatively late, there being no trace of it in the Homeric hymn; but it is certainly pre-Christian, and is only a transference of the Child-God from one Goddess-Mother to another. Cp. Cicero, *De nat. deor.* ii. 24.

⁵ For the figure of this Virgin as represented in the ancient Zodiacs see, for instance, the frontispiece to Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, and the plate in Ernest Bunsen's *Islam, or the True Christianity*, 1889.

⁶ Diogenes Laërtius, b. iii. c. i. § 1. It is true that Diogenes wrote in the second or third century after Christ; but for this story he cites (1) Speusippus,

No less significant is the fact that most of the few details given of the Virgin-Mother in the Gospels are in striking correspondence with Pagan myths. Early in January the Egyptians celebrated "the Coming of Isis out of Phœnicia,"¹ from which it appears that Isis was supposed to make a journey either to bring forth Horos or after the birth, as Mary goes into Egypt. But the bringing-forth of the God-child while "on a journey" is an item common to a dozen pre-Christian myths, as those of Hagar and Ishmael, Mandanê and Cyrus, Latona and Apollo, Maya and Buddha, and the stories of Æsculapius and Apollonius of Tyana;² and the peculiar motive of the taxpaying is almost certainly derived either from the Hindu legend of Krishna or from a cognate Asiatic myth.³

§ 2. *The Mythic Maries.*

The first step of criticism, after recognizing the myth of the Virgin-Birth, is to assume that the mother of the "real" Jesus was nevertheless one Mary (Miriam), the wife of Joseph. For this assumption there is not the slightest justification. The whole birth-story being indisputably late and the whole action mythic, the name is also to be presumed mythical. For this there is the double reason that Mary, or Miriam, was already a mythic name for both Jews and Gentiles. The Miriam of Exodus is no more historical than Moses: like him and Joshua, she is to be reckoned an ancient deity Evemerized; and the Arab tradition that she was the mother of Joshua (=Jesus)⁴ raises an irremovable surmise that a Mary the

the nephew of Plato, whose *Funeral Banquet of Plato* was extant; (2) Clearchus' *Panegyric on Plato*, which likewise belongs to Plato's generation; and (3) Anaxilides' *History of Philosophers*. The myth, as regards Plato, is thus evidently pre-Christian. Nor is it confined to Europe even in relation to philosophers, for we find it applied to Confucius, as to Buddha. See above, p. 190.

¹ Plutarch, *I. and O. c.* 50.

² See above, *Christ and Krishna*, pp. 190-3.

³ *Id.* pp. 194-6.

⁴ Above, pp. 82-3.

Mother of Jesus may have been worshipped in Syria long before our era.

It is not possible from the existing data to connect historically such a cult with its congeners; but the mere analogy of names and epithets goes far. The mother of Adonis, the slain "Lord" of the great Syrian cult, is Myrrha; and Myrrha in one of her myths is the weeping tree from which the babe Adonis is born. Again, Hermes, the Greek *Logos*, has for mother Maia, whose name has further connections with Mary. In one myth, Maia is the daughter of Atlas,¹ thus doubling with Maira, who has the same father,² and who, having "died a virgin,"³ was seen by Odysseus in Hades. Mythologically, Maira is identified with the Dog-Star, which is the star of Isis.⁴ Yet again, the name appears in the East as Maya, the Virgin-Mother of Buddha; and it is remarkable that according to a Jewish legend the name of the Egyptian princess who found the babe Moses was Merris.⁵ The plot is still further thickened by the fact that, as we learn from the monuments, one of the daughters of Ramses II. was named Meri.⁶

In the matter of names, it is of some though minor interest to recall that Dêmêtêr is associated in Greek mythology with one Jasius or Jasion—not as mother, but as lover.⁷ Jason, we know, actually served as a Greek form of the name Joshua or Jesus;⁸ and Jasion, who in one story is the founder of the famous Samothrakian mysteries,⁹ is in the ordinary myth slain by Zeus. But the partial parallel of his name is of less importance than the possible parallel of his mythic relation to the Goddess Mother.

In many if not all of the cults in which there figures a

¹ Apollodorus, iii. x. 1, 2.

² Pausanias viii. 48.

³ *Id.* x. 30, citing the lost poem, *The Return from Ilium*; see also scholiast on *Odyssey*, xi. 325.

⁴ Preller, *Griech. Myth.* i. 359, following Hesychius. Cp. Plutarch, *I. and O.* c. 61.

⁵ Eusebius, *Præparatio Evangelica*, ix. 27 (Migne, *Ser. Græc.* xxi. 729), citing Artapanus.

⁶ Brugsch, *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, Eng. tr. ii. 117. It is noteworthy that Ramses II. had Semitic blood in him, and introduced into Egypt the Semitic institution of the harem. Rawlinson, *Hist. of Ancient Egypt*, ii. 324.

⁷ *Odyssey*, v. 125; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 969.

⁸ Josephus, *12 Ant.* v. 1.

⁹ Preller, *Griech. Myth.* i. 667.

nursing mother it is found that either her name signifies "the nurse," or that becomes one of her epithets.¹ Thus Maia stands for "the nurse"² (τροφός); Mylitta means "the child-bearing one";³ both Dêmêtêr and Artemis were styled "child-rearers";⁴ and Isis was alternately styled "the nurse" and "the mother."⁵ Now, one of the most important details of the confused legend in the Talmud concerning the pre-Christian Jesus Ben Pandira, who is conjoined with Ben Stada, is that the mother is in one place named Miriam *Magdala*,⁶ Mary "the nurse," or "the hair-dresser."⁷ As Isis too plays the part of a hair-dresser,⁸ it seems clear that we are dealing here also with myth, not biography. In the Gospels we have Mary *the Magdalene*—that is, of the supposed place Magdala, which Jesus in one text visits.⁹ But Magdala at most simply means a tower or "high place" (the same root yielding the various senses of "nursing" = rearing, and "hair-dressing"); and in the revised text Magdala gives way to Magadan, thus disappearing entirely from the Gospels. There is no documentary trace of it save as a citadel so named by Josephus.¹⁰ Mary the Magdalene, finally, plays in the Gospels a purely mythical part, that of one of the finders of the risen Lord. The interpolated text in Luke (viii. 2), baldly describing her as having had seven devils cast out of her by Jesus, is equally remote from history; but it points towards the probable mythic solution. Maria the Magdalene, who in post-evangelical myth becomes a penitent harlot, is probably cognate with the Evemerized Miriam of the Mosaic myth,

¹ Cp. Hesychius, s.v. AMMAS, cited by K. O. Müller, *Dorians*, i. 404, note. Selden (*De Diss Syris*, Synt. ii. cap. ii. ed. 1680, p. 182) derives *Ammas* from the Semitic *Aymma* = mother.

² Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, iv. 16.

³ Bähr, *Symbolik des mosaischen Cultus*, i. 436.

⁴ Above, p. 168.

⁵ Plutarch, *I. and O.* cc. 53, 56.

⁶ Cp. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, 1e Ptie. 1867, p. 471, note.

⁷ Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud, and the Midrashic Literature*, part iii. 1888, p. 213a, citing the *Hagigah*, 4b; *Sanh.* 67a; *Sabb.* 104b—earlier edd. Cp. Reland, *Palestina Illustrata*, lib. iii. s.v. MAGDALA (ed. 1714, p. 884); Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ: in Luc.* viii. 2 (ed. 1674, p. 101).

⁸ Plutarch, *I. and O.* c. 15.

⁹ Matt. xv. 39, A.V.

¹⁰ *Wars*, xi. 25; *Antiq.* xiii. 23; xviii. 1.

who also is morally possessed by devils, and is expressly punished for her sin before being forgiven. Something else, evidently, has underlain the pseudo-historical tale; and the Talmudic reference, instead of being a fiction based on the scanty data in the Gospels, is presumptively an echo of a mythic tradition, which may be the real source of the Gospel allusions. In Jewry the profession of hair-dressing seems to have been identified with that of *hetaira*—the character ultimately ascribed in Christian legend to Mary the Magdalene.

The Gospels, coming into existence at a time when on all hands asceticism as a religious principle was outfacing phallicism and sexualism, could not admit of any myth representing the God as having sex relations with women; though in the Fourth Gospel, where he is humanly and attractively pictured as the tender friend of the sisters of Lazarus, there is also left open the unpleasant problem before alluded to. Even in this case, however, the friendship with a "Mary" points towards some old myth in which a Palestinian God, perhaps named Joshua, figures in the changing relations of lover and son towards a mythic Mary—a natural fluctuation in early theosophy, and one which occurs with a difference in the myths of Mithra, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and Dionysos, all of whom are connected with Mother-Goddesses and either a consort or a female double, the mother and the consort being at times identified.¹ And the solution in the case of the Jesus myth becomes pretty clear when we come to the story of the Resurrection.

As at the beginning, so at the end of the story, Mary plays a mythic part. In the Gospels, taken as a whole, she has two typic characters—that of the child-bearer and that of the Mater Dolorosa, mourning for her child slain; and at both of those points we have for the legend those

¹ One mythic source of this double relation lies in the conception of the Sun-God's connection with the Goddesses of Dawn and Twilight. It was equally natural to picture him as *born of* the Dawn, and as the lover who leaves her. Again, he could as easily be figured as born of the Night, and again as the lover of the Night or the Twilight. Cp. Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, pp. 33, 241-8; *Manual of Mythology*, pp. 96-97. The story of Œdipus marrying his mother Jocasta was thus mythically originated.

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most decisive of all origins, ritual and art. No less general than the figure of the child-suckling Goddess was the conception of a mourning Goddess, or Dolorous Mother. In the myths of Venus and Adonis, Ishtar and Tammuz, Cybelê and Attis, we have at first sight a non-maternal¹ but in another view a maternal mourning;² while Dêmêtêr, wailing for Persephonê, was for the Greeks pre-eminently the Mater Dolorosa;³ and there is a rather remarkable anticipation of the inconsolable "Rachel weeping for her children" in Hesiod's account of Rhea (Cybelê) possessed by "a grief not to be forgotten" because of her children, whom their sire Kronos had devoured.⁴ In the cult of Attis the weeping of the Great Mother over the mutilated body of the youth is a ceremonial feature;⁵ and in the saga which makes Dêmêtêr the mother of Dionysos it is she who brings together the mangled limbs of the young God (as Isis in one story does with Osiris, and in another with Horos) when he has been dismembered by the Titans, whereafter she bears him again.⁶ And most noteworthy of all is the coincidence of the mourning of the two or more Maries with the ritual lamentation of the "divine sisters" Isis and Nephthys for Osiris—a customary funeral service with the Egyptians.⁷ That lament was supposed to be made at the spring equinox, the time of the

¹ Diodorus, iii. 59.

² In one version of the Aphrodite and Adonis myth Adonis is a child given by Aphrodite in a chest into the charge of Persephone (Apollodorus, b. iii. c. xiv. 4); and Macrobius (*Sat.* i. 21), describing the image of the mourning Goddess at Mount Libanus, goes on to explain that it means the earth (the mother) mourning during winter for the loss of the sun. It is clear from Lucian's account that she combined many Goddess-attributes. (Cp. Ammianus Marcellinus, xix. i. 11.) In the myth of Cybelê and Attis, again, the character of the "mother of the Gods," and her "love without passion for Attis" (so Julian: the popular view was different, according to Arnobius, v. 13; Diodorus, iii. 57; Lucian, *De Sacrificiis*, 7), recall the two Maries of the Christian legend, one the mother, the other the penitent devotee.

³ Grote and Renan apply the term to her: *History of Greece*, 4th ed. i. 38; *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 53.

⁴ Hesiod, *Theog.* 467.

⁵ Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, v. 7; vii. 343. Cp. Diodorus, as last cited.

⁶ Diodorus, iii. 62. In another version the Mother Goddess Rhea performs the function (Cornutus, *De natura deorum*, 30); in yet another Apollo does it by order of Zeus (Clem. Alex. *Protrept.* ii. 18)—a parallel to the function of John in the Christian story.

⁷ *Records of the Past*, vol. ii. pp. 113-120.

(mythic crucifixion ; and it is plain that the Gospel story has been manipulated on some such basis. In Matt. xxvii. 56, we have as mourners “ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses, *and* the mother of the sons of Zebedee.” Here the mother of James and Joses is a crux for the orthodox, who dispute as to whether she was simply the whilom Virgin ; and the difficulty is not helped by verse 61, where we have “ Mary Magdalene *and the other Mary.*” Since Mary the mother of Jesus is here not mentioned at all, and nothing whatever has been said as to her dying previously, the inference is that the narratives of the part played by the women at the resurrection were framed *before* the birth-story had become current. The Mary-myth thus grew up from two separate roots.

In Mark, matters are further complicated. “ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and Joses ” are accompanied by Salome (xv. 40) ; Mary Magdalene and Mary the (mother ?) of *Joses* see Jesus buried (47) ; while Mary Magdalene and Mary the (mother ?) of *James* with Salome bring the spices (xvi. 1). In Luke, again (xxiv. 10), we have the two latter Maries and *Joanna*, not at the cross, but at the tomb. More complicated still does the matter become in John, where (xix. 25) we have Jesus’ mother (not named) and her *sister* Mary the (wife ?) of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Of these variations the orthodox explanation is the lapse of memory on the part of the chroniclers—a mere evasion of the problem. In view of all the data, we may turn with some degree of confidence to the solution of an ancient ritual usage, with occasional variations, represented in pictures or sculpture. What we already know of ancient ritual supports the view ; and, as we have seen, there are weighty reasons for believing that the Christian legend was first set forth in a dramatic worship.¹ The crowd of women who in all the accounts are represented as following the God from Galilee would on this hypothesis be, equally with the Maries, figures in a ritual lamentation such as belonged to all the

¹ See above, *Christ and Krishna*, pp. 227–235.

pagan worships of a slain Saviour God; as in the usage of the "women weeping for Tammuz," which the Hebrew prophet denounced centuries before.¹ And even as the Goddess wept annually over the image of the beloved Attis or Adonis or Osiris, figuring first as consort or lover and later as mother, so in the early Jesuist mystery-drama, which excluded the lover-motive, would a Maria (a tradition from a similar ancient Goddess-cult) weep over the image of the Crucified One, figuring as his devoted disciple; till the Fourth Gospel, which has no Birth Story, and which, elsewhere as here speaking of Jesus' mother without naming her, introduces her as the first of three Maries who stand by the cross. Thereafter, perhaps against a reluctance of many to give the God an earthly mother at all, the myth-cycle rounded itself for the Christian cultus.

The *finding* of the body by a woman or women, in any case, was equally part of the cults of Osiris and Attis, though there would doubtless be local variations, as in the different Christian versions. And the crowd of women followers is in a general way obviously preceded in the myth of Dionysos, which, as we shall see, Christism copies at several points.

To surmise, in the face of all the mythic data, that there *was* a Mary Magdalene, who with "the other Mary" *thought* she saw either the risen Lord or the angel announcing the Lord's resurrection, is a mere defiance of all critical tests. Renan, accepting the myth for his artistic purposes, notes that Paul says nothing about the women; and he implies a touch of apostolic misogyny. This is but critical caprice. The rational inference is that even the late interpolator who made Paul speak of Jesus as having appeared to five hundred at once, either had not yet met with, or disbelieved, the Magdalene story, though the Gospels were already in existence.

¹ Ezekiel viii. 14.

§ 3. *The Myth of Joseph.*

Alike from the point of view of the mythologist and from that of the believer, there is at first sight something of a crux in the legend which gives the "Virgin" a husband. Had Joseph figured to start with as the father of Jesus, the grafting-on of the myth of the supernatural conception could have happened all the same, that being after all only a new form of the common Hebraic myth of the birth of a sanctified child to aged parents. But the mythical father appears, so far as we know, simultaneously with the mythic mother, albeit only to occasion the assurance that he is not really the father at all. Thus he does not strengthen the claim of the mother's virginity; and there is no ostensible ground for his invention. Apologetics might hereupon argue that the detail is thus obviously genuine biography; and even the naturalist might be so led to surmise that "the" Gospel Jesus had had a known parentage, and that the virgin-birth-myth was merely superimposed on the facts. All the while, however, there is a decisive solution in terms of mythology.

The first preoccupation of the early Judaic myth-makers, evidently, was to present the Messiah as Ben David, "son" of the hero-king, himself clothed about with myth, like Cyrus. For this purpose were framed the two mythic genealogies. But it so happened that the Palestinian tradition demanded a Messias Ben Joseph—a descendant of the mythic patriarch—as well as a Messias Ben David. We are not concerned here with the origin of the former doctrine, which suggests a partial revival of the ancient adoration of the God Joseph as well as that of the God Daoud, though it may have been a tribal matter. "It is not likely," says one scholar,¹ "that the idea of a Messias the son of Joseph would have its origin anywhere but among the Samaritans, who were always eager to raise the tribe of Joseph at the expense of Judah." The fourth

¹ Nutt, *Fragments of a Samaritan Targum*, 1874, introd. p. 69.

Gospel¹ shows the occurrence of Samaritan contacts with the Jesuist cult; and the book of Acts assumes that it was spread equally through Samaria and Judæa.² There were thus sufficient grounds for adopting the favourite Samaritan myth.

But it suffices us that the myth had a general Jewish currency. The Hebraist just cited summarizes the doctrine on the subject as follows: "Messiah the Son of Joseph will come before Messiah the Son of David, will assemble the ten tribes *in Galilee*, and lead them to Jerusalem, but will at last perish in battle against Gog and Magog for the sins of Jeroboam."³ This, however, overlooks the circumstance that in two Talmudic passages the Messiah Ben David is identified with the Messiah Ben Joseph, or, as he is styled in one case, Ben Ephraim.⁴ The obvious motive for this identification would be as natural to Jesuists as to orthodox Judaists. The Messiah being expected under two names, a claimant with either title might be met by denial on the score that he had not the right descent. To make the Son of David a Son of Joseph by the plan of giving him an actual father of the latter name was a device thoroughly on the plane of the popular psychology of that age; since the Davidists⁵ could point out to the Josephists that their stipulation was now fulfilled in a manner which showed them to have misunderstood their prophecy.⁶

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The myth of Joseph, then, arose as a real accessory to the cult. Once introduced, he would naturally figure as an elderly man, not only in the interest of the Virgin-myth, but in terms of the Hebrew precedent, adopted in the myth

¹ John iv. Cp. Luke xvii. 11.

² Acts viii. 1, 5, etc.

³ Nutt, as cited, p. 70. Cp. Leslie, *Short and Easy Method with the Jews*, ed. 1812, pp. 127-130; Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ: in Matt. i. 2*.

⁴ Tract. Succa, fol. 52, 1; Zohar Chadash, fol. 45, 1; and Pesikta, fol. 62, quoted by F. H. Reichardt, *Relation of the Jewish Christians to the Jews*, 1884, pp. 37-38.

⁵ The passage duplicated in Matt. xxii. 41-46, Mark xii. 35-36, and Luke xx. 41-44, shows that there was an anti-Davidic group of Jesuists, who interpolated the Gospels for their special purpose.

⁶ Renan, who has so many glimpses that come to nothing because of his lawless method, has the note: "Le nom de *Ben Joseph*, qui, dans le Talmud, désigne l'un des Messies, donne à réfléchir" (*Vie de Jésus*, édit 15e. p. 74, note). But he goes no further.

of the parentage of John the Baptist. He is accordingly represented in the apocryphal History of Joseph the Carpenter (cc. 4, 7) and in the Gospel of the Birth of Mary (c. 8), though not in those of the canon, as a very old man; and this is the view of Christian tradition. Such a concept might of course very well arise from the simple wish to insist on the point that Joseph was not the real father of Jesus. But here again there is a presumption that the detail, along with that of the leading of the laden ass by Joseph in the journey of the "holy family," was suggested by old religious ceremonial. In the sacred procession of Isis, as described by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses*, one of the figures is that of a feeble old man leading an ass. It is sufficiently unlikely that the great Isiac cult would adopt such a detail by way of representing an episode originating in a recent system. Grounds for the symbolism in question may be found in Plutarch's statement¹ that in the forecourt of the temple of a Goddess at Sais there were sculptured a child, an old man, and some animal figures, the two former standing simply for the beginning and the ending of life. Further, the Egyptians held that all things came from Saturn² (or a similar Egyptian God), who signified at once Time and the Nile,³ and was always figured as aged. On the other hand, as we have seen and shall see throughout this investigation, the Christian system is a patchwork of a hundred suggestions drawn from pagan art and ritual usage.

§ 4. *The Annunciation.*

This obvious introduction to the supernatural birth is anticipated in several pagan legends; but the most precise parallel is the Egyptian ritual usage or standing myth in regard to the birth of the kings, which is fully set forth in the sculptures on the wall of the temple of Luxor, reproduced and elucidated by Sharpe.⁴ There we have first the Annunciation to the maiden queen Mautmes, by the ibis-

¹ *I. and O.* c. 32.

² *Id.* c. 59.

³ *Id.* c. 32.

⁴ *Egyptian Mythology*, pp. 18-19.

headed Thoth, Logos and messenger of the Gods, that she will bear a son. In the next scene the Holy Spirit, Kneph, and the Goddess Athor take the queen's hands and hold to her mouth the *crux ansata*, the cross symbol of life, thus supernaturally impregnating her. In another scene is represented the birth of the babe, and his adoration by deities or priests. This was part of the systematic deification of the Egyptian kings; a process which sometimes included their being raised to the position of the third person in the prevailing Trinity; and it seems to have customarily involved the doctrine that the king's mother was the spouse of the great God Amun-ra, who was therefore the king's father. Thus the post-Pauline creed-makers of Alexandria had well-trying myth material lying ready to their hands in the ancient Egyptian system. A little had to be left out; but there was small need to invent anything new.

§ 5. *The Cave and Stable Birth.*

Forming as it does part of the late fabulous introduction to the third Gospel, the story of the birth of the God-Child in a stable is as obviously unhistorical as the rest of that narrative. And, whether we take the "canonical" story of the inn-stable or the "apocryphal" story of the cave, which has become an accepted Christian tradition, we have clearly an ill-disguised adaptation of a widespread pagan myth.¹ There can be little doubt that the cave shown as the God's birth-place at Bethlehem had been from time immemorial a place of worship in the cult of Tammuz, as it actually was in the time of Jerome;² and as the quasi-historic David bore the name of the Sun-God Daoud, or Dodo,³ who was identical with Tammuz, it was not improbably on that account that Bethlehem was traditionally "the city of David." In view of these variations of God-names, however, and of the close similarities of so many of the ancient cults; and on the hypothesis that the mythical

¹ See above, *Christ and Krishna*, pp. 197-215.

² Epist. 58, *ad Paulinum*.

³ Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 56-57.

Joshua, son of Miriam, was an early Hebrew deity, one form of the Tammuz cult *may* in pre-Christian times have been a worship of a Mother and Child, Mary and Jesus—that in short Maria = Myrrha, and that Jesus was a name of Adonis. Sacred caves were about as common as temples in Greece; and Apollo, Herakles, Hermes, Cybelê, Dêmêtêr, and Poseidon were alike worshipped in them.¹ But above all the great cult of Mithra, the Mediator, made a cave pre-eminently the place for worshipping its God; and it may be taken as certain that he, and similarly Tammuz, being represented to be born on what we now call Christmas Day, would be figured as cave-born. Hermes too, the Logos and Messenger or Mediator, was born of Maia in a cave.² The stable motive, again, belongs to an extremely ancient mythology. The stable-shed, which appears in the Catacomb sculptures, was probably pre-historic in the birth-ritual of Krishnaism, and would seem even from these very sculptures to have been borrowed by the Christians from Mithraism.³ The adoration of the “Magi,” which as we have just seen was paralleled in the Egyptian birth-ritual, has every sign of being originally a ritual usage; and the “ox and ass” of Christian legend in all probability had the same origin; as had the legend of the bending palm-tree as given in the Koran—a legend set forth in a Catacomb sculpture, and given with a difference in an apocryphal Gospel, but long anticipated in the myths of the births of Apollo and Buddha.⁴ So again with the “child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” That is the exact description of the Babe-God Hermes in Grecian song and sculpture; and equally of the Babe-God Dionysos, who was carried in his manger-basket in ritual-procession, and so represented in art; and of the divine child Ion, who is laid by his mother in his swaddling clothes and basket cradle in the cave of her nuptials, and carried thence, cradled, by Hermes to the temple.⁵ In the Catacomb sculpture, the “manger”

¹ Pausanias, ii. 23; iii. 25; vii. 25; viii. 15, 36, 42; x. 32.

² Homeridian Hymn to Hermes; Apollodorus, bk. iii. x. 2.

³ See above, *Christ and Krishna*, pp. 199–213. ⁴ *Id.* pp. 193, 210.

⁵ *Id.* pp. 198, 199, 200.

is just the long basket or *liknon* of the Greek God-children.¹ A similar ritual, too, is established by Christian evidence² as having flourished under the Ptolemies in Egypt. The *Chronicon Paschale* represents that even at that period the customary adoration of a virgin-born child lying in a manger³ was an ancient mystery; and we know from other sources that the Sun-God Horos, son of the Virgin Isis, was represented annually as born at the winter solstice, at the moment of the appearance of the constellation *Virgo*, in the temple where dwelt the sacred cow and bull, of whom the former, like the Goddess, was held to be supernaturally impregnated.⁴ Nothing in hierology is more certain than that the Christian story of the birth of Jesus is a mere adaptation of these ancient pagan materials. The process of myth-manufacturing can be seen going on in the Gospels themselves, Luke adding the shepherds, and the conception of Elizabeth, to the machinery of the other versions, as the Apocryphal Gospels add still more. The shepherds came from the same pre-historic source as the rest. They belong to the myths of Cyrus and Krishna; and they are more or less implied in that of Hermes, who on the day of his birth stole the cloud cows of Apollo, himself a divine shepherd, and God of shepherds.

§ 6. *The Birthday.*

That this must have been placed either on the 25th December, or on some other solar date, soon after the birth

¹ It may be worth noting that so late as the middle of the seventeenth century this symbol survived in Protestant England. "The coffin of our Christmas pies, in shape long," says Selden, "is in imitation of the cratch" (*i.e.*, *crèche*). *Table Talk*, art. CHRISTMAS.

² Above, p. 202.

³ In this case the word is not *liknon* but *phatné*, the term used in Luke. This was the name given in the ancient astronomy to the nebula of the constellation Cancer (Ass and Foal)—a further connection of the birth-myth with astronomy.

⁴ By a ray of light—an idea reproduced in pictorial treatment of the myth of the Virgin Mary. The cow myth was widely spread. See refs. above, p. 201, note 5.

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 legend took Christian shape, is obvious ; and the late recognition of that date by the Church was simply due to the notorious fact of its having been the birthday of the Sun-God in half a dozen other religions—Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician, Grecian, Teutonic. Only when Christism had become as powerful as these could it thus openly outface them. Several sects, indeed, long persisted in fixing the day on the 24th or 25th of April, thus connecting it with the vernal equinox rather than the winter solstice, while others placed it at 25th May ; and the greater part of the Eastern Church for centuries made the date 6th January—the day now called Epiphany.¹ All alike were solar, and were chosen on the same principle as had been acted on by the Platonists, who placed the master's birthday on that of Apollo²—that is, either at Christmas or at the vernal equinox. As Julian has explained, these dates varied in terms of the different ideas as to when the year began ;³ and the Christian choice would be determined by the prevailing usage near the Christian centres. But even in Palestine the day chosen had long been a sacred one outside the prevailing cult. It was on the 25th of December (Casleu or Chisleu) that Antiochus Epiphanes caused sacrifice to be offered on an “idol altar” placed on the “altar of God”;⁴ and from what we know of the persistent polytheistic tendencies of the Palestinians at that and earlier stages of their history we may infer that the birthday of the Sun-God was a well-known date for them as for other nations, though after the Maccabean period it would for a time be little heard of in Jewry, save among the country-people.

§ 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents.*

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the unhistorical character of this story, which appears only in the late preface to the first Gospel, being absent even from the

¹ Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, ed. 1853, vii. 280-2.

² Diogenes Laërtius, *Plato*, 2.

³ *In Regem Solem*, c. 20. See above, *Christ and Krishna*, pp. 177, 179, notes.

⁴ Macc. i. 54-59.

elaborate narrative of the third, where the element of ritual is so obvious in the first two chapters. It is simply a detail in the universal myth of the attempted slaying of the Child-Sun-God,¹ the disappearance of the stars at morning suggesting a massacre from which the Sun-Child escapes; and we see it already in the legend of Moses, which is either based on or cognate with an Egyptian myth. In the second century Suetonius gives a variant of the myth as accepted history concerning the birth of Augustus.² But all the available evidence in regard to the Krishna myth goes to show that the massacre motive already existed in Indian mythology long before the Christian era.

NOTE ON THE MOSES MYTH.

I have been challenged for saying that the story of Moses and the floating basket is a variant of the myth of Horos and the floating island (Herod. ii. 156). But this seems sufficiently proved by the fact that in the reign of Ramses II., according to the monuments, there was a place in Middle Egypt which bore the name I-en-Moshé, "*the island of Moses.*" That is the primary meaning: Brugsch, who proclaims the fact (*Egypt under the Pharaohs*, ii. 117), suggests that it can also mean "the river-bank of Moses." It is very obvious, however, that the Egyptians would not have named a place by a real incident in the life of a successful enemy, as Moses is represented in Exodus. Name and story are alike mythological, and pre-Hebraic, though possibly Semitic. The Assyrian myth of Sargon, which is indeed very close to the Hebrew, may be the oldest form of all; but the very fact that the Hebrews located their story in Egypt shows that they knew it to have a home there in some fashion. The name Moses, whether it mean "the water-child" (so Deutsch) or "the hero" (Sayce, *Hib. Lect.* p. 46), was in all likelihood an epithet of Horos. The basket, in the later form, was doubtless an adaptation from the ritual of the basket-borne God-Child, as was the birth story of Jesus. In Diodorus Siculus (i. 25) the myth runs that Isis found Horus *dead* "on the water," and brought him to life again; but even in that form

¹ Above, pp. 188-9, 191-2.

² *Octavius*, c. 94.

the clue to the Moses birth-myth is obvious. And there are yet other Egyptian connections for the Moses-saga; since the Egyptians had a myth of Thoth (their Logos) having slain Argus (as did Hermes) and having had to fly for it to Egypt, where he gave laws and learning to the Egyptians. Yet, curiously enough, this myth probably means that the Sun-God, who has in the other story escaped the "massacre of the innocents" (the morning stars), now plays the slayer on his own account, since the slaying of many-eyed Argus probably means the extinction of the stars by the morning sun (cp. Eméric-David, *Introduction*, end). Another "Hermes" was son of Nilus, and his name was sacred (Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* iii. 22; cp. 16). The story of the floating-child, finally, becomes part of the lore of Greece. In the myth of Apollo, the Babe-God and his sister Artemis are secured in floating islands (Arnobius, i. 36), or otherwise Delos floats (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* ii. 89; iv. 22; Macrob. *Sat.* i. 7; Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, 213; Pindar, *Frag.* cited by Müller, *Dorians*, Eng. tr. i. 332; Lucian, *Deor. Dialog.*, *On Delos*).

§ 8. *The Boy Jesus in the Temple.*

Strauss¹ has pointed to the obvious untrustworthiness of the story of the boy Jesus, at the age of twelve, being lost by his parents and then found in the temple, among the doctors, astonishing them by his wisdom. It is found in Luke only. As against those critics who see in the simplicity and non-miraculous character of the story a proof of its genuineness, Strauss points to the extra-Scriptural stories of Moses leaving his father's house at twelve to play the part of an inspired teacher, and of Samuel beginning to prophesy at that age. It was in fact an ordinary Jewish myth-motive. But Strauss as usual has omitted to notice Pagan parallels, one of which supplies the source of the first part of the Gospel story—the losing of the child.

In Strabo's account of Judæa, after the recital of the Greek version of the Moses myth, there is a chapter of reflection on the operation of divine law,² where are given

¹ *Das Leben Jesu*, Abs. i. K. v. § 41.

² B. xvi. c. 2, § 38 (ed. Casaubon, p. 762).

some quotations telling how among other episodes "parents went to Delphi, 'anxious to learn whether the child which had been exposed was still living,' while the child itself 'had gone to the temple of Apollo, in the hope of discovering its parents.'" The parallel is not exact, but the clue to the Christist myth is obvious enough. Strabo's book on Syria and Judæa was sure to be read by many Greek-speaking Jews, such as constituted the first Jesuist groups; and the myth may very well have been adapted direct from his text, which dates at least a century before the Gospels. The Pagan myth he reproduces may have been reproduced in art; but as a picture could not easily convey by itself the idea that the child had been lost, the written source is in this case the more probable. Jesuists who found Strabo astray in the case of the Moses myth would have no scruple about adapting him in another case.

The detail of the Christ-child prophesying in the *temple*, however, compares further with the Egyptian belief that children playing in the temple courts conveyed prophetic knowledge by their chance cries.¹ And here again we have to reckon with the fact that in one part of the Egyptian ritual Isis figured as wailing for the loss of her *child*, the boy Horos. Lactantius, who gives the detail,² names not Horos but Osiris; but is quite explicit as to its being a *boy* who is lost and found again. The ritual occurring in the temple, it was a matter of course that the lost boy should be found there. Thus, then, though the Gospel story of the abnormal wisdom of the child Jesus represents a development alike on Pagan and Jewish lines, the story of the finding in the temple is a specifically Pagan myth.

§ 9. *The Upbringing at Nazareth.*

That the location of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is mythical may be taken as granted by all who recognize myth in any part of the Gospel narrative. That the

¹ Plutarch, *I. and O.* c. 14.

² *Div. Inst.* i. 21.

Messiah Ben David had to be born in the royal city of Judæa was an obvious pre-requisite. The rationalist criticism of the last generation accordingly proceeded to decide that since Jesus was not born at Bethlehem he was born at Nazareth;¹ Strauss pointing to the number of instances in which he is called "the Nazarene" in the Gospels and the Acts. And, indeed, the fashion in which the first and third Gospels speak of Joseph and Mary as settling in or returning to Nazareth after the birth, while the second makes Jesus come from Nazareth *sans phrase*, points naturally to such a view. But when the texts are investigated and tested down—a method which Strauss never properly applied—the resulting "Primitive Gospel," as thus far educed by inquirers anxious to preserve what they can, presents a Jesus without any cognomen whatever,² even as do the Epistles. And any reader who will take the trouble to check down the references to Nazareth in the first Gospel as it stands will find that for the Ebionites, who, as we know, had not the first two chapters,³ there was there *no mention either of Nazareth or of Jesus the "Nazarite" or Nazarene*. Beginning with the third chapter, we find (v. 13) only "from Galilee" where Mark has "from Nazareth of Galilee." In iv. 13, again, we have a plain interpolation in the phrase "leaving Nazareth," since that place is not previously mentioned; while in Luke (iv. 16) the similar introduction of Nazareth is no less clearly spurious, being actually introduced by mistake too early in the chapter, so that it tells of the doings at Capernaum (v. 23) before the visit to Capernaum is mentioned, and we go on to read (v. 31) of "Capernaum, a city of Galilee," *after* the interpolated mention of it. No more flagrant interpolation exists. There now remains in the first Gospel only one more mention of Nazareth, and that is in the passage (xxi. 11) where, on Jesus entering Jerusalem seated on the ass and the ass's colt, "the multitudes said, This is

¹ So Strauss, *First Leben Jesu*, Abs. i. K. iv. § 39 (4te Aufl. i. 301); *Second Leben Jesu*, B. i. § 31; B. ii. Kap. i. § 35 (3te Aufl. pp. 191, 335); Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, ch. ii.

² See, for instance, the work of Mr. Jolley, before cited.

³ Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, xxx. 13, 14.