Jesus literally crucified? It seems certain that the expression "hanging" was frequently used in Greek in the Roman period for crucifixion;[1] and the early Church was content to leave standing the passages in the Acts which described Jesus as "hanged on a tree." The detail, however, remains problematical, since the Talmud expressly talks of hanging on a tree *after* stoning[2]—that is, the hanging up of a dead body, which to crucify would be futile.

If the Jesus of Paul were really a personage put to death under Pontius Pilate, the Epistles would give us the strongest ground for accepting an actual crucifixion. We have seen that certain important passages were interpolated; but the references to a crucified Jesus are constant, and offer no sign of interpolation. But if Paul's Jesus, who has taught nothing, and done nothing but die, be really the Jesus of a hundred years before, it becomes readily intelligible that, even if he had been only hanged after stoning, he should by that time have come to figure mythically as crucified. For, as we shall see, the cross was itself a myth element peculiarly likely to be bound up with the cult of any Saviour God of that period. The historic crucifixion, scourging, and subsequent slaying of Antigonus, the last Asmonean King of the Jews, by Mark Antony,[3] would further supply the motive for the story of Jesus having been crucified with a parade of the kingly title, as Antigonus doubtless would be. And, historically speaking, it is probable enough that a crucified king should have had set on his head, in mockery, a crown of straw and thorns, by way of heightening his degradation. Yet again, Philo tells a singular story of how, during the reign of Caligula, King Agrippa was insulted at Alexandria by the populace, who took a lunatic named (oddly enough) Karabbas, honoured and dressed him as a mock king, and hailed him

[1] Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i. 226, *note*.

[2] Cp. *Soteh*, fol. 23, col. 1, cited by Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, Eng. tr. 1883, p. 433.

[3] Dio Cassius, xlix. 23. Josephus does not give the detail of the crucifixion, and most of the Christian historians have ignored it.

"Maris," the Syrian name for king.[1] But here, as in the case of Antigonus, possible history is overlapped by mythology, and it is necessary to take into account the latter factor.

The story of the crown of thorns, the scourging, and the kingly title, is wholly absent, like the rest of the Gospel narratives, from the letters of Paul, and may without hesitation be held to be mythical, whatever we decide to hold concerning the crucifixion. The first explanation that occurs to the student of comparative mythology is that the crown of thorns is simply the ancient nimbus of the Sun-God;[2] and this is in all probability the root-motive. But it happens that in Pagan mythology there is a closer approximation to the crown of thorns than the nimbus; a missing link, so to speak, which would serve to explain the manufacture of this part of the Christist story, as we have seen so many other Christist myths to be framed out of Pagan art and mystery ritual. Two of the leading Saviour figures of Paganism were Prometheus and Herakles, and each of these is mythologically represented as wearing a mock crown. The myth connects the two heroes. According to Athenæus,[3] Jupiter condemned Prometheus, when he released him from captivity, to wear in memory of that a crown of osiers and an iron ring; and the antiquarian further quotes from the lost *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Sphinx* of Æschylus to the effect that worshippers wear a crown in honour of Prometheus, thereby symbolically representing his bondage. The crown was thus a memorial of a sacrifice undergone for the good of mankind.[4] But it is in connection with Prometheus that such a crown is associated with Herakles. According to the old mythologists, when Herakles, seeking the golden apples of the Hesperides, came upon Prometheus and slew the eagle which tortured him, Prometheus in gratitude warned him not to seek the apples himself, but to send Atlas for them; which Herakles did, bearing

[1] Philo Judæus, *Against Flaccus*, c. 6.
[2] Cp. Philo's story of Caius, *Legation to Caius (On Ambassadors)*, c. 13.
[3] B. xv. cc. 13, 16. Pp. 672*f*, 674*d*.
[4] On his return to Olympus, Prometheus becomes a prophet and counsellor of the Gods. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, 2te Aufl. i. 78.

the burden of the heavens the while in Atlas' place. But when Atlas got the apples he proposed to take them himself to Eurystheus (who had set the finding of them to Herakles as his eleventh labour) and leave Herakles to bear the heavens. Again Prometheus counselled his Saviour to feign acquiescence, and to beg of Atlas a momentary resumption of the load while he (Herakles) made a wisp-pad for his head. Atlas consented, and of course Herakles left him with his load for ever.[1] Thus it is Herakles the Saviour that wears the mock crown. This special detail is probably one of the innumerable stories concocted to explain ancient mystery-ritual; from which we can only conclude that in ritual or mystery Prometheus and Herakles were represented as crowned with osiers or weeds. It may have been that such crowns were actually worn by the initiates; and in a cult like that of Mithra, from which the Christists took their Lord's Supper, an ascetic crown of thorns would be likely enough. A symbolical crown of some sort was certainly used, on the testimony of Tertullian.[2] In the Magian Mithra-worship, too, the sacrificial victim was crowned;[3] and in Pagan cults generally this usage prevailed.[4] We know, too, from Athenæus[5] that in Egypt crowns of thorns had a special religious vogue, there being certain thorn-trees about Abydos whose branches curled into garland form. Any collocation of these garlands with a religious rite could give the hint for the Gospel myth. We have it further from Herodotus[6] that the Greeks had a story that when Herakles landed in Egypt the Egyptians crowned him with a garland and led him in procession, intending to sacrifice him to their supreme

[1] Apollodorus, ii. 5, § 11. Cp. Keightley, *Mythology of Greece*, 2nd ed. p. 362, citing Pherecydes from the Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius, iv. 1396. See above, § 10, for a theory of the main part of the myth.

[2] *De Præscriptione*, c. 40.

[3] Strabo, xv. 3, § 13. Herodotus, whom Strabo mainly follows, gives the crown to the priest (i. 131); but Strabo seems to have had some other sources. In any case, the crowning of sacrifice-victims was a general usage.

[4] Bähr, *Symbolik*, i. 363, ii. 252 *n.*, and refs.

[5] B. xv. c. 25, citing the lost *History of Egypt* of Hellanicus, and the lost *History of the Things to be seen in Egypt* by Demetrius.

[6] ii. 45.

God; but when he got to the altar the hero fell upon them and slew them. Herodotus warmly repudiates this story, on the score that the Egyptians had no human sacrifices; but it points none the less to an Egyptian ritual in which a Saviour-God was led as a prisoner in procession wearing a crown, probably one of those in use at Abydos. At bottom, as above suggested, the whole ritual might very well be symbolical of the ancient nimbus.

But there is the alternative explanation so ingeniously wrought out by Mr. Frazer in his *Golden Bough*. He has shown that in the ancient Babylonian festival of the Sacaea a prisoner condemned to death was dressed in the king's robes, throned, and allowed to disport himself as the king for five days, whereafter he was stripped, scourged, and crucified.[1] This was a combination of the common practice of sacrificing criminals as scapegoats,[2] and of the special usage of slaying a divine man by way of renewing the youth of vegetation in particular and life in general.[3] In all of these sacrifices, as in that of criminals to Apollo in the festival of Thargelia at Athens,[4] the victim was crowned, like the animal victim in ordinary sacrifices. Here, then, we have a likely source, not only of the tale of the mock crowning of Jesus, but of the proposed substitution of the criminal Barabbas, who in the time of Origen figured in most MSS. as being named *Jesus Barabbas*.[5] And in the care taken by the Greeks in the Thargelia to remove the body of the slain victim to a distance we may have the true clue to the story of the removal of the body of the crucified Christ. Given an ancient Christist ritual mystery, this might well be an integral part of it. The drink of gall, as a matter of fact, figured in the mysteries of Dêmêtêr.[6]

Another item in the Gospel story can with still greater probability be traced to Pagan myth and art. One of the

[1] *The Golden Bough*, 1890, i. 226. [2] *Id.* ii. 212. [3] *Id. passim.*
[4] Müller, *Dorians*, tr. i. 260.
[5] See the evidences as to this reading collected by Mr. Nicholson in his work on *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*, 1879, pp. 141–2.
[6] Clem. Alex. *Protrept.* ii.

subsidiary labours of Herakles was the setting up of two pillars at Gades (Cadiz) to mark the boundaries of Europe and Libya.[1] Here the cult of Herakles combines with that of his Phœnician double, the Sun-God Melkarth, worshipped at Gades, of whose mythus the Samson legend in the Hebrew Bible is a variant. The two pillars (represented in the Hebrew as in the Phœnician temples)[2] are simply ancient symbol-limits of the course of the sun in the heavens; and, as usual, we have a variety of legends in the different mythologies to explain them.[3] In the Samson legend they occur twice, figuring in one episode as the gateposts of Gaza[4] which the hero carries off; in another as the two pillars of the Philistine hall, between which the shorn and blinded hero sits in his captivity; Samson here being the winter sun, weak and rayless, at the end of his course, and, therefore, touching at least one pillar. Now, just as Samson in one story carries

[1] Apollodorus, ii. 5, § 10. Cp. Diodorus Siculus, i. 24; Pomponius Mela, i. 5; ii. 6; iii. 6.

[2] Solomon's temple was an imitation of that of Tyre, which we know was dedicated to Herakles, and had two pillars. Herodotus, ii. 44; Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, c. 16. P. 463.

[3] Professor Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, pp. 190–1, 194, 438) opposes the phallic theory of sacred pillars, though inconclusively, but takes no note of the simple astronomical explanation. Sir George Cox makes the same oversight (as I regard it) in discussing the "pillars" of Herakles, Osiris, Dionysos, and Sesostris, which he makes merely phallic, though assimilating them with the world-tree of Scandinavian mythology or the pillar of Atlas, which supports the heavens (*Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, new ed. pp. 268, 351). Doubtless the "pillars" of Dionysos (Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, last cit.) and Osiris (Diodorus, i. 20) were phallic; and so may have been those of Sesostris (Herodotus, ii. 102, 106), on which see Payne Knight (*Symbol. Lang. of Anc. Art and Mythol.* new ed. p. 94), whom Sir George Cox seems to follow. But still the pillars which mark the course of the Sun-God have an obvious enough non-phallic significance. That an astronomico-geographical meaning was involved is clear from Virgil's reference to the *columnas Protei*, which were in Egypt (Servius on *Æneid*, xi. 262), and from the other notion that Hercules' columns were on the northern coast of Europe (Tacitus, *Germania*, xxxiv.). Pindar repeatedly refers to the Pillars of Herakles as the bounds of possible travel.

[4] Note the correspondence of the names Gaza and Gades. Steinthal (Essay on *Samson*, trans. in vol. with Goldziher's *Hebrew Mythology*, pp. 403–4) connects the Gaza episode only with Herakles' fight at the gate of Hades. I think we may go further. In regard to the pillar-bearing it should be noted that Atlas, whose place Herakles temporarily takes, is bearer of the "pillar of heaven and earth" on his shoulders "in the western regions." Æsch. *Prom. Vinct.* 356–8 (374–6). Cp. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 518, 748; *Odyssey*, i. 53–4—"columns dividing heaven and earth."

the pillars, so did Herakles, as became his strength, carry his pillars to their places; even as, in the Tyrian form of the legend, he dies at the very place where he has set them up.[1] And in ancient art he was actually represented carrying the two pillars in such a way under his arms that they form exactly a cross.[2] Here, probably, we have the origin of the myth of Jesus carrying his own cross to the place of execution.[3] Christian art has always represented him staggering under the load, as even Herakles stoops with the weight of his columns. Singularly enough, the three Synoptics substitute for Jesus as cross-bearer one Simon, a man of Cyrene. Cyrene is in Libya, the legendary scene, as we saw, of the pillar-carrying exploit of Herakles; and Simon (Simeon) is the nearest Greek name-form to Samson—which in Greek might be read as Simson, following the Hebrew.[4] But in Palestine Simon, or Sem, was actually a God-name, representing the ancient Sun-God Semesh, identified with Baal, from whose mythus that of Samson unquestionably arose; and the God Simon was especially worshipped in Samaria.[5] That district, lying between Galilee and Judea, must needs at an early period have tended to affect the Jesuist legend, which in the Fourth Gospel makes the Founder visit the region and make converts in it. What more likely than that a representation of the Sun-Hero Simon (so recognizable by the many Jews settled in Greece), carrying his pillars crosswise, should come to figure as that of a man Simon carrying a cross? The two versions of the cross-bearing satisfy us that the story

[1] Preller, as cited, ii. 209, citing Arnobius i. 36, etc.

[2] See the engraving from Maffei in Montfaucon, *L'Antiquité Expliquée*, T. i. Pt. ii. p. 210, and at the end of Higgins's *Anacalypsis*, vol. ii.

[3] John xix. 17. The myth of Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice (Gen. xxii. 6) is a remoter parallel.

[4] The German transliteration of the name is Simson.

[5] Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu und ihre erste Entwickelung*, 1857, pp. 287, 289. Volkmar traces the legend of Simon Magus (= Simon *Megas*, the Great), "the Great Power of God" (Acts viii. 10), to the Samaritan Sun-God cultus. Cp. Movers, *Die Phönizier*, i. 417, 634, and the Laterculus of Eratosthenes (in Cory's *Ancient Fragments*, pp. 139, 140, 141), where Sem appears in the combinations "Sensaophis" (Saophis = Hermes) and Semphucrates, "who is Hercules Harpocrates."

is a myth: is any hypothesis more probable than that Simon the Cyrenian's task is a variant of that of the Cyrenian Simon-Herakles?

If the cross-bearing and thorn-crown motives in the Jesuist legend be thus reducible, like so many others, to a well-established Pagan type, the greater, clearly, is the likelihood that the idea of crucifixion is a mythic development on the basis of the simple hanging of the original Jesus ben Pandira, a century before the "Christian era." Not only was the cross-symbol, as all scholars now admit, absolutely universal in pre-Christian times, and, as a rule, a recognized symbol of life or immortality, but the actual idea of a mystic or exemplary crucifixion was perfectly familiar in Pagan theology. Obvious myth combined with real and legendary history to crystallize the conception. The crucifixion of Antigonus, King of the Jews, would alone set up an enduring impression in Syria and Egypt; and the story of the crucifixion of Cyrus,[1] who had actually figured as a Messiah, or Christos, for the Jews in their prophetic literature,[2] would go still further to establish the myth-motive of a crucified Messiah wherever the Jews went—that is to say, throughout the Græco-Roman empire. The legend of the prepared sacrifice of Isaac, the Only-begotten Son, in which the Son is bound on wood, and a ram finally takes his place, would further serve the record-worshipping Jews as a forecast; as would the story of the saving of the Israelites by the outstretching of the arms of Moses. But over and above all this, a theological crucifixion-motive pervaded mythology both in the East and the West.

The mystic crucifixion, like the cross-symbol, represents rather the coincidence of a number of symbolic and mystic notions than any one in particular. That the cross is, among other things, a phallic emblem, there can be no reasonable doubt; but it is also highly probable that it was from the earliest times associated with the fire-sticks, which among the Aryans in India retained a theological

[1] Diodorus Siculus, ii. 44. [2] Isaiah xlv. 1. See above, p. 185.

sacredness long after they had ceased to be necessary for household uses. In the Vedas, Agni, the Fire-God, is perpetually figured as a divine child born of the two *aranis;* and to represent the God as being generated by the friction of the crossed sticks would be to figure him on the cross. And this is the probable origin of various symbolic combinations of the cross with the sun: as the figuring of the Deity in the Assyrian system as a cross, of which the upright is a human figure and the transverse beam a conventionalized pair of wings, a type which in Eastern Mithraic remains becomes a crucified figure;[1] that in turn holding out with one hand a wreath or crown, which was doubtless connected with the use of a crown (of thorns?) in the Mithraic mysteries.[2] And in the *Mihr Yasht* ritual, in the Zendavesta, Mithra, the Sun-God, drives in his chariot across the heavens "with his arms lifted up towards immortality."[3] It is a perfectly intelligible variation of the same idea which appears in the myth of Ixion, crucified on his "four-spoked fetter," as Pindar calls it.[4] Ixion was himself, undoubtedly, in some mythology, at some time, the actual Sun-God, and would as such be figured outstretched at once on the fire-cross and on the sun-wheel. But the apparent torture of the mystic position, misunderstood by worshippers of another system, would appear as a punishment, and so we have the myth of the presumptuous guest of Olympus, who dared to aspire to the favours of the Queen of Heaven, and is first baffled by Zeus's substitution of a cloud for Hêrê, and then bound by Hermes, on Zeus's command, to the fiery wheel which revolves for ever in Hades.[5] How easily any such story found currency is

[1] See Bryant's *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, 1774, 4to. i. 232–4, 294; also the plates in Lajard's Atlas to his *Introduction à l'Etude du Culte de Mithra*.

[2] Above, p. 398.

[3] Darmesteter's *Zendavesta*, ii. 152 *(Sacred Books of the East)*.

[4] Pythians, ii. 74.

[5] Compare Cox, *Mythology*, p. 262:—"The proud Ixion himself is fastened to the four-spoked wheel of noonday, for his presumption in seeking the love of the wife of Zeus. The sun as climbing the heights of heaven, and wooing the bright ether," [Hêrê (Juno) = the Air] "is an arrogant being who must

further shown by the transference of the four-spoked-wheel motive to the bird Iünx[1] (the wryneck) for no better reason, perhaps, than the resemblance of its name to that of Ixion, though here again we may be touching primæval Aryan mythology, for the zig-zagging lightning is in mythology a bird—eagle,[2] hawk, or woodpecker; and certain birds were fabled to be fallen flashes of lightning. At Babylon four Iünxes were figured in gold on the canopy, or roof, of the king's throne-room, "to keep the king in memory of the goddess of vengeance," and the mages called them the "tongues of the Gods."[3] In the Vedic hymns, again, Agni, the fire-God, is a "golden-winged bird,"[4] and his thunderbolts are "well-winged ones"; while Indra, the thunderer, is "the well-winged red one"; and the sun itself and the moon are well-winged birds which fly round the tree of the sky.[5] With all this the winged Sun-God of Assyrian and Egyptian art, and the winged Sun-Angel of Christism, connect easily enough. The step to the Messianic sacrifice is only a stage further.

In this crucifixion of the Sun-God or Fire-God, again, we have one of the clues of the myth of Prometheus. Despite some recent German scepticism, the connection of Prometheus, the fire-bringer or -stealer, with the Sanskrit *Pramantha*, or fire-generating boring-stick, and the variant word *pramâthyus* = Borer,[6] or Robber, seems sufficiently well made out; and the mythical chaining of Prometheus on a rock on the Caucasus, in such wise that he cannot keep the eagle of Zeus from gnawing his liver, implies the posture of crucifixion. Lucian, indeed, expressly describes

be bound to the fiery cross, or whose flaming orb must be made to descend to the west, like the stone of Sisyphus, just when it has reached the zenith, or summit of the hill." It should be added that Ixion may have been originally represented symbolically as the Sun-God on his wheel without any thought of punishment. That is probably a late guess.

[1] Pindar, *Pyth.* iv. 353.

[2] Thus Jupiter's eagle and his thunderbolts are kindred symbols.

[3] Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, i. 25.

[4] Steinthal on the Prometheus Legend (trans. in vol. with Goldziher), pp. 366–8, citing Kelly's *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition and Folk-Lore* on the cognate myths.

[5] Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, ii. 168–9.

[6] In the *Theogony* Prometheus steals the fire in hollow reeds.

him as crucified by Zeus.[1] In one version, however,[2] the chains of Prometheus are passed through the middle of a column; and here we are brought in touch with the form of the suffering-Saviour myth in which the God is fastened to a tree. Phoroneus, son of Inachos the water-God (probably = Noach = Enoch) who in Argos was revered as the fire-bringer,[3] as Prometheus was elsewhere, had for mother the nymph Melia, "the Ash"; and though Steinthal[4] perhaps assumes too readily that he was figured as a bird, from the derivation of his name from the Sanskrit epithet of Agni, *bhuranyus*, "rapid, darting, flying," still the Greek name of his mother connects him with the tree. And the fact that on the one hand Prometheus was said to have made men from clay, and that on the other Phoroneus was fabled by some to be the first man,[5] brings us still further into connection with the Græco-Jewish significance of the God-Christ, who as *Logos* had presided over the creation of the world.

The actual use of the symbolic tree, however, is best known in connection with the widespread ascetic worship of the self-castrated God-man Attis, who was specially honoured in relation to Cybelê, the Virgin Mother, from the 22nd to the 27th March, a date pointing at once to the vernal equinox and the arrival of spring.[6] At that season the Sacred Tree of Attis—a pine—was cut down, and was carried, swathed and crowned with violets, to the temple of the Great Goddess as a symbol of the lost demi-god. Then he was sought for in the hills and woods with a ritual of frenzy and lamentation, which after three days[7] was followed by jubilation on his being given out to be

[1] *De Sacrificiis*, c. 6.
[2] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 521.
[3] Pausanias, ii. 19.
[4] As cited, p. 368.
[5] Preller, *Griech. Myth.* ii. 36, citing Clemens Alexandrinus and Plato.
[6] Preller, *Röm. Myth.* p. 736; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 21.
[7] The confusion of the Gospels as to the time between Jesus' death and resurrection is doubtless due to the fact that other cults varied in this respect. Attis was ritually found on the third or fourth day (cp. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i. 297; Creuzer, *Symbolik*, 2 Aufl. ii. 38), and Adonis on the second (Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, c. 6). It should always be remembered that Adonis was "the Lord" *par excellence*, and that Attis too would have that title.

found again.[1] Attis was fabled to have been changed into the pine by the Goddess in punishment for his breach of chastity;[2] but the tree seems similarly to have been identified with the nymph he loved;[3] and Julian, telling that the symbolic tree was annually cut down "at the moment when the sun arrives at the extreme point of the equinoctial arc," states that the cutting of the tree "has nothing to do with the rites which it accompanies." These were "holy and not to be divulged," and included "the sacred and ineffable harvest of the God Gallos," *i.e.*, *castratus*. Obviously the cut pine symbolized the cut phallus, the life principle of Nature and humanity. We learn from the Christian Father, Julius Firmicus, who had no scruple about publishing Pagan mysteries, that on the pine tree there was bound the image of a youth;[4] and the same writer reveals that a ritual of tree and image existed also in the worship of Isis and Osiris and in the cult of the Virgin Persephonê.[5] In the Isiac mysteries the coffin[6] of Osiris would seem from this evidence to have been a hollowed pine tree; and in those of Persephonê the "sacred tree," after being cut, was formed into the image of a virgin, over which the worshippers lamented for forty nights, burning it on the fortieth.

Here we have the *arbor crucis*, clearly enough, along with the whole idea of suffering, mourning, resurrection, and rejoicing. Attis, risen, became "Papa," Father and Lord;[7] as Osiris remains the Father-God, Creator and Judge of all flesh, soul of the world, and Saviour of mankind. And Dionysos, on the whole the most popular of the Græco-Roman deities in the period just before Christianity, is in the same way a God of the Sacred Tree, a Saviour, and a

[1] Preller, *Gr. Myth.* i. 509–511; Julian, *In Deorum Matrem*, cc. 3–5; Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, v. 16, 17.

[2] Ovid, *Metamorph.* 103–107.

[3] *Fasti*, iv. 231–2.

[4] *De Errore Profanarum Religionum*, xxviii.; cp. Diodorus Siculus, iii. 59.

[5] In the cult of Adonis, animals were hung on tree trunks in the temple, and burned with the trees. Lucian, *De Dea Syria*.

[6] Or coffin-containing tree. See the myth in Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. xv. Cp. the words of Pompey, "*tectum ligno Osirim*," as cited in Lactantius, i. 21.

[7] Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, v. 4; Diod. Sic. iii. 58.

sacrifice. One of his epithets was *Dendrites*,[1] "pertaining to the tree"; he had his sacred pillar; and in Bœotia he was called *endendros*, "in the tree."[2] In his case the divine suffering does not seem to have been undergone in that connection; like Mithra, he *is* the victim sacrificed in his cult;[3] and as Mithra was certainly the divine Bull, and equally the divine Ram or Lamb, so Dionysos was the divine Bull, and doubtless also the divine Ram, which was most commonly sacrificed to him,[4] as being the animal into which, in one legend, he was actually turned by Zeus in his childhood to save him from Hêrê.[5] In his childhood, however, in a common story, he is actually slain by the Titans;[6] and in various legends he suffers persecution. In his case, no doubt, his special association with the vine gave the determining bent to the symbolism of the cult; but his wooden images were made of the phallic fig-tree, and a stump of that sometimes symbolized him.[7] In Egypt, again, all cultivated trees were sacred to Osiris.[8] Whether or not, or in what order, these systems borrowed from one another, it is now very hard to trace; but the presence of the Sacred Tree = Cross in so many cults proves the universality of the idea. Attis, the unsexed youth, though probably in origin a God of Vegetation,[9] finally represents the combination of sun-worship and moon-worship, and the transference to the Moon-God, *Deus Lunus*, of the sex attributes of the Moon-Goddess; while his worship at the vernal equinox in connection with the Mighty Mother identifies him in one aspect with the sun,[10] then supposed to be reunited with the earth, and so to renew vegetation. The cult was to all appearance of Asiatic origin, as was

[1] Preller, i. 555, citing Plutarch, *Symp.* v. 1.
[2] *Id.* p. 562, citing Hesychius. See also above, p. 84.
[3] Compare Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i. 328.
[4] Brown, *The Great Dionysiak Myth*, ii. 65.
[5] Hyginus, cited in Smith's Dict. of Myth. In Apollodorus (iii. 4, 3) he is changed into a kid.
[6] Preller, *Gr. Myth.* ii. 53; Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrep.* c. 2; Arnobius, i. 40; Justin, 1 *Apol.* 21, 54; Pausanias, viii. 37.
[7] Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, ii. 235, citing Maximus Tyrius.
[8] Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 35.
[9] Frazer, as cited, i. 298.
[10] Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 21.

certainly that of Mithra, another composite Deity, who, however, represented sun and moon in being twy-sexed, not unsexed, and who is represented in art and symbol with a crescent behind his shoulders, making, as Firmicus vehemently insists, a virtual crucifix.[1] In his cult, too, as we gather from the monuments, there figured the Sacred Tree; and at the foot of this tree, on the sacred anniversary, there was sacrificed a ram, that is, a male lamb,[2] for the sacrifice must be immaculate. Osiris, again, finally represents a great complex of myth, being at once Night Sun and Day Sun, Moon, moisture, Nile, seed, and other principles; and Persephonê, yet again, is the buried Germinal One, whom the Mater Dolorosa seeks with lamentations, and who is finally restored to her mother for part of the year, living above as fruit and grain, and beneath as seed: whence the myth of her capture by Pluto and her queenship of Hades.

But the full mythic significance of the Sacred Tree in all these systems cannot here be traced.[3] In the religion of ancient Gaul its cultus seems to have been closely connected with the cannibalistic holy communion, since the victims slain to be eaten were first crucified in the temples.[4] Enough that it seems to have been a world-wide myth; and that in ancient Mexico, strangely enough, there was developed the closest parallel to the Christian cultus. The Sacred Tree was there made into a cross on which was exposed a baked-dough figure of a Saviour God; and this was after a time climbed for, taken down, broken up, and sacramentally eaten.[5] The very name of the Mexican cross meant "tree of our life, or flesh."[6] And there too the cross-figure had a special religious significance, one of the

[1] *De Errore*, xxii. Firmicus quotes Isaiah as to the Son who shall have the "government upon his shoulders," and adds, "these are the horns of the cross," comparing them to Mithra's crescent.

[2] *Id.* xxviii.; Garucci, as cited above, p. 391.

[3] On this wide subject see Mr. J. G. Frazer's masterly research in *The Golden Bough*, and the excellent monograph of Mrs. Philpot, *The Sacred Tree*, 1897. Cp. Cox, p. 351.

[4] Strabo, b. iv. c. iv. § 5; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 4; Plutarch, *Marcellus.*

[5] H. H. Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, ii. 386, 509. Cp. Stephens' *Central America*, 1842, ii. 346.

[6] Bancroft, ii. 506.

hideous rites of the system being the standing of the murderous priest in the skin of a newly-slain woman victim, with his hands spread out "like a cross," before the image of the War-God.[1]

That the cross-symbol had already many centuries before the Christian era acquired an abstract or mystical importance in Greek theology is shown by the singular proposition in the *Timæus* of Plato,[2] to the effect that when God had compounded the soul of the universe he divided it lengthways into two parts which he joined together "like the figure of a χ," and so imposed it on the world. Not only does Justin Martyr[3] cite this in support of the doctrine of the crucifixion of the Logos, but we know that the populace of Antioch in the time of Julian, referring to the Christian reign of Constantius as the time of "*Chi* and *Kappa*,"[4] signified their favourite Saviour God's name by the initial letter which itself was one of the names for the cross.[5]

That the phallic significance of the cross should connect with all its other aspects is perfectly intelligible. For primitive peoples—and in that definition we may include the populace of civilized Paganism—such symbolism was in no way monstrous, being perfectly spontaneous and natural; and the raging invective of the Christian Fathers against the Pagan usages proved, not the vice of the Pagans, but the growth of a new sophistication and sense of sin and shame, which, rising in Greece with the ascetic and flesh-mortifying cults as it had done among Jews and Orientals, became specially associated with Christianity, the religion *par excellence* of salvation-buying self-abasement. As Voltaire long ago pointed out, what are to us indecent practices could not have been so to the people who invented them. It was in the nature of religious evolution that symbolism

[1] *Id.* iii. 356.

[2] Jowett's trans. iii. 618.

[3] Plato's doctrine is doubtless a mere theosophizing of the usage of representing the earth as a globe divided in four by crossing bands. See it on a coin of Augustus, in a note of Gronovius on Pomponius Mela, i. 1. This was no doubt the meaning of the cross on the ancient Roman denarius.

[3] 1 *Apol.* 60.

[4] Constantius' name in Greek beginning with *K*.

[5] Gibbon, note to ch. 24, citing Julian's *Misopogon*.

should crystallize; and long ritualistic association of the Sacred Tree or Cross with the God's suffering and death would give it a special significance of that kind for the devout. Still, the fact remains that the vogue of the symbol was in large measure first secured by its popular emblematic meaning; and inasmuch as the cross was thus already an amulet[1] of life-preserving virtue, Christism profited by its acceptance, and could make that the basis for a new mystico-historical doctrine, of the kind which formed the staple of ancient theology. Wherever Christism went, the cross was before it;[2] and when it was found that the ancient symbolical rosary[3] was tenaciously preserved along with the correlative emblem, Christism simply adopted the rosary as it had done the cross. The vitality of the popular notion has been shown by the retention of phallic ceremonial in parts of Christian France and Italy down to our own time.[4] And in respect of at least one symbol, Christism traded from the outset on Pagan usage. The bishop's crozier, or pastoral staff, had unquestionably an emblematic meaning in the Osirian cult, from which the Christians deliberately appropriated it; and here the symbolism of cross, crozier, and tree of life was, as we saw, specially bound up with the worship of a slain Saviour-God. "The emblem became the *stauros*, or cross of Osiris, and a new source of mythology was thus laid open. To the Egyptian the cross thus became the symbol of immortality, *and the God himself was crucified to the tree which denoted his fructifying power.*"[5] The ritual lamentation of the divine sisters, Isis and Nephthys, for Osiris, referred to in a previous section,[6] is found in the temple remains of the island of Philae expressly connected with the representation of Osiris in the form of a crucifix, the God's head standing on the top of a four-barred Nilometer, faced by

[1] It is still so used in Italy. See Payne Knight's *Symbolical Language*, as before cited, p. 30.

[2] See above, *Christ and Krishna*, Sect. xxi.; and for the universal vogue of the symbol see Goblet D'Alviella's *Migration of Symbols*.

[3] *Id.* p. 31. For early Etruscan samples of the cross and rosary see Montfaucon, *Antiq. Expliq. Suppl.* iii. 77.

[4] See Dulaure, *Cultes Differens*.

[5] Cox, *Mythology*, p. 353. [6] Above, p. 323.

the mourning female figures. Here, too, he represents the Trinity, combining the attributes of Phtah-Sokari-Osiris.[1] There need then be no perplexity for rationalist students in regard to the text in Revelation (xi. 8) about "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their [in many Greek versions *our*, as in our A. V.] Lord was crucified."

Yet again, the common representation of the Hermae (figures or emblems of Hermes, God of boundaries, serving as landmarks), in the form of a cross with a head for top,[2] would connect the cross in particular with the doctrine of the Logos or Word, Hermes being the Logos in Greek theosophy long before the Christian era. Yet further, the recognized use of the *crux ansata* as the symbol of Venus, and the worship of it as such in her cult,[3] would connect the emblem just as effectively with a doctrine of Love. In fine, throughout the civilized world, and equally in the uncivilized, the symbol of the cross was found more or less directly associated with deity. It was built into the foundations of Egyptian temples; it is found in mosaic, with a superimposed head of Neptune, making it a crucifix, in the ruins of a Gallo-Roman villa;[4] it was the sign by which Osiris gave eternal life to the spirits of the just; it was the hammer (= lightning) with which northern Thor (Thonr, thunder = Indra) slew the serpent and restored the slain to life.[5] Always it meant salvation, life; often it meant the death of a God.

The instance of Neptune brings us, finally, to another fruitful source of cross-mythology. In his early Etruscan form, as Nethuns, he appears to have been a solar deity, standing for the risen sun.[6] In any case, as a God of the

[1] See the plates in Rossellini's *Monumenti dell' Egitto e della Nubia*, Tom. 3°, Tav. 23; and the description in his *Monumenti del Culto* (Pisa, 1844), p. 157. These wall-pictures appear to have been in a peculiarly sacred and secret chamber. See also Kenrick's *Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs*, 1850, i. 415.

[2] See the figures in Montfaucon, art. *Mercure*.

[3] Payne Knight, p. 30, citing Proclus, *Paraphr. Ptolem.* lii. p. 97.

[4] Baring-Gould, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, p. 344.

[5] It is worth noting that the serpent itself symbolizes the lightning which slays it. Strabo, xvi. c. ii. § 7.

[6] I. Taylor, *Etruscan Researches*, 1874, p. 139.

underworld, ruling the sea, but meddling with the affairs of the earth,[1] he would figure on a cross as representing his divided or overlapping power. But most clearly does the cosmological significance of the cross appear in the astronomical representation of the Lamb or Ram of the zodiac, which is actually that of a quasi-crucifixion of the animal[2] by the crossing lines of the equinoctial arcs. Astronomically speaking, the back of the zodiacal sign Aries is about ten degrees in length, and the equinoctial colure, or intersecting line, would pass through it at one part or another during seven centuries.[3] Here, then, was the Lamb on the Cross in astronomy, and by consequence in the religious mysteries. Melito of Sardis, arguing that "the Lord was a lamb, like the ram which Abraham saw caught in the bush," explains that the bush "represented the cross."[4] And the killing of the Lamb at the foot of the Sacred Tree, above referred to, was doubtless a symbolic sacrifice of zodiacal bearing, as was the earlier slaying of the Bull by Mithra. The entrance of the sun into Aries, too, was for the ancients the Birthday of the World;[5] and Aries was thus the chief of the signs, all of which were in their turn identified with the Sun-God.[6] The further significance of the Lamb as symbolizing purity is likewise apparent in Pagan cults before Christianity.[7] While Hermes, who as *Kriophoros*, the Ram-bearer, supplied the art-type for the Good Shepherd, had no special repute for purity, Apollo, who also was named *Nomios*, the pastoral, and *ἀρνοκόμης*, lamb-haired, or lamb-fleeced,[8] is repeatedly specified by Pindar (despite the countervailing legends)

[1] Cp. Catullus, xxxi. 3.
[2] See the figure in Brown's ed. of Aratos.
[3] Whiston's *Confutation of Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology*.
[4] Fragment v.
[5] Macrobius, *In Somnium Scipionis*, i. 21.
[6] *Saturnalia*, i. 21. In the Egyptian slaying of the ram for Ammon, the slain ram was mourned for and laid on the image of the God, and another image of the Sun-God brought to it (Herodotus, ii. 42).
[7] By a process of inversion, the grown ram seems to have signified, when sacrificed, the idea of lust. In Persian mythology, a ram helps to lead the first man and woman into sexuality and sin, and is the first animal they sacrifice (Spiegel, *Erânische Alterthumskunde*, i. 511–2).
[8] *Saturnalia*, i. 17.

as the ἅγνὸς θεός, "the chaste God";[1] and the Greek *hagnos*,[2] chaste, would certainly be coupled with the Latin *agnus*, lamb, throughout the Roman Empire.[3] In Apollo's own temple of Larissa the oracle was given out by a priestess, who once a month tasted by night of the blood of a sacrificed lamb, and became possessed by the God.[4] Here we have one more precedent for the Christian sacrament. But a ritual lament for a slain lamb is further pointed to by the Song of "Linus," a name apparently given by misunderstanding on the part of the Greeks[5] to Adonis or some other Syrian God, who was fabled to have grown up "among the lambs" and been slain by wild dogs, and who probably figured the destruction of the fresh spring by the summer heat.[6] And though the Jewish Passover, with its sacrificed lamb, had a different pretext, that too has clearly an astronomical basis, its date being determined by certain relations of sun and moon. Ancient mythology is a shoreless sea of dreams, of which we can only say that in their strange way they too must represent the working of constant psychological law, if we could but catch and follow the clues.

To sum up, then: the story of the crucifixion, firstly, *may* rest on the remote datum of an actual crucifixion of Jesus Ben Pandira, the probable Jesus of Paul, dead long before, and represented by no preserved biography or teachings whatever. But had this Jesus really been only "hanged on a tree," the factors of a crucifixion myth were strong enough to turn the hanging into a crucifixion.

Secondly, whether or not Jesus Ben Pandira was actually crucified, it was the mythic significance of crucifixion that made the early fortune of the cult, with the aid of the

[1] *Olymp.* vii. 106; *Pyth.* ix. 102; Æschylus, *Suppliants*, 222; Plutarch, *De Ei*, c. 20; *De Exilio*, c. 17. The same adjective was applied to Adonis, Dionysos, Persephonê, and Hephaistos in the Orphic hymns.

[2] In modern Greek the aspirates are not sounded.

[3] Thus the Greek ἄγνος (a tall tree like the willow) is the Latin *agnus castus*. It was with rods of this tree, by the way, that the scapegoat slave was beaten at Chaeronea, as described by Plutarch, who officiated once as chief magistrate (*Convivial Questions*, vi. 8).

[4] Pausanias, ii. 24.

[5] Preller, *Griech. Myth.* i. 360.

[6] K. O. Müller, *Lit. of Anc. Greece*, Lewis' trans. 1847, p. 18.

mythic significance of the name Jesus or Jeschu = Joshua, the ancient Sun-God.

Thirdly, the whole apparatus of the Gospel crucifixion is pure myth. The Last Supper, the Passion, the Betrayal, the Denial, the Trial, the false witnesses, Pilate's wife's dream, Pilate's repudiation of responsibility, the substitution of Barabbas, the crown of thorns, the gall and vinegar, the carrying of the cross, the mocking inscription, the talk of the two thieves, the "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (a quotation from Psalm xxii. 1), the "It is finished"—all these details are as truly mythical as the rending of the temple veil, the preternatural darkness, the rising of the saints from their graves, and the rising of the Crucified One from the rock tomb. The non-miraculous items are historically as unfounded as the miraculous. All alike are late accretions, probably dramatic; and to take them as history is no more reasonable than to see history in the *Bacchæ* of Euripides.

§ 25. *The Seamless Tunic.*

The account in the fourth Gospel of the parting of the God's garments among the soldiers is a good instance in little of the process of myth-making. In the synoptics it is simply stated that the soldiers cast lots for the garments, such being doubtless the practice at executions; the "prophecy" in the Psalms (xxii. 18) being as a matter of course kept in mind, though not cited. But in the fourth Gospel a late hand has wrought up the narrative with singular infelicity, describing the Roman soldiers as piously agreeing among themselves to fulfil the Jewish prophecy by abstaining from rending the Lord's *chiton*, or inner garment, which was "without seam, woven from the top throughout," at the same time dividing the other garments into "four parts, to every soldier a part." In order to lay stress on the seamless character of the tunic, resort is had to the absurdity of suggesting that the natural procedure of the soldiers with such a tunic

would be to cut it up, thereby making it worthless. Absolute myth is set forth with the circumstantiality of an eye-witness, very likely on the strength of a dramatic representation.

Like the water-wine miracle, equally special to the fourth Gospel, the myth of the seamless robe is specifically Pagan. In Sparta, says Pausanias concerning his own day, "every year the women weave a *chiton* for Apollo at Amyclæ; and they call the place where they weave it *Chiton*."[1] So at Elis every fifth year sixteen matrons wove a *peplos* or shawl for Hêrê, a special place being appointed for the work in this case also.[2] The function was rated high, and in some cults the robe had a mystic as well as sacred significance. Whether or not this significance was stressed in later Greece, it has entirely disappeared in the Christian myth, where the story of the seamless *chiton* has no point whatever.

The mystic meaning, however, is obvious enough. As Plutarch tells, the robe of the solar Osiris, unlike that of Isis, is one, whole, and indivisible, that robe being the universal light; whereas the light of the moon is variable and chequered, and the robe of Isis is accordingly so made; both robes being actually so represented in the mysteries[3] and in the monuments.[4] But the two symbols blend. The solar child Cyrus, like the young Joseph, is clothed in "a coat of many colours."[5] In the Magian system, again, "Ahura Mazda, together with Mithra, Rashnu, and Spenta Armaita, puts on a garment decked with stars, and made by God in such a way that *nobody can see the ends of its parts*."[6] So in the Orphic and other mysteries the Sun-God's robe is a purple peplos—like that put on Jesus by the mocking soldiery[7]—with a fawnskin added to symbolize the dappled night-sky, and a golden cincture to mark the

[1] B. iii. c. 16. [2] *Id.* v. 16; vi. 24, *end*.
[3] *On Isis and Osiris*, c. 78. Cp. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, i. 9, 19; vii. 3, etc.
[4] Bähr, *Symbolik des mosaischen Cultus*, i. 318.
[5] Herodotus, i. 111.
[6] Haug, *Essays on the Parsis*, p. 207.
[7] Matt. xxvii. 28; Mark xv. 17.

sun's path.[1] Pan, yet again, wears a deerskin of many colours to represent "the all"; and for Clement of Alexandria the robe of the high-priest is "the symbol of the world of sense."[2] Nearly every God has his typic garment. Dionysos, the God of the Night-Sun, wears the dappled deerskin as being "an image of the starlight in which he is clothed";[3] Attis is crowned by Cybelê with a starry cap;[4] and Sosipolis, the guardian God of Elis, is figured as a boy in a many-coloured cloak covered with stars.[5]

It is probable that in the early Christian dramatic mystery most of the details of the symbolic vestures of the other cults were reproduced in the garments divided into "four parts"; and not unlikely that the whole procedure of the "gorgeous apparel" was copied in the first instance from one of the mimic cults already described. But a myth Christianized was a myth materialized; and the seamless tunic has for the Christian world become a meaningless particular, like the many-coloured coat of Joseph.

§ 26. *The Burial and Resurrection.*

Such narratives as those of the rock-burial and resurrection of the Saviour-God in the Gospels are beyond all reasonable doubt simple developments of those mourning rituals which we have seen to be in use in so many ancient systems. The lost Persephonê was mourned for forty nights; the lost Attis and Adonis were sought for with lamentation, followed by rejoicing, when they were ceremonially found; the body of the slain Osiris was searched for with lamentation; and the prepared image, when found, seems to have been further mourned over and then rejoiced over.[6] Whatever may have been the order of the ceremony,

[1] Macrobius, *Sat.* i. 18, *end.* Cp. Clem. Alex. *Stromata*, vi. 2, citing Pherecydes.
[2] Clement, *Stromata*, v. 6.
[3] Diodorus Siculus, i. 11.
[4] Julian, *In Matrem Deorum*, cc. 3, 6.
[5] Pausanias, vi. 26.
[6] Firmicus, *De Errore*, c. 2; Juvenal, viii. 29. In Plutarch's version of the myth, Isis loses the body after finding it.

it is certain that the burying of an image of the slain God was a regular part of it. And above all in the cult of Mithra is the basis of the Gospel legend apparent. There the stone image of the "God from the rock" was laid on a bier, was mourned for, was placed in his rock tomb in the sacred cave, was withdrawn from that tomb, and was liturgically rejoiced over.[1] The early Christians who adopted the Mithraists' Lord's supper, adopted at the same time their resurrection mystery; and the Church finally made an explanatory legend out of the ritual, just as the Pagans did in myths innumerable. The later authorized myth of the Descent into Hell[2] is only a development or variation of the God's death and burial, and was already especially familiar in the mysteries of Dionysos, who descended to Hades to bring back his mother Semelê and carry her to heaven;[3] and in the worship of Attis, whose "Flight," "Concealment," "Vanishing," and "Descent into the Cave" are all specified by Julian[4] as part of the mysteries of the Vernal Equinox. The only wonder is that, seeing the Athenians celebrated the mysteries of Dêmêtêr twice a year, the Lesser mysteries at the vernal equinox and the Greater at the autumnal,[5] the Christist system did not adapt both, as the Attis

[1] Firmicus, *De Errore*, xxiii. (xxii. ed. Halm). Mr. Frazer remarks (*Golden Bough*, i. 297, *n.*, 298, *n.*) that the ceremony here described by Firmicus (*nocte quadam simulacrum in lectica supinum ponitur, et per numeros digestis fletibus plangitur....Idolum sepelis. Idolum plangitur*, etc.) "may very well be the mourning and funeral rites of Attis, to which he had more briefly referred in c. 3." But he had also referred to the funeral rites of Osiris (again mentioned in c. 27); he had repeatedly referred to Mithraism; and he speaks of the funeral rites of Attis, Mr. Frazer thinks, in c. 27. The details there are different. And in c. 23 (22) there are details which seem to me to point definitely to Mithra and not to Attis. The *idolum* here is of stone (*tu jacentia lapidis membra componis, tu insensibile corrigis saxum*); whereas in the Attis cult the image was wooden (c. 27) like that of Osiris. He describes too a process of anointing, and breaks out, *Habet ergo Diabolus Christos suos*—a phrase more applicable to Mithra than to Attis. Nor is there any reference in the context to the Attisian practice of castration, discussed in c. 4, or to the principle of vegetation, discussed in c. 3. Apart from the special symbolisms, doubtless, the religious comfort given was much the same in the different cults.

[2] See above, *Christ and Krishna*, Sec. xvi.

[3] Pausanias, ii. 31, 37; Apollodorus, iii. 5, 3.

[4] *In Deorum Matrem*, 5, 6. Cp. Macrobius, *Sat.* i. 21.

[5] Julian, last cit. c. 8.

worshippers seem to have done. That it did not do so is doubtless due to the greater vogue (despite the name "Lesser") of the vernal celebration.

That the contradictory Christian details as to the manner of the finding of the slain God's body are to be explained by the natural variations of their special mystery-drama we have already seen. The "Maries" in particular belong to the Judaic environment. Such circumstantialities give an air of reality to the story so long as their discrepancies are ignored. But when all the phenomena are alike taken into account, the solution supplied by comparative mythology is found to meet every aspect of the problem.

§ 27. *The Banquet of Seven.*

In a chapter which is obviously a late appendix to the fourth gospel (xxi.) we have one more addition to the resurrection myth of the synoptics. The risen God appears to seven of his disciples by the sea of Tiberias, and after helping them to a great haul of fish, causes them to partake of a meal of fish and bread, he himself not being represented as eating. In Mark and Luke we have two different stories. Mark gives us a manifestation to the eleven "as they sat at meat"; and Luke gives the story of the "two of them" on the way to Emmaus, to whom the God gives bread, followed by his appearance to "the eleven," on which occasion he himself eats broiled fish. The narrative in Mark is in the admittedly late appendix (xvi. 9–20); and that in Luke also may confidently be pronounced a late compilation, in view of its giving details which the other gospels lack. The unhistorical character of the whole set of stories is too obvious to need enforcement; but it seems possible to throw greater light on their origination than has yet been done. In all, we have stress laid on the act of eating, either by the God or those to whom he ministers; and in a religious ceremonial of eating we may look to find the origin of the various myths.

As regards the party of seven, the cue lies to hand in the Mithraic Catacomb remains. The banquet of the *Septem Pii Sacerdotes*, the seven holy priests, there represented as part of the syncretic cult of Mithras-Sabazios, was in all probability a feature in the cult of Dionysos, who also was identified with Sabazios; and the Christian story is simply one more case of a myth invented to explain a ritual usage. The wide vogue of that is to be inferred from the fact that a set of seven priests figures repeatedly in the Veda; and that a group of seven rulers of sacrificial feasts existed in Pagan Rome.[1] The materials of the banquet in the Catacomb painting are noteworthy. There is a pasty, a hare, a fish, an object which the Abbé Garucci calls a goose, but which is smaller than the hare, and might as well be a lobster; and *eight* cakes or muffins, red in colour, each marked with a cross and four dots or punctures—exactly the cross and "four wounds" of the Christian myth, represented on the solar disc.[2] In the Christian story we have simply bread and fish, as befitted a poor and struggling cultus and the circumstances of the Jesuist legend; but it is significant that in the supposed Christian Catacomb paintings which represent a banquet of seven—and which orthodoxy supposes to represent the episode in the fourth Gospel, without a word of regard to the admittedly Mithraic remains—there are commonly *eight basketsful* of bread. This number is viewed by the Catholics as indicating that the early Christians aimed at a symbolical truth, and to that end deliberately disregarded literal accuracy; not a word being said, again, of the eight cakes or cross-buns on the table of the *Septem Pii Sacerdotes*.[3] It is a curious circumstance that in one of

[1] See above, *Christ and Krishna*, p. 238, and refs. Cp. Garucci, *Mystères du Syncrétisme Phrygien*, 1854. The Persian monarchy, being held theocratic, had seven high officials answering to the seven Amshaspands (Bähr, i. 12); and the same idea would in all probability influence the secret cult.

[2] Thus the "hot-cross-bun" is a Pagan emblem.

[3] Northcote and Brownlow's ed. of *Roma Sotteranea*, 1879, ii. 67–71. I erred in stating, formerly (*Christ and Krishna*, ed. 1889, p. 87), that the figures in the quasi-Christian picture (Pl. xvii.) wore Mithraic caps. They are bareheaded in the sample given; and in Garucci's Mithraic picture only three of the seven wear caps.

these "Christian" catacomb pictures the seven figures are nude. We may surmise that a picture in which one of the seven was clothed would suffice to motive the odd statement (John xxi. 7) that Peter, previously naked, drew a garment about him when he was about to plunge into the sea. The frequency of the subject, as compared with the ostensibly much more important Supper of the Twelve, is a sufficient proof that it rested on some broader and older basis than the solitary narrative of the fourth Gospel.

Whether the story of the meeting with the eleven does not rest on some similar ancient ceremonial, and whether the myth of the meeting on the way to Emmaus is not in turn based on some concrete fact in ancient art or hierology, we cannot at present pretend to decide. Two things only have to be borne in mind in that connection. The story of the treachery of Judas, as we have seen, is as mythical as any of the details we have been considering; and just as the number Twelve is a factitious arrangement, so may the number eleven have been determined by some outside fact, and the betrayal story have been framed in consequence. As our knowledge stands, however, the probable solution seems to be that the banquet of the eleven is a late invention, which sought to supersede or outweigh the Banquet of Seven, of which the Pagan origin and vogue were notorious, by a story more in harmony with the established Christian tradition. On that view, the Banquet of Seven, mythic in itself, is the occasion of the other myth.

§ 28. *The Ascension.*

Of all the Christian miracles, this is perhaps the most obviously a fable born of ignorance. Only in a world living under the primitive delusion of a flat earth and a solid overarching firmament could such a fable have been framed; and it is a standing proof of the moral frailty of the religious intelligence that such a tale is still allowed to perplex and delude the simple. Orthodoxy may however be a little

more ready to consent to its disappearance when the mass of Christians realize that it is one more of the standing myths of Paganism. Even as Enoch and Elijah, mythic figures both, ascend to heaven in the Old Testament, so does demigod after demigod ascend to Godhood in the heathen world. Krishna thus mounts through the firmament of Indra.[1] At Byblos, after the annual mourning over the dead Adonis, he was believed to rise on the second day and mount to heaven in the presence of his worshippers.[2] Herakles in turn rises to heaven and immortality from the funeral-pyre which in his case rounds the solar myth,[3] the suggestion coming from the spectacle of the litten clouds of sunset. So Dionysos in one account ascends to heaven with his consort Ariadne,[4] in others with his mother Semelê;[5] which latter myth is supplied, in the Christian system, only after the Gospel-making period, by the doctrine and the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Such beliefs were in the ordinary way of opinion in an age in which it was quite worth while to go through the procedure of letting loose an eagle from the funeral pyre of each deceased emperor by way of demonstrating *his* ascent to heaven.

True, there were many scoffers; and it lies on the face of the Gospels, especially of the fourth, that the Gospel-makers relied for credence much more on their elaborated circumstantial stories of the risen God's reappearances than on that of his ascension, which in the synoptics is barely alleged, and which in the fourth Gospel is not asserted at all. But Christianity rose, in an atmosphere of thickening superstition, with the decline of ancient knowledge and civilization; and the ascension myth, once set up for modern Chistendom, is thus far no more expungible by the science of Copernicus and Newton than were the pell-mell of Pagan myths by the better knowledge of antiquity. *Absit omen.*

Be the event what it may, the general truth is such as

[1] Above, p. 145. [2] Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, c. 6. Cp. Frazer, i. 280.
[3] Cp. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 373, 469.
[4] Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* i. 10. [5] Refs. above, p. 250.

he who runs may read. In the fourth century, the exasperated Firmicus, met at every point by Pagan precedent for the legends of his gospels, could only shriek: "*Habet Diabolus Christos suos*[1]—the Devil has *his* Christs." We have now seen in some detail that the Christs, that of Firmicus included, were all man's. The Jesuist system is only one phase in a continuous development of ancient religion, in which God after God, Name after Name, is associated with the same immemorial and dimly comprehended symbols. In all probability there has been no long break for many thousands of years in the celebration of the Sacred Birthday on Christmas Day at the Tammuz-cave at Bethlehem; and only a slight variation in the dramatic ceremonial of the death of the God at Easter, which is still regularly performed at Jerusalem.[2] Long before Biblical Judaism was known, the people of Palestine shared in the universal rituals of the primeval cults of sun and moon, Nature and symbol; and the successive waves of conquest, physical and mystical, have only transformed the primordial hallucination. It might well last two thousand years more after subsisting from the dawn of civilization; and it will disappear only when all hallucination alike is solved in science.

[1] *De Errore*, c. 23 (22).
[2] See the *Church Times*, May 11th, 1888.

SECOND DIVISION.

Myths of Doctrine.

§ 1. *The Jesuine Discourses in General.*

Coming, finally, to the teachings as distinct from the actions attributed to the Gospel Jesus, we shall do well first to recall as closely as may be the tenor and cast of the Jesuine discourses, and to try to imagine their being delivered in antiquity to groups or crowds of Syrian peasants in the fashion the Gospels describe. It is surprising how little misgiving has been shown on this point even by critical students. Dr. Edwin Hatch, the one English ecclesiastic of recent years who has shown any original insight into the problems of Christian origins, remarks concerning the obvious transition from the Sermon on the Mount to the Nicene Creed that "The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants; the other to a world of Greek philosophers."[1] Is this really a just judgment? Is there any more of the spirit and speech of the peasant in the "Sermon" than in the Creed? Certainly they differ widely enough. The first comes from moralists, the second from pragmatic theologians, combining old theosophy with new. But is the former any more on the plane of Syrian peasants than the other?

With the "Sermon on the Mount" in particular—pronounced by Baur[2] to be undoubtedly, with the parables about the kingdom of God, the most genuine and original

[1] Hibbert Lectures on *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church*, 1890, *beginning*.

[2] *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, 1853, p. 34. Renan, on the other hand, recognizes that the maxims of the Sermon had long been "the current money of the synagogues." *Vie de Jésus*, préf. de la 13e édit. p. xviii. Cp. ch. v. p. 85.

elements of the Jesuine teaching preserved to us—we shall deal in detail below, showing that it was never a Sermon, and that the Mount is just that of the old God-and-Mountain myth over again. But the reader is requested first of all to put to himself in reverie the question whether that cento of crystallized ethical maxims and cryptic sayings was the kind of discourse that would be acclaimed by Syrian or any other illiterate peasants in any age. It is true that a number of the maxims in the Sermon are *as such* much fitter for popular instruction than many of the mystic parables—to say nothing of the impossible discourses of the fourth Gospel. But it is with the total Sermon as a possible discourse delivered extempore to a multitude that we are concerned. The sermons even of educated and thoughtful preachers to educated and comparatively thoughtful audiences in our own day fall far short of the Gospel discourse in brevity and obscurity of phrase and condensation of propositions—as they had need. Contrasting them with the Sermon on the Mount, men in any age might well say that Jesus preached as never man preached. But is not this comment the unwitting confutation of the claim that this unexampled preaching really took place, to the satisfaction of multitudes of Syrian peasants? Will any man to-day undertake to enthral any audience, Syrian or other, to whom the matter is new, by repeating the Gospel compilation of texts as it stands?

The same question forces itself in face of such an utterance as the passage Matt. xi. 25–30, which begins: "At that season Jesus *answered and said*, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth," and ends, "For my yoke is easy (*chrēstos* = gentle, beneficent) and my burden is light." Such an allocution has not even the semblance of a historical utterance by a teacher. It begins with a prayer to God, and passes without any attempt at juncture into a general address, including the formula, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you....." What was the yoke, and what was the rest? What effect could such an address

have upon an audience? There is no preceding explanatory talk, no specification even of a way of life as constituting the "yoke." We are dealing with an utterance put in the mouth of a God, as such, without even an account of circumstances. As history, the statement is simply unintelligible; it can seem otherwise only to those who habitually think of Jesus as a supernatural figure.

Considered as a myth, on the other hand, the passage explains itself at once. It is an utterance of the God in the mystery-drama. In the *Bacchæ* of Euripides the Chorus sings: "Coming from the Asian lands, having left the sacred Tmolus, I dance in honour of Bromius, *a pleasant labour and a toil easily borne*, honouring the God Bacchus."[1] In the mysteries of Mithra, again, the priest recited the formula: "Be of good courage, Mystæ: ye have been instructed of the God: and ye shall have salvation from your sorrows."[2] Similarly, in the mysteries of Isis,[3] the Goddess, first announcing her powers and titles as Jesus announces that "all things have been delivered unto me of my Father," proceeded with phrases of reassurance and comfort: "I come compassionate of your woes: I come, helpful and propitious. Cease from tears and make an end of lamentations; put away despair: now doth my providence cause to shine the salutary day." The believer is told to "fear not that the way is hard"; the priest exhorts him to wear a joyous countenance, in keeping with his white robe, and to bear willingly the "yoke" of his new ministry, enjoying the fruit of his new "liberty"—a liberty dependent on a new strictness of life. By such parallels, the speech of Jesus, inexplicable as it stands in the Gospel, is at once elucidated: it is the dramatic language of the God in the mystery-play, transferred at haphazard to the Gospel as something said by the Messiah in life, àpropos of nothing.

[1] *Bacchæ*, 64–66.

[2] Firmicus, *De Errore*, xxiii. Cp. Damascius, cited by Frazer, i. 298, *note*.

[3] Apuleius (*Metamorphoses*, l. x.) thus makes Isis address the praying Lucius. The language is evidently imitative of that used in the mysteries of initiation, which follow in the tale.

So little concern for verisimilitude had the gospel-makers that in the very next chapter to that in which Jesus is made to declare "I am meek and lowly in heart," he is represented as saying of himself, "a greater than Solomon is here."[1] That utterance, too, is historically irreconcilable with the notion of a sane teacher; it belongs to the process of myth-making. But no less obviously fictitious is the reiterated utterance to the disciples that whatsoever they shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.[2] Here we have a figment of church-making priests, who doubly betray themselves by the previous formula, "if he refuse to hear the *ecclesia*, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican"—this at a time when there was for the Jesuists no *ecclesia*. Following on this stands the entirely discordant command that the inveterate offender shall be forgiven "until seventy times seven." Shall we then say that this teaching, which is supported by the parable about forgiving trespasses under fear of future punishment, is the earlier and the genuine one because it is the better, and that the obvious ecclesiastical forgery is necessarily the later? That course is barred, firstly, by the fact that the ecclesiastical forgery belongs still to the Judaic period, while the parable is clearly Gentile; and secondly by the very structure of the higher teaching, for there also Jesus is made to speak Messianically of "*my* heavenly Father," even as he does in the prior teaching about the little ones whose "Angels do always behold the face of *my* father which is in Heaven." These are not the words of an actual teacher: they are formulas put in the God's mouth by his worshippers.

In the case of such teachings, the problem is relatively simple: *a priori* and *a posteriori* the decision must be against the traditional acceptance. But in regard to a number of the Jesuine utterances the grounds for forming an opinion are scantier; and a further process of analysis is necessary before we can say with the same confidence that we have seen a myth constructed. For instance, we

[1] Matt. xii. 42. [2] Matt. xviii. 18–19.

have the story of the warning to the scribe who proposed to become a disciple: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."[1] Any wandering Judaic teacher, clearly, might have said this, since any such might call himself "the Son of Man." But that the saying, if traditional, is merely a tradition about "somebody," becomes fairly clear when we note that the episode ends there. The saying is fortuitous: it is flatly opposed to others of "the Gospel Jesus," who immediately afterwards figures as explaining why his disciples do not fast, and as avowing that he has come "eating and drinking": it is, in effect, a pragmatic fiction, framed either to show that the Messiah expected to suffer, or to countervail new doctrines which made him anti-ascetic.[2] In Luke (ix. 59) the utterance is followed by the story of his saying "unto another, Follow me," and of the other asking for leave to bury his father. In Matthew that story is introduced by the phrase, "And *another of his disciples* said unto Him," the scribe in this case being implicitly styled a disciple. But the latter story in both forms is a pragmatic variant on that in the myth of Elijah and Elisha,[3] where Elisha gets the leave which Jesus refuses. We are not dealing with biography at all.[4] In neither case is aught said of the effect of the saying on the "disciple."

Thus the stories of Jesus explaining why his disciples do not fast,[5] and why he comes eating and drinking,[6] are arraigned in advance. If these be biographical, the previous story of professed hardship is not. But since the previous story is myth, may not these be biographical? The second, indeed, might very well be true of a non-ascetic teacher, twitting his censurers. But with what other elements in the Gospels does this story conceivably

[1] Matt. viii. 20.

[2] That there was an anti-ascetic school in Jewry is clear from the number of passages in praise of wine-drinking in the Talmud. See them collected by Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudic Commentary*, Eng. tr. pp. 229–232.

[3] 1 Kings xix. 20.

[4] "The facility of transfer of a tale from one person to another is a mark of the myth." Dr. Gardner, as cited, p. 112.

[5] Matt. ix. 15. [6] Matt. xi. 19.

coalesce? With any of the various doctrines of the kingdom of heaven? With the narrow Judaic Messianism which framed one Messianic discourse excluding Gentiles and Samaritans, and another promising that the twelve should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes? We are not entitled to say that with this last frame of mind it could not consist; but we are entitled to say that a teacher with these for his central doctrines answers only to a fragment of the total tradition, and is not at all the accepted Jesus of modern imagination. And when at least four-fifths of the Gospel teachings collapse into myth on judicial scrutiny, how shall we rationally found on a residuum that merely evades our primary tests? In the lore of Paul there is not even that residuum. That is to say, there was in Paul's time a Jesuism which had a crucified Jesus, but *no* Jesuine teaching; not even that of "the kingdom."

And this elenchus is fatal to the biographical pretensions of even the best Gospel teachings. Some of these are at once proved late by the simple test of comparison of MSS. Dr. Farrar, finding that the saying, "For the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," is absent from the four earliest codices, exclaims that "this glorious utterance" is "omitted" by the copyists. "There were scribes so ignorant, and so steeped in the Elijah-spirit of persecution, as to regard it as dangerous."[1] Mr. J. Estlin Carpenter justly comments that "this charge seems to be really without foundation. The evidence points to gradual accretion rather than to intentional omission."[2] But the critical process must go further than it has been carried by the school of Mr. Carpenter, who chronically fall back on assumptions as to the genuineness of other Jesuine utterances, and quite unwarrantably salve the fourth Gospel as giving "*interpretations* of the Master's thought."[3]

A scientific criticism must set aside all such obviously

[1] *Expositor*, April, 1889, p. 249.
[2] *The First Three Gospels*, 2nd ed. p. 394.
[3] *Id.* p. 55.

arbitrary compromises; and it must expressly refuse to let the attractiveness of any doctrine in the Gospels certify its genuineness. Jesus at one point is made to insist that every jot and tittle of the Mosaic law must be accomplished, and at another to rebut Sabbatarianism. Paul knows of neither teaching. Shall we then say that the second comes from the Jesus we *wish* to believe in, merely because we like it? Or shall we say this of the humanitarian teaching: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"? It is impossible: that particular teaching is mythical to the core, being put in the mouth of the God as such, not of any actual teacher. We may, if we are determined to be arbitrary, proceed to say that the man who *wrote* that myth had in him the high quality men used to ascribe to Jesus; and profess to make shift with an idealisation of him. But the teaching in question is a palpable adaptation from the ancient ritual of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, where the soul at the bar of judgment pleads: "I have given bread to him that was hungry, water to him that was thirsty, clothes to the naked, and shelter to the wanderer."[1] Thus are we carried back to the humanism of ancient polytheists, the immemorial rituals of one of the oldest civilisations. And it needed no supernal prophet to frame these any more than the Christian adaptations. King Saneha on his monuments praises himself in the language of the ritual cited; and "that very Saneha who refreshed the thirsty, and protected the oppressed, has no difficulty about punishing his conquered enemy pitilessly. He causes the concubines of this enemy, the innocent victims of his vengeance, to be devoted to the deity. He appropriates all his enemy's goods, plunders his house, and proceeds in all this on the maxim that he ought to do to his enemy as his enemy had meant to do to him."[2] Saneha, alas, is thoroughly historical. Christendom still duly produces its generations

[1] Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 227. Cp. Kuenen, *The Religion of Israel*, Eng. tr. i. 397.

[2] Tiele, as cited, pp. 129–130.

of moderately modified Sanehas, as regularly as its harvests; and, like him, tells of its religion of love.

If on this it be urged that, even as men are compounds of contradiction—even as a hundred historical teachers, from Plato to Ruskin, give internecine and irreconcilable laws as *their* gospel to men—so may it have been with a Jesus in the days of Pontius Pilate; if this be urged, the answer is that that line of reasoning evades alike the documentary and the psychological problem. The contradictions of the Gospel teaching are not as the incidental self-contradictions of Hegel and Kant and Comte and Arnold and Ruskin: they are as the oppugnant doctrines of these and many more varying men intertwined with each other: they belong to clashing sects, to changing generations, to a hundred hands; they occur in documents which are visibly wrought of shreds and patches; they are inextricably bound up with myths "gross as a mountain, open, palpable"; and all the while they are faced by the eternal veto of the silence of Paul, who knows not a word of Jesuine teaching, and to whom even the later interpolators attribute at most a knowledge of the Dominical ritual of the Eucharist, itself pure myth.

After Paul, there may hypothetically have been, say, three Jesuses who taught and figured as Messiahs—a second Jesus without cognomen, a third who was a Nazarite, a fourth who "came eating and drinking." But to none of these faraway and problematic shadows, passing like changing clouds across the remote horizon of our imagination, can we scientifically ascribe a single saying in the Gospels, any more than we can scientifically credit them with raising the dead. The discourses, like the miracles, reveal their mythic origin to the instructed eye of reason. And when we fully realise what the mythopœic faculty can do, we have positively no reason left for believing that any aspect of the composite Gospel Jesus is projected even remotely by any real person living the life of a wandering teacher. Men who had grafted Gentilism on a neo-Judaic cult of a demi-god Messiah could strike out the conception of a Son of Man "eating and drinking," as they could

graft the scattered higher Judaic ethics on a crude cult of salvation by blood sacrifice. Against such liberalism, other and more sectarian adherents could frame the myth that the teaching Jesus was like them a Nazarite, and ascribe to him the teachings they favoured. Against this, in turn, another group or generation could call themselves Nazarenes in the sense of "Netzerenes," members of the Messianic cult of "the Branch"; or they could frame the myth of the sojourn at Nazareth, seeking a neutral etymology which should leave them Jesuists without even a shadow of Nazarite burdens. When we can set formal or pragmatic limits to the generative power of the mythopœic faculty, we may pretend to save some shred of historical fact from the Jesus legend as it stands; but not till then.

Nor can we with any pretence of historical and logical method any longer claim to stamp certain doctrines as framable only by "the" ideal Jesus of tradition. This persistent *petitio principii* is committed by none more arbitrarily than by John Mill, who like Arnold thought to solve the Gospel problem on a mere general survey and inference.[1] "Who among his disciples or among their proselytes," he asks, "was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul.....; still less the early Christian writers.....About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight....."[2] Had Mill known anything about the legend and lore of Buddha; had he paid heed to the evolution of moral ideas in Egypt and China; had he weighed with any comparative care the ethic of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius; and had he taken the trouble to note how often the Jesuine teaching is a mere repetition of teachings in the Old Testament, he could never have penned his headlong endorsement of the average Christian prepossession. His words expressly homologate all the

[1] Cp. Professor Bain's *J. S. Mill*, p. 139.
[2] *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 253–4.

sayings in the Gospels, though he goes on to contemn the fourth Gospel *en bloc*, on grounds which involve the overthrow of his claim for the synoptics, whose teaching is so often and so profoundly inconsistent. Where the professed rationalist thus outsings the pæans of faith, the devout Newman, as we have seen, deliberately surrenders the claim made as historically false. The sufficient answer to Mill is that if nobody but one in the whole Hellenistic world in the first two centuries of our era was capable of framing the Jesuine teachings, those teachings could not possibly have found any acceptance. His conception is the old historical chimera, a mere survival of supernaturalist concepts. It was certainly not the mythic "fishermen of Galilee" who framed the Gospels, which did not exist in the time at which they are pretended to have lived; and as little was it Paul, whose utter ignorance of any Jesuine teaching might have given Mill pause if he had been doing aught but voice an unreasoning prepossession, acquired from his environment. But in the Judæo-Hellenistic world of the second century there was demonstrably the power to frame each and every doctrine in the New Testament.

The general principles being thus reached and laid out, it remains to trace and anatomise, in series, some of the salient myths of doctrine as we have done with the myths of action. The forms of demonstration vary; but the exhibited processes of fiction, the exposed psychology of error and credence in the two species, are essentially akin.

§ 2. *The Preaching of John the Baptist.*

The menace to the "offspring of vipers"[1] might conceivably be delivered (in a more paraphrased form) in ancient Palestine by any fanatic who expected the speedy coming of a conquering Messiah; it has no relevance whatever to the coming of an ostensibly beneficent and suffering and teaching Messiah. There is therefore some

[1] Matt. iii. 7.

presumption in favour of a real tradition of such preaching by a man named John, and of its having been adapted by Christists to some one of their purposes. But here again arises the normal difficulty: Paul knows nothing of the Forerunner; and again, Why should Christists who represented Jesus as preaching forgiveness and love, desire to make use of such a factor? In the lack of evidence we can only surmise that the Forerunner-motive was introduced (*a*) before the Sermon on the Mount and other passages of a pacific tenor; perhaps (*b*) in the period after the destruction of Jerusalem, when predictions of that event were ascribed to Jesus. The pretended acclaiming of Jesus as Messiah by John is of course absolute myth.

§ 3. *Jesus as a Preacher of Universalism.*

In connection with the miraculous healing of the centurion's servant (Matt. viii. 11) Jesus is represented as declaring that many Gentiles shall enter into the Jewish kingdom of heaven, while "the Children of the Kingdom" shall be cast into perdition. Here, on a quite mythical occasion, we have a teaching possible to a revolutionary mahdist somewhat like John, but in no way congruous with the Judaic doctrine put into the mouth of Jesus in Matt. x. 5–6, where he tells his disciples to go only to the cities of Israel, expressly avoiding the Gentiles and the Samaritans. It is arguable, *prima facie*, that either doctrine may be the earlier, and the other a later interpolation. But on the view that the earlier doctrine was the universalist, we must conclude that a universalist cult was captured by or relapsed into a purely Judaic one—an extremely unlikely development. A narrow cult might be expanded into a broader; but into a cult which began on the broad basis no narrow Judaists would ever have entered. The whole Pauline literature points to the converse process; and on that view the universalist doctrine is a late pro-Gentile fiction; though the story of the sending of the disciples through Israel is also unhistorical, being an item in the myth of the Twelve Apostles. Both of the conflicting

teachings are thus alike mythical. The early Jesuist movement *was* anti-Gentile and anti-Samaritan; but the story of the Messiah *preaching* these doctrines is apologetic myth. And the connected conception of a popular teacher avowedly sending forth disciples "as sheep in the midst of wolves," and predicting wholesale massacre for his followers, is myth pure and simple: the creation of the later age in which destructive persecution had actually been suffered; the process being psychologically akin to that which produces myths to explain ritual. After the Master was held to have been put to death, the doctrine that "it is enough for the disciple to be as his master" was an obvious comment when the followers in turn suffered violence; and to put the doctrine into the Master's mouth was in the normal way of mythopoiesis.

§ 4. *Jesus as Messiah.*

Much speculation has been spent on the problem, "In what light did Jesus regard his mission as Messiah?" and no solution has ever been reached which gives any common standing-ground for those who have abandoned the supernaturalist view. On that view the Jewish Messiah's function was to make a tremendous display of miraculous power, to be triumphantly acclaimed at Jerusalem, yet to fail to convert the Jews to belief in his divinity, and thereupon to get put to death by them for the salvation of mankind. Putting such irrationalism aside, men begin to ask whether Jesus had not some humanly-intelligible plan, some scheme of either social or individual reform for his own country, to begin with. He has thus been conceived as predominantly (1) a socialist, (2) an anti-ceremonialist, (3) a mental individualist, in the sense of preaching a care for the higher life as freed from economic concern. But none of these views, nor any other scheme of characterization, serves to explain why, starting as such a teacher, he should call himself the Messiah. For the Jews that word connoted primarily a restorer of the Jewish national fortunes. Later—it matters not to our present

problem how long[1] before the reign of Herod—there began to arise, possibly from Mazdean sources,[2] the conception of a spiritual Messiah, who should secure to his followers not an earthly but a heavenly salvation. The question is, How shall we conceive any sane moral teacher as regarding himself in either of these lights?

We have seen that the Gospels swing at the will of their framers and interpolators between a Judaic and a universalist conception of salvation. On either line, wherein was the Messiahship to consist? The sending out of the twelve disciples to Israel is myth: are we then to fall back on the assumption that a real Jesus sought to make a popular movement among the Jews by telling them: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"?[3] Are we to be asked to believe that on the strength of such anti-national teaching any man was welcomed by the whole populace of Jerusalem with hosannahs? Or, putting aside both factors of the contradiction as obviously late pragmatic myths, shall we try to conceive of a Jesus who, without the machinery of Twelve Apostles, circulated simply the doctrine of a speedy end of the world, in which he should appear in the clouds as the Son of Man=Son of God? On that view we are dealing with an insane visionary—a possible enough phenomenon in ancient Jewry, but no subject for modern admiration. And here, as always, there faces us the tacit negation of Paul. *Paul's Jesus had given no Messianic teaching. He did but Messianically die.*

important

There was, in fine, only one sense in which any sane Jew of the period could regard himself as the Messiah, and that was as a national leader against the Roman rule. A series of such Messiahs did actually arise; and as each of them would be called "the Lord" by his followers, it

[1] See Nicolas, *Des Doctrines religieuses des Juifs*, 1860, ch. v., for a concise view of the developments. Cp. Schürer, *Hist. of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, Eng. tr. Div. ii. vol. ii. § 29.

[2] Cp. Gustave d'Eichthal, *Les Evangiles*, 1863, i. 38–39, 216–218.

[3] Matt. xxi. 43.

remains a possibility that some of the ethical sayings of one or other of them may have got into circulation and been mistakenly preserved in the Gospels. But the solid fact remains that the Gospels preserve no saying uttered in such Messianic capacity, the position forced on all the Gospel-makers being that the slain and risen Messiah was not a political leader at all. He is represented as being asked what the Jews should do in the matter of tribute, and as returning a juggling answer, the final force of which is that the Roman rule should be submitted to. And the story of the miraculous fish with the coin in its mouth reveals once for all that such teachings are as mythic as the miracle itself.

Thus the whole Messianic teaching of the Gospels exposes itself as pure myth on the most general criticism; and a particular analysis only strengthens the conclusion. A dozen times over Jesus is represented as grounding his Messianic claim on his miracles—myth certifying myth. In one episode, as we have seen, he is made to repudiate the Davidic descent which the genealogies claim for him. Yet again, such a quasi-Messianic utterance as Matt. xviii. 11, "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," is in that connection admittedly spurious, being absent from the oldest codices; and the same passage in Luke (xix. 10) has every mark of fiction. The teacher is represented as saying that *he* has saved Zacchæus, when the sole rational purport of the story is that Zacchæus is saved by his own goodness. For the rest, the teacher's Messianic assumption is again and again connected with teaching that is no less palpably fictitious, as the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem—an utterance discredited on the one hand as implying supernatural knowledge, and on the other hand as unknown to Paul. Always we come back to that dead wall of rebuttal, even if we evade the palpable falsity of the Gospel record.

Any attempt on rational lines, then, to reach a real personality for the Gospel Jesus must at an early stage give up the hypothesis that he claimed to be Messiah in any sense whatever. That is plainly a cult-myth. What

sympathetic criticism wants to save is the moral teacher; and the moral teacher is not to be combined with a magistral or theurgic pretence of "saving," either on earth or in heaven. Every such pretence stultifies the function of humanly teaching men how to live aright, though such a pretence could conceivably be foisted by later devotees on a primary moral teaching really given. But the moral teaching in turn must be investigated upon its documentary merits; for when once the presence of superimposed didactic myth is granted, it is obviously illicit to deny the likelihood that the primary moral teaching is itself either in whole or in part mythic.

§ 5. *Jesus as Preparing the Kingdom of God.*

In the lore of "the kingdom of God" we have a position conceivably midway between an impossible profession of spiritual Messiahship by a teacher in his own person, and the simple utterance of moral exhortations or theistic moral philosophy. There at once arises, however, the problem as to what "the kingdom of God" really meant. In the Sermon on the Mount the "kingdom of heaven" is named in the first sentence, and several times afterwards, with no elucidation, but in the ostensible sense simply of "heaven" —a happy and lasting dwelling-place on high. Here, then, and in other passages of the same order, a certain line of conduct is specified simply as securing happiness in a future state; and the meaning attached to the Forerunner's prediction, "the kingdom of heaven [or of God] is at hand," would seem to have been that the earthly order was soon to pass away. Similarly, the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God" would seem to have meant the same doctrine *plus* the assurance of salvation to the poor (or the poor in spirit); to those who keep the law (Matt. v. 17–19); or to those who are peaceable and forgiving, and in general "do the will of my Father which is in heaven." In this aspect the kingdom of God is merely the heaven promised to the good; and any teacher may have thus supported his prescriptions. Such a teaching, too, might later be made

a basis for fictitious Messianic claims put in the teacher's mouth. On that view the teachings themselves are a subject for investigation.

In other passages, however, "the kingdom of God" becomes a mystery. "Unto you [the disciples] is given [A. V. "it is given to know"] the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all things are done in parables."[1] Putting aside for the present the still more cryptic context, we have here an entirely different strain from that above noted. About the "kingdom of heaven" in the former teachings there is no alleged or implied mystery; and the delivery of the latter teaching by the same teacher is simply unintelligible. By those who found on the other, this must be set aside as spurious. So with the parables which "liken" the kingdom of heaven to a measure of leaven, a hidden treasure, a fishing net, or a grain of mustard seed that grows into a great tree: the reference is not to the "early heaven," but to the process of the new cult or to the supposed happiness acquired by joining it. Baur's grouping of these with the Sermon on the Mount[2] is his most singular oversight; for the kingdom of heaven in that document is simply the future state of reward, whereas the concept of the parables is, as he himself avows, subjective. It is therefore a secondary doctrinal development.

So, too, with the formula in Matt. xii. 28: "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you"; the purport is supernaturalist, and alien to the simple doctrine of the heavenly reward. Yet again, however, we have in Luke (xvii. 20–21) the remarkable saying, in reply to a question as to the time of the advent, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [*i.e.*, "with outward show," "in a visible form"], neither shall they say, Lo, here! or There! for lo, the Kingdom of God is within you." Is *this*, then, the doctrine of the teacher of the Sermon on the Mount and the kindred lore? If so, how is this solitary saying to be explained, as standing

[1] Mark iv. 11; Matt. xiii. 11.

[2] As cited above, p. 423.

among a multitude representing an utterly different cast of thought?

The answer is inevitable: this, the one truly remarkable and impressive Gospel saying on the subject of the "kingdom," is a late intellectual development: the "original" thought is an interpolation from or by some unknown thinker. To fasten upon this as a truly Jesuine teaching because it is so striking, is to violate every principle of coherent criticism. If *this* be Jesuine, the whole remaining mass of the Gospels is not only spurious but an immense stultification of a Jesuine doctrine actually current to start with. But this memorable doctrine is not only unknown to Paul: it is the negation of *his* entire cult. Finally, it occurs in the confessedly late third Gospel; and it occurs in context with (1) a passage accrediting the Samaritans and (2) a passage predicting the day of judgment. With neither of these has it any connection. It is one of the most manifest interpolations in the Gospels; and it is in conflict no less with the other "kingdom" passages in Luke than with those in Matthew and Mark. What can criticism do but give it up as a late rationalistic fiction?

As regards the doctrine of the "kingdom of God" then, we must recede for our basis to the simple form of it which pervades the Gospels, and which represents a standing belief in later Judaism. The conception of "the kingdom" as a "mystery" belongs to a Gnostic or priestly influence which repeatedly appears in Mark: the highest form of all is the most impossible as a starting-point. To the primary form there attaches no originality. All the more, of course, it may conceivably have been part of the lore of a non-Messianic moral teacher, part even of the lore of the remote Jesus of Paul, since Paul holds by a heaven and a hell. But no such commonplace of current religion can constitute a significant nucleus for a personality. The significant element must be the moral teaching combined with it—a moral teaching of which, be it noted, Paul shows no knowledge. Let us then waive, for the argument's sake, the veto of Paul's silence and consider whether the

moral teachings in turn can have been the genuine utterances of a Jesus broadly answering to the Gospel narratives.

§ 6. *The Sermon on the Mount.*

In the first Gospel (v.–vii.) Jesus is represented as uttering, on a mountain, a short but for the most part highly concentrated ethical discourse, fit for use as a written cult-code, of a primitive sort, but extremely unfit for oral communication to a popular audience, who could not possibly get more than fragments of it by heart. In the third Gospel (vi.), parts of the same document, word for word, with, however, some marked and vital changes of phrase, are represented as being delivered "on the plain." Neither mountain nor plain is named.

The demonstration of the mythical character of both the discourses and the typographical details is to be reached by way of a decomposition of the main document into its component texts, which are nearly all pre-Christian. The *Société Scientifique Littéraire Israélite* a generation ago published a work by its perpetual secretary, M. Hippolyte Rodrigues, entitled *Les Origines du Sermon de la Montagne*,[1] showing that there is hardly an item in it which is not to be found in one form or another in *Jewish* literature, early and late, quite independently of any Christian tradition. A selection of the more important parallels cited by M. Rodrigues (with some others) to the sentences of the Sermon, from Hebrew literature, will suffice to show as much here. Let the passages which follow be compared with the verses in Matt. v., vi., and vii. corresponding to the numbers :—

V. 3. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low and he saved me. Ps. cxvi. 6.

Mysteries are revealed unto the meek....The Lord....is honoured of the lowly. Ecclesiasticus iii. 19–20.

He that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour ["eternal glory" in the version of M. Rodrigues]. Prov. xxix. 23.

[1] Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1868.

Wherever there is any question in the Bible of the greatness of God, his love for the humble is spoken of. Talmud, *Megilla*, p. 31, recto.

I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isa. lvii. 15.

4. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. Ps. cxlvii. 3.

5. The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Ps. xxxvii. 11.

He giveth grace unto the lowly. Prov. iii. 34.

6. He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly....he shall dwell on high. Isa. xxxiii. 15.

Thou wilt bless the righteous, O Lord. Ps. v. 13. (Cp. xv. 12.)

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter into it. Ps. cxviii. 20.

7. He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour. Prov. xxi. 21.

8. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?....He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Ps. xxiv. 3, 4.

9. Seek peace and pursue it. Ps. xxxiv. 14.

Love peace and seek it at any price. Talmud, Hillel, *Pirké-Aboth*, i. 12.

10. Remember that it is better to be persecuted than persecutor. Talmud, *Yoma*,—*Derech Eretz*.

Were the persecutor a just man and the persecuted an impious, God would still be on the side of the persecuted. Midrash, *Vayikra-Rabba*, xxvii. 11 and 12.

Verses 13 to 21 are hardly worth comparing, though even their phraseology, and in particular the stress laid on "these least commandments"—a stress which is in flat denial of some of the main dogmas of the Christian religion—is obviously Judaic. At verse 22 we return to specific precepts:—

22. He who causes his brother publicly to blush shall have no part in the future life. Talmud, *Aboth*, iii. 13.

It were better for a man to cast himself in a furnace than to cause his brother to blush in public. Rabbi Simeon, Ben Jochaï, Talmud, *Sota*, fol. 19.

He who causes his neighbour to grow pale in public shall have no part in the world to come. Eléazar of Modein, *Pirké-Aboth*, iii. 15.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Lev. xix. 17.

The stranger that sojourneth with you....thou shalt love....as thyself. Lev. xix. 34. (Cp. Deut. x. 19.)

24. Bear not hatred to thy neighbour for every wrong, and do nothing at all by injurious practices. Ecclesiasticus x. 6.

Be slow to embroil thyself, and be easy to be reconciled. Talmud, *Pirké-Aboth*, ii. 10.

To whom does God pardon sins? To him who himself forgives injuries. Talmud, *Megilla*, fol. 28.

The friends of God are, he who does not grow wroth, and he who gives the example of humility. Talmud, *Pesachim*, 113.

Whoever is prompt to pardon, his sins also shall be pardoned. Talmud, *Megilla*, fol. 25.

It is [a man's] glory to pass over a transgression. Prov. xix. 11.

[Note in contrast the ethical significance of Matt. v. 26.]

28. Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbour's wife. Ex. xx. 17. Deut. v. 21.

He who regards a woman with an impure intention has already as it were committed adultery. Talmud, *Kallah*, beginning.

In every act it is above all the thought, the intention, which God inquires into, and which he will judge. Talmud, *Yoma*, fol. 29, *a*.

29. [The doctrine is old in Judaism. *Midrash Jaleont*, Section Wayechi, No. 16, on Gen. v. 48, gives the story of Rabbi Nathia ben Harras, who, tempted by the Devil in the form of a beautiful woman, burned out his eyes with a red-hot nail. The angel Raphael was sent to restore his sight, but he feared fresh temptation. Then God promised that the Evil One should never tempt him again, and he consented to be healed.]

32. A wife must not be sent away save for adultery. Shammai in the Talmud, *Gittin*, p. 90.

The altar itself sheds tears on him who repudiates his wife. Eliezer, *ibid.*

34. Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One. Ecclus. xxiii. 9.

Let your nay be nay. Let your yea be yea. Talmud, *Baba-Mezia*, fol. 49, verso.

39. Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him. Lam. iii. 30.

Say not thou, I will recompense evil. Prov. xx. 22.

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. *Id.* xxiv. 29.

Thou shalt not take vengeance....but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Lev. xix. 18.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Isa. l. 6.

Those who undergo injury without returning it, those who hear themselves vilified and do not reply, who have no motive but love, who accept evils with joy, it is of them that the prophet speaks when he says, the friends of God shall shine one day as the sun in all his splendour. Talmud, *Yoma* or *Yom-Kippur*, p. 23, col. 1; *Sabbath*, p. 88; *Gittin*, p. 36.

If thy comrade call thee ass, put on the pack-saddle. Talmud, *Baba-Kama*, 27.

42. The righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth. Ps. xxxvii. 21.

All the day long he dealeth graciously and lendeth. *Id.* 26.

Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him. Deut. xv. 10.

Stretch thine hand unto the poor, that thy blessing may be perfected. Ecclus. viii. 32.

44. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. Prov. xxv. 21.[1]

45. It is not the wicked we should hate, but wickedness. Talmud, *Berachoth*, p. 10, recto.

There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Eccles. ix. 2.

46–7. [See above.]

48. Be like God, compassionate, merciful. Talmud, *Sabbath*, p. 133 verso.

Ch. vi. 1–4. As well not give as give with ostentation in public. Talmud, *Chagiga*, fol. 5 recto.

He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses himself. Talmud, *Baba-Bathra*, p. 9 verso.

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord. Prov. xix. 17.

Here be the eight degrees of charity:—The first, the highest, is that of the man who *helps the poor before his fall.* The second is that of him who gives without knowing and without being known. The third is that of him who knows to whom he gives, but does not make himself known, etc. Maimonides, *Hilchet-Matanot-Amyîm*, x., based on the Talmud.

5–6. Who is it that shall not see the face of God? First, hypocrites; next, liars. Talmud, *Sota*, p. 42.

The doctor who is not within as he is without, does not deserve the name of doctor. Talmud, *Yoma*, fol. 72.

[The "Lord's Prayer" calls for separate treatment, and will be dealt with in the next section, in which we shall offer evidence, which was not available to the compilers of the *Origines du Sermon de la Montagne*, that the entire formula was in Jewish use before the rise of the Jesuist movement.]

Chapter vi. 14 follows up the prayer with a return to a point already put—the necessity of mutual forgiveness; and here again there are close Judaic parallels.

14-15. He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He showeth no mercy to a man which is like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? If he that is but flesh nourish hatred, who will entreat for pardon of sins? Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 1–5. [See Prov. xix. 11, before cited.]

I have delivered him that without cause was mine adversary. Ps. vii. 4. (Cp. Job xxxi. 29.)

[1] The Gospel statement that of old men were taught, "hate thine enemy," is understood to refer to Deut. xxiii. 6. But even in that context there had been interpolated some higher teachings.

On the question of fasting, the Talmudists have no special parallels to offer; but an important question will arise on this head when we proceed to consider the evidence for a pre-Jesuist use of the "Lord's Prayer." Meantime we take the remaining parallels:—

> 19. Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the Most High [*or, as the Jews translate*, place your treasure where the Most High commands you to place it], and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Ecclesiasticus xxix. 11.
>
> 20–21. I wish to amass inexhaustible treasures, while my fathers have sought perishable gold in this world. Talmud, *Baba-Bathra*, p. 14.
>
> I shall teach my son nothing but the law, for we are nourished by its fruits in this world, and the principal *(le capital)* is secured to us for the life to come. Rabbi Nehoraï, in the Mishna, *Kiduschin*, fol. 82.
>
> Be not as servants who serve their master in view of wages, but be rather as slaves who serve their master without hope of remuneration. Antigone de Socho (2nd c. B.C.), in Talmud, *Pirké-Aboth*, i.
>
> The son of the queen of Abiadena, the king Monabazes, thus answered his brothers, who reproached him with being prodigal in charity: "My ancestors have laid up treasure for earth, I lay up treasure for heaven; my ancestors have laid their wealth in a place where it is in dangers, I have placed mine in an impregnable place; their fortune produced nothing, mine has fruits; they heaped up treasures, I collect treasures of the soul; they saved for others, my savings are for myself; they gathered for this world, I gather for a life to come. Talmud, *Baba-Bathra*, 11a.

Verses 22–23 are obvious commonplaces. Verse 24 has several Judaic equivalents, some of which, like so much of what we have been considering, represent the moral commonplace of all ages. For instance, Prov. xxx. 8–9, which puts the common-sense of the subject rather more persuasively than does the Gospel:—

> Give me neither poverty nor riches;....lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and use profanely the name of my God.

Again we have:—

> Many have sinned for a small matter; and he that seeketh for abundance will turn his eyes away [from the law]. Ecclus. xxvii. 1.
>
> As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling. *Id.* xxvii. 2.
>
> Blessed is the rich that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold. xxxi. 8.

Here the note is much less uncompromising than that of

the Gospels, which tell of an anti-plutocratic movement. But the parallels continue :—

24. He that loveth gold shall not be justified, and he that followeth corruption shall have enough thereof. *Ib.* 5.

25–34. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Ps. xxxvii. 4.

The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. Prov. x. 3.

The *young lions* do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Ps. xxxiv. 10.

But there is another view :—

Yonder is *the sea*, great and wide, wherein are *creeping things* innumerable....*These* wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season....Thou openest thine hand, *they* are satisfied. Ps. civ. 25–28.

27. Watching for riches consumeth the flesh, and the care thereof driveth away sleep. Watching care will not let a man slumber, as a sore disease breaketh sleep....The poor laboureth in his poor estate, and when he leaveth off he is still needy. Ecclus. xxxi. 1–4.

Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Ps. cxlv. 16.

He giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever. Ps. cxxxvi. 25.

He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. Ps. cxlvii. 9.

O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. Ps. cxxxiv. 9.

He who has only a morsel of bread in his basket, and asks, What shall I eat to-morrow? is a man of little faith. Talmud, *Sota*, p. 586.

Each hour suffices for its trouble. *Id. Barachot*, fol. 9 verso.

VII. 1. Judge not your neighbour when you have not been in his place. *Id. Aboth*, ii. 5.

2. Man is measured by the measure he has meted. *Id. Sota*, p. 8b, and elsewhere.

One should abstain from judging one's friend and one's enemy, for one does not easily see either the faults of one's friend or the merit of one's enemy. *Id. Ketouboth*, 105, col. 2.

He who charitably judges his neighbour shall be charitably judged by God. *Id. Schabbuoth*, i. 27.

3–5. Physician, heal first thine own wound. Midrash Rabba, *Bereschit*, xxiii.

Rabbi Tryphon suggested that the habit of rejoinder hindered men from profiting by remonstrances. "Alas, if you say to someone, Take that straw out of your eye, you get for answer, Take that beam out of your own." Talmud, *Arakhin*, fol. 16.

Rabbi Tryphon seems to have seen a side of the matter which did not strike the Jesuists who compiled the Sermon

on the Mount. To the command, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs," which appears to have signified that the Gospel was not meant for Gentiles and Samaritans, the Jews are naturally not anxious to provide closer parallels than Prov. xxxiii. 9: "Speak not in the hearing of a fool." But the sentiment is in tolerable harmony with many passages of the Old Testament.

7–11. The gates of prayer are never closed. Talmud, *Sota*, p. 49a.

Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart. Jeremiah xxix. 13.

12. Do not unto others that which it would be disagreeable to you to suffer yourself—that is the main part of the law; all the rest is only commentary. Hillel, Talmud, *Sabbath*, 306.

13–14. The way of sinners is made plain with stones, but at the end thereof is the pit of hell. Ecclus. xxi. 10.

15. [Need hardly be paralleled from the writings of the prophets. The Gospel text, be it noted, is plausibly supposed to have been framed by the Judaist Jesuists in denunciation of Paul.]

16. For the work of a man shall be rendered unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Job xxxiv. 11.

17–20. Thou renderest to every man according to his work. Ps. lxii. 12.

I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Ezekiel xviii. 30.

Providence sees all, liberty is given, the world is judged by goodness, and every one is rewarded according to his works. Talmud, *Pirké-Aboth*, iii. 19. Rabbi Akiba.

Shall not he render to every man according to his work? Prov. xxiv. 12.

21. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these....If ye thoroughly amend your ways....then will I cause you to dwell in this place. Jeremiah vii. 4–7.

23. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Ps. vi. 8.

24–27. As timber girt and bound together in a building cannot be loosened with shaking, so the heart that is stablished by advised council shall fear at no time. A heart settled upon a thought of understanding is as a fair plaistering upon the wall of a gallery. Ecclus. xxii. 16–18.

For the closing verses of the seventh chapter the compilers of the *Origines du Sermon de la Montagne* suggest an emendation to the effect that the people were filled with admiration because Jesus had taught them after the manner of Ben Sirach and Hillel and Shammai, reproducing the brief and incisive maxims in which those teachers abound, and not verbosely after the manner of the scribes. It

might be remarked on this, first, that the Oriental mind in general runs to wise commonplaces, and that among the Jews in particular compilations of such were in favour—as the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon show—because of the lack of imaginative literature. Among the Greeks the maxims of Theognis were not ranked very high, because they had more succulent literary food in Homer and their drama. The Jews had little but proverbs, laws, chronicles, and the declamations of the prophets. But, as we shall see further in dealing with the "Lord's Prayer," there is no reason to believe that the "Sermon" as such was ever delivered by any man.

On the other hand, we now know, from evidence that was not available when the *Origines du Sermon* were compiled, that such fresh stringing together of ethical maxims for didactic purposes was practised in the Jewish community[1] just before the development of Christism. Since the publication of the *Origines* there has been given to the world the most valuable treasure-trove of modern Christian archæology—namely, the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, discovered by M. Bryennios in 1873, published by him in 1883. Of that document, as we have seen, the Judaic origin is incontestable; and no less obvious is the fact that the early document contained matter that has been since embodied in the Sermon on the Mount. The Christian tampering begins, as we have said, in the seventh paragraph. But although there is a clean cleavage between that and the preceding matter, it does not follow that the original document ended with the sixth paragraph. That would have been a very abrupt ending. What is more, the first paragraph contains some of the *ipsissima verba* of the Sermon in Matt. v.; and the eighth section, after the plainly irrelevant plunge into baptism and the Trinity, goes on with more of the words found in the Sermon. The more significant passages in the first paragraph are :—

"Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for

[1] Cp. Ewald, *Geschichte Christus' und seiner Zeit*, 3te Ausg. 1867, pp. 35–39, as to strings of maxims by Hillel and other Rabbis.

them that persecute you; for what reward have ye if ye love them that love you? Do not the Gentiles also the same? But love ye them that hate you, and ye shall have no enemy. Abstain from the fleshly and worldly lusts. If anyone give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect; if anyone compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain; if anyone take thy cloak, give him thy coat also; if anyone take from thee what is thine, ask it not back; for indeed thou canst not. To everyone that asketh thee give, and ask not back."

Even in the Christian redaction in which the document has come down to us, it is not in any way suggested that these passages are repetitions from the Gospels. Beyond all candid question, they are parts of the pre-Christian document officially compiled for the moral instruction of Jews living in Pagan communities. That purpose lies on the face of many of the prescriptions; and it was the broad suitability of such instruction to the practical needs of the early Jesuists that caused the *Teaching* so long to pass current among them. There it was, then, that they found the basis for their myth of the Twelve Apostles before the Gospels existed; and there the Gospel makers had a first model for the didactic discourses they attributed to Jesus, and in particular for the Sermon on the Mount. The factitious character of that document is thus established twice over.

If indeed it be dispassionately considered on its *prima facie* claims to credit, it is seen to be factitious. Even had such a string of quotations been delivered as a discourse, who was to report it? Why, again, should the Sermon be so long in the first Gospel and so short in the third if there existed any early documentary basis for the former version? In regard to no unsectarian issue would criticism hesitate to decide that the story of the Sermon was invented to give an air of circumstantiality to the claim made for the compiled teaching. And in the item of "The Mount," finally, we return to a myth of action.

Nothing could be more plainly fictitious than the fashion in which the first and third Gospels at the outset represent Jesus as addressing only his disciples, and finally assert

that he had been addressing the multitude.[1] It is clear that either he was originally asserted to have addressed his disciples only, or he was first represented as addressing the multitude, and the preliminary phrase about the disciples and the Mount in Matthew is an interpolation. And this is in every way the probable solution. That the teacher could primarily be described as leading a multitude to a mountain top in order to speak to them for at most ten minutes is not a plausible view. It is the mountain and the twelve that are interposed; and this for clear mythic reasons. It is not merely that Moses gave his law from the Mount, but that the God on the Mount is the Sun-God once more on the "pillar of the world," this time surrounded by his "twelve"—the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It is the same motive that operates in the fiction of the naming of the twelve: "And he goeth into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve....."[2] Here we have the language of pure myth. The twelve, as we have seen, are demonstrably unhistorical; and this introduction of them might alone suggest as much. A picture or sculpture of the Sun-God on his Mount, with the zodiac arrayed around him, suggested the repeated Gospel presentments of Jesus choosing and teaching his twelve disciples on "a" or "the" mountain—not any mountain in particular—a narrative which only the spell of tradition and ecclesiasticism enables men to regard as probable. The specification of "the plain" in Luke, finally, is evidently a late device to account for the differences between the two versions of the discourse; the disciples being there also interpolated in imitation of Matthew, perhaps with a view to raising their traditionary status.

[1] Matt. v. 1; vii. 28; Luke vi. 20; vii. 1.
[2] Mark iii. 13–14; cp. Luke vi. 12.

§ 7. *The "Lord's Prayer."*

The so-called Lord's Prayer, placed as it is in the Sermon on the Mount, turns out to derive like that from pre-Christian Jewish lore, and, like parts of the Sermon, from an actually current Jewish document in particular.

First let us take the main parallel passages in the Talmud and the Bible and the Apocrypha, cited by the Jews :—

> On whom do we rest? On our Father who is in Heaven. Talmud, *Sotah*, end.
>
> Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased. Ps. cxv. 3.
>
> Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?....Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? Jeremiah xxiii. 23–4.
>
> Blessed be God every day for the daily bread which he giveth us. Talmud, *Yom-Tob*, p. 16a. Hillel.
>
> Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. Ecclus. xxviii. 2.
>
> Whosoever is prompt to forgive, his sins also shall be forgiven him. Talmud, *Megilla*, fol. 28.
>
> Suffer not, O Lord, that we should be led into sin, or into transgression, or into disgrace; put far away from us evil thoughts, in order that we may attach ourselves to those which are good. *Prayer for every day in the Jewish ritual.*
>
> Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

It is hardly necessary to remark here that the Talmudic parallels to any part of the Sermon on the Mount cannot conceivably have been borrowed by the Rabbis from the Christian Gospels: they would as soon have borrowed from the rituals of the Pagans. This is now tacitly admitted by Christian scholars; and the claim made for the "Lord's" authorship of the prayer ascribed to him takes the following shape :—

> "The prayer is doubtless based upon expressions and sentiments already familiar to the Jews; indeed parallel phrases to nearly all its contents have been discovered in the Talmud. This, however, does not detract from its beauty or *originality, as a whole.*"[1]

[1] Art. "Lord's Prayer" in McClintock and Strong's *Biblical Cyclopædia.* Cp. Trollope, *Liturgy of St. James.*

In none save an ecclesiastical cause would such a claim now be made; and it is needless here to deal with it, since it can be shown that the prayer as a whole is pre-Christian. Even the authority cited admits that "The closing doxology is omitted by Luke, and is *probably spurious in Matthew*, as it is not found there in any of the early MSS."

That is to say, even after the Gospels had taken substantially their present shape; even after the third was compiled, Christians did not hesitate to *add to their Lord's Prayer phrases already in Judaic use*. There need then be no difficulty in believing that the other phrases of the prayer were taken even in their present context from a Jewish formula. We have seen in the analysis of the so-called Sermon, as a whole, how much of Judaic ethical commonplace went to make it up; and the habit of borrowing could easily be further illustrated. Take another orthodox testimony.

Of the Talmudic treatise *Sotah*, or "The *Erring Woman*," says Dr. B. Pick, the last sections

> "are very interesting, because they foretell the signs of the approaching Messiah, and wind up with the following remarkable words: 'In the time of the Messiah the people will be impudent and be given to drinking; public-houses will flourish and the vine will be dear;....the wisdom of the scribes will be stinking; fear of God will be despised....The young men will shame the old, the old will rise against the young; the son will despise the father; the daughter will rise against the mother, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. The face of that generation is as the face of a dog; the son shall not reverence the father."[1]

Compare this passage with Matthew x. 35. Here are the very words, first of Micah (vii. 6), and next of a Rabbi, put in the mouth of Jesus as his own; and this in a passage which every rationalist critic must recognize to have been compiled for Christian purposes long after the sect had taken shape, and when it was undergoing persecution. Certainly there has been a process of sifting.

> "In one of the treatises of the Talmud called *Challah* we find, almost verbatim, what our Lord says in Matt. v. 28, and yet that portion of the Talmud is written in language so obscene and immoral that it would be

[1] Art. TALMUD in McClintock and Strong's *Biblical Cyclopædia*, x. 179.

> difficult to meet its equal among the most licentious publications of ancient or modern times. We challenge any admirer of the Talmud to translate the treatise and publish it."[1]

Doubtless the believer will decide that it was abnormal good taste that eliminated the objectionable portions; but we shall see that such elimination could very well be made by a mortal and forgotten Jew, whether or not taught by Pagan decorum to rise above the prurient puerilities which occupied so much of the thoughts of the Rabbis.

A much closer and more striking parallel, however, than any cited in the *Origines*, was long ago pointed out by Christian scholars. The Rev. John Gregorie, who wrote over two hundred years ago, presents a compilation from the Jewish "Euchologues" in the following terms:—

> "Our Father which art in Heaven, be gracious to us, O Lord our God, hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above, and upon earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us now and for ever. The holy men of old said, remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against me. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing. For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and for evermore."[2]

This is cited by Evan Meredith,[3] who also makes reference to Basnage[4] as saying that the Jews had an ancient prayer called the *Kadish*, "precisely like Jesus's prayer." But these citations are somewhat misleading, alike in Gregorie and in Basnage. The former does not profess to find his compilation as it stands: he takes it piecemeal from the Rabbinical writings.[5] Even in that regard, however, the parallel made out is somewhat closer than that drawn up in the *Origines du Sermon de la Montagne;* and we shall be better able to understand why when we turn to Basnage. Speaking of the regular Jewish worship of his own day (*circa* 1700), that historian says:—

> "The minister, supposing that the people have recited their prayers, commences the daily service by a prayer which is called *Kadish*, because

[1] Dr. Pick, as last cited, p. 174.
[2] Gregorie's Works, 4th ed. 1864, p. 168.
[3] *The Prophet of Nazareth*, 1863, p. 426.
[4] *Histoire des Juifs*, liv. vi. chap. xviii. section 7.
[5] Citing *Tephill. Lusitan.* p. 115; *Sepher Hammussar.* xlix. 1; Com. in *Pirké Aboth.* fol. 24; and *Seph. Hammussar.* ix. 12.

it asks of God the *sanctification* of his name: 'O God, be thy name magnified and hallowed in the world which thou hast created according to thy good pleasure; cause thy kingdom to come *(faites regner votre Regne)*: let Redemption flourish; and let the Messiah come speedily; let thy name be celebrated,' etc. This prayer is the most ancient of all that the Jews have preserved; and as it is read in the Chaldaic language, there is some ground for supposing that it is one of the prayers which were made at the return from Babylon for the use of the people, who understood Hebrew with difficulty. It is several times repeated in the service as being the most important, and the people are obliged to respond several times, Amen, Amen. Thus it is properly an anthem. If the Germans have cut away what has regard to the Redemption, the coming of the Messiah, and the deliverance of the people, it is not that they believe that this Redeemer is come, but they are persuaded that all these advantages are included in the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ seems to have borrowed the first words of this prayer, since he has made us also say 'hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come'; and this confirms what we have said as to the antiquity of this prayer."

Basnage's version, it will be seen, does not correspond strictly to the Christian formula; but his remarks throw an important light alike on these textual discrepancies and on the absence of all save one or two parallel phrases from the extract given in the modern *Origines du Sermon de la Montagne*. In the first place, the fact that in the time of Basnage the Jewish *Kadish* was read in Chaldean (*i.e.*, Aramaic) is, as he says, a clear proof of its great antiquity. In all probability the proof goes further than he thought; for there is reason to surmise that, as so many of the Jewish legends and myths are originally Babylonian, so the "Lord's" prayer, or Kadish, is *originally a Babylonian prayer*.[1] But Basnage makes the significant intimation that the German Jews had already in his day dropped part of the ancient formula; and he goes on to show incidentally what the forces were that compelled such excisions :—

"After the anthem is usually recited the Decalogue, which is the

[1] This passage was first printed in September, 1891. In the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for October, 1891, Mr. T. G. Pinches published for the first time a translation of a tablet found at Sippara in 1882, in which there occur, in an invocation of Merodach, the lines :—

"May the abundance of the world descend into thy [the city's] midst;
May thy command be accomplished in time to come....
May [the evil spirit] dwell outside of thee."

Here we have prayer-norms, on the lines of the Lord's Prayer, dating perhaps 4000 B.C.

> foundation of the Judaic religion; but the doctors say that they have been *obliged to abolish this usage because of the heretics or Christians*, who insist that God had given only these ten commandments on Sinaï. To-day they content themselves with reading some passages of Deuteronomy which they call *Schémah*" (because of the first word).

Here we have the whole solution. The prayer of the Jews has been gradually modified out of fear of persecuting Christians, who would not let them use what passed for a Biblical or Christian formula. The phrase "*Dieu n'avait donné que ces dix commandemens sur la Sinaï*" is not very lucid; but we can easily imagine how Christian fanaticism would argue the case. It is not clear how the French Jews have lost sight of these modifications, or why they do not mention them if they are aware of them; but it is consistent with many known facts that the modifications should have been made. After the revival of Hebrew learning, the Rabbis took precautions[1] to keep out of the published copies of the Talmud those passages referring to the early Jesus who was stoned and hanged on a tree on the eve of the Passover, such allusions being supposed by Christians, and even by some Jews, to refer to the Jesus of the Gospels. They probably *did* so refer, indeed, in a sense which neither side realised, since the chances are that the Gospel biography was originally a collection of mythical matter relating to the early Jesus, and that he was really the Jesus of Paul, who shows no acquaintance with the Gospel narratives. But all we are here concerned with is the fact of the suppression of the passages in the later printed editions of the Talmud. If the Jews had to do that, and had to drop the very decalogue from their ritual, still more likely would be the compulsory abandonment of the gist of a prayer which ran closely parallel to one specially claimed by the Christians as theirs. This was probably not the attitude of the real scholars. Gregorie, who well deserves the latter title, was quite satisfied that Jesus had copied established forms :—

> "Note that our Lord gathered up his form of prayer out of the traditions of the elders. It must not seem strange to you: if you know

[1] For some details see Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Jews*, ed. 1812, pp. 2–3.