

## THE TRINITY.

BY THE EDITOR.

LUCIAN mentions in his interesting essay *De Syria Dea*, § 33, the fact that in a temple at Hierapolis there stood the statues of Zeus and Hera and between them a third one called *σημείον*, viz., a sign or token. Obviously Zeus and Hera are the Hellenised names of Syrian divinities, the god-father or heaven, and the god-mother, the *magna dea* or the deity of life and love and fertility. But what can have been the sense of having a Semeion or a sign erected between them, and what may have been its shape? Was it a pole or *ashera*, a stone pillar, or any other monument? Who can tell? The sense of the passage seems lost beyond redemption. Yet the idea suggests itself that the word Semeion may have been the name or a corruption of the name of a god for whom Lucian could not find an appropriate Greek expression, and this suggestion finds good support in the fact that בעל שׁמׁן, i. e., the Lord Shaman, is the Syrian Hercules, the divine god-child and saviour, who corresponds to the Babylonian Samas, the Hebrew Samson and the Greek Heracles.

If this conjecture is tenable, the three statues at Hierapolis were nothing else than a representation of the ancient trinity which was revered almost all over Hither Asia.

The trinity conception is very ancient and is based upon natural as well as human analogies. It represents the sky, the earth, and the sun; god-father, god-mother, and god the son, the creator and ruler of the world, the life and fertility of the earth, and the god-man, or the hero-god.

This trinity conception was not always nor in all countries of Hither Asia clearly retained. As the religious notions were not scientific but mythological, the sun-god and sky-god were frequently identified, which produced confusion. The *dea magna* was now the earth goddess, now the moon goddess, and again a Pros-

erpine, a vegetation-goddess. Local modes of worship made prominent here one, there another, trait, and the differences of local names served to obscure the original identity of different versions of the same dogma.

Zoroastrian rigor antagonised the old forms of paganism, yet even under Persian rule the old trinitarian belief came to the front. The trinity Ahura Mazda, Anahita, Mithra is in its origin decidedly un-Zoroastrian and may be regarded as an adaptation of the Persian monotheism to the prevalent trinitarianism of their conquered nations.

The same notions prevailed in Egypt where the trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Hor is probably the echo of still older views of the same kind.

In the Book of Wisdom, Sophia or Wisdom (originally a synonym for *Logos*) is spoken of as the spouse of God, being privy to his counsels; and the Messiah is her son.

We know from the Koran that the Christian trinity conception known to Mohammed was the trinity of the family, God, Mary, and Christ, and a quotation from the lost Gospel of the Hebrews speaks of the Holy Ghost as the mother of Christ.

The trinity conception of God-father, God-mother, and God-son was apparently rejected by the Western Church for the sake of the sanctification of family life implied thereby. Primitive Christianity was strongly biased by asceticism and monachism, and woman was regarded as temptation incarnate. Nothing could be more pagan to an African or Roman monk than the belief in a God-mother, and thus the Holy Ghost lost its sexual character and developed into a neuter whose definite relation to God the Father and God the Son was rendered indistinct and finally formulated as an influence proceeding from both of them. The less offensive names God-father and God-son, with the omission of God the Mother, i. e., her replacement through the uncompromising Holy Ghost, have been retained to the present day.

Mary, the mother of God, so called by both the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, practically still plays the part of the God-mother, the θεὰ ἁγία, the holy goddess of the ancient nations; and this persistency of the trinity idea is not surprising at all, first because of conservatism in matters religious, but then also on account of the natural foundation which it finds in the facts of life.