

CHRISTIANITY AS THE PLEROMA.

BY THE EDITOR.

[CONTINUED.]

ANCIENT BABYLON.

HOW much Christianity has been prepared in Babylon appears from our more matured knowledge of the cuneiform inscriptions. The subject is discussed by Schrader in *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*,¹ p. 377 ff., where the points of identification between Marduk, Yahveh and Christ are thus enumerated:

1. Christ's preexistence as a divine being and as creator of the world.

2. Christ's miraculous birth. Prototypes of this doctrine are not yet known of Marduk, but rather of Babylonian heroes such as King Sargon I, King Gilgames² and Assurbanipal.

3. Christ as the saviour, as the inaugurator of a new age, of a time of prosperity. Under this heading we must also mention the fact that in the inscription on an ancient cylinder Cyrus is called "Saviour-King" just as Isaiah calls him "the Messiah of Yahveh" (Is. xlv. 1). What Isaiah says of Cyrus³ is referred directly to Jesus by John the Baptist.⁴

4. Christ as the pleroma, or fulfilment of the times, which is closely connected with the Babylonian notion of cycles, involving the idea that in the proper season of a periodic round of ages a certain consummation is attained.

5. Christ as sent by the Father. In the same way God Marduk looks upon the world with compassion whenever it is in a state of disorder and tribulation, and sends the saviour to rescue mankind from evil.

¹ 3d. edition. Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903.

² As related by Aelian, *Anini Hist.*, XII, 21.

³ Verse 2; cf. xl, 3, 4.

⁴ Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 23.

6. The passion of Christ. It is noteworthy that in Babylon the king assumes the part of the penitent for his people and takes the guilt and punishment upon himself.

7. The death of Christ. The death of Marduk is not directly known, but can be derived from the name he bears as "Lord of the lamentation," and the fact that in the cult of Marduk his tomb is mentioned. Other deities who must be named in this connection are Shamash, Nergal, Tammuz, Sin and Ishtar.

8. Christ's descent to hell. Here the same names must be mentioned as above.

9. Christ's resurrection. That the time of Christ's sojourn in hell is said to be three days is probably based upon the old Babylonian conception. Three days in spring the moon is said to be invisible, which fact may be compared with the story of Jonah who stays in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

10. The ascension of Christ.⁵

11. The exaltation of Christ.

12. The *parousia* of Christ and his second advent.

Jesus prophesies that great tribulations shall precede his second advent and here also we find some close parallels in Babylonian inscriptions. The time of tribulation stands in contrast to the time of prosperity which is assured through the appearance of the saviour. The renewal of the world is preceded by a breakdown of the old order. Men will become wicked and horrible crimes will be perpetrated. We read in one text (K. 7861.—Cun. Texts, xiii, 50), "A brother will kill with weapons his brother, a friend his friend." In another text (K. B VI, 1, p. 275 f.) we read of eclipses of sun and moon and the quarrels between inmates of the same house and between neighbors. A third passage (K. 454—Cun. Texts, XIII, 49) reads thus: "Such a prince [who would not obey the commandments of the gods] will experience misery; his heart will not rejoice; during his rule battles and combats will not cease. Under such a government brother will devour brother; people will sell their children for money; the countries will fall into confusion; the husband will leave his wife and the wife her husband; a mother will bolt the door against her daughter; the treasury of Babylon will be carried to Syria and Assyria; the king of Babylon will have to surrender the possessions of his palace and his treasury to the princes of Assyria."

13. Christ as a judge.

⁵ This point and the following two are not satisfactorily treated and so we mention them without entering into details.

14. The marriage of Christ; or rather the symbolical marriage of the Lamb in Revelations and the allusions to Christ as the bridegroom have their prototype in the marriage of Marduk celebrated on the Babylonian New Year's day.⁶

THE PROCESS OF IDEALIZATION.

The pagan saviour idea was gradually transformed into the conception of Christ. We can trace the process in different places and everywhere it follows the same law. In primitive times the saviour is simply a strong man; unarmed and naked he wrestles with the lion, but he is also brutal and gross. Such is Samson of the tribe of Dan, and such is Heracles in the ancient myth.

As civilization advances the hero acquires the gentler and nobler features which are now more highly respected than superiority of brawn. Moral stamina becomes an indispensable condition for respect and so it is unhesitatingly attributed to the national ideal. In this phase Heracles is represented as choosing between the pleasures of vice and the practice of virtue and he prefers the latter, setting a noble example to all Greek youths.

The Heracles of the classical period has his faults still, yet the philosophers claim that the real Heracles had none, and that the stories of his frolicking and rude exploits are inventions of myth mongers and should be regarded as perversions of the truth. He was a saviour and he labored for the best of mankind without any thought for himself. So the idealizing process goes on and reaches a climax at the beginning of the Christian era when Seneca speaks of him with the same reverence as a Christian would speak of Christ. He says:

"Heracles never gained victories for himself. He wandered through the circle of the earth, not as a conqueror, but as a protector. What, indeed, should the enemy of the wicked, the defender of the good, the peace-bringer, conquer for himself either on land or sea!"

This conception was not peculiar to Seneca but was at that time common to all pagan sages. Epictetus speaks of his sonship to Zeus and says: "He knew that no man is an orphan, but that there is a father always and constantly for all of them. He had not only heard the words that Zeus was the father of men, for he regarded him as *his* father and called him such; and looking up to him he did what Zeus did. Therefore he could live happily everywhere."

⁶ See the author's *Bride of Christ* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1908).

This final conception of Heracles as the ideal hero, the god-man, the son of Zeus, is presented in Schiller's great hymn "The Ideal and Life" in the two concluding stanzas. And we may be sure that the German poet, perhaps the best representative of the religious spirit of classical antiquity, is not conscious of the similarity of the Greek hero with Christ. Their resemblance at any rate in this poem is unintentional. Schiller says:⁷

"Heracles in deep humiliation,
Faithful to his destination,
Served the coward in life's footsore path.
Labors huge wrought he, Zeus' noble scion:
He the hydra slew and hugged the lion,
And to free his friends faced Pluto's wrath;
Crossed the Styx in Charon's doleful bark;
Willingly he suffered Hera's hate,
Bore her burdens, grievous care and cark
And in all he showed him great,

"Til his course was run, 'til he in fire
Stripped the earthly on the pyre,
'Til a god he breathed Empyrean airs.
Blithe he now in new got power of flight
Upward soars from joyful height to height,
And as an ill dream sink earth's dull cares.
Glory of Olympus him enfoldeth;
'Mongst the gods transfigured standeth he,
From the nectar-cup which Hebe holdeth
Drinks he immortality."

Schiller touches on the same topic of Heracles as the divine saviour in one of the Xenions where Zeus addresses his hero son in these words:⁸

"Thou hast divinity, son, not acquired
By drinking my nectar;
But thy divinity 'tis
Conquered the nectar for thee."

This idea does not quite agree with the accepted view according to which Heracles, being the son of Zeus, was born immortal. In the same way Jesus is born as Christ, but Schiller's idea of Heracles corresponds to the doctrine held by a fraction of the early Christians, which makes Jesus acquire Christhood by his saintly life.

The belief was quite common, especially among docetic Chris-

⁷ For our version we have utilized an unpublished translation by the Rev. W. N. Guthrie.

⁸ *Goethe and Schiller's Xenions*, p. 34.

tians, that Jesus became Christ at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan, and this was the original meaning of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. The Cambridge Codex of the New Testament (6th century) still preserves the old reading which is a quotation of Psalm ii. 7, and declares most positively that in this very moment Jesus becomes the Christ and is to be considered the son of God. The passage (Luke iii. 22) reads in the Cambridge Codex: "And the Holy Ghost descended into him in a bodily form as a dove; and there was a voice out of the heaven: Thou art my son; this day I have begotten thee."

When with the growth in a literal belief in dogmas this version was felt to be in conflict with the dogma of the virgin birth, the words, "this day I have begotten thee," were changed to, "in thee I am well pleased," but in the epistle to the Hebrews (i. 5) the passage is still quoted in its original form.

The ideas of the acquisition of Christhood by Jesus and the birth of God the Son from eternity, need not contradict each other, as we learn from Buddhism, where the Bodhi (i. e., "enlightenment") is an eternal condition of the world-order, and Gautama acquires it by his virtues and his wisdom. The Bodhi is personified as the Eternal Buddha, corresponding to the Christ who says of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am." In a later version this Buddha of Eternal Bliss lives in the Tusita heaven and decides to descend into the womb of Maya, for the purpose of salvation, just as Christ is born through Mary as the child Jesus. Buddha is not born as Buddha, but as Bodhisatva, viz., a being that is destined to develop into a Buddha. He possesses the potentiality of acquiring the bodhi and he then actually acquires enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

The same story of the incarnation of the Saviour God, of a supernatural fatherhood, of great merits etc., is told of Krishna, of Horus, of Samson, of Zeus, of Dionysos, and of every other hero and god-man. These stories are repeated everywhere and the figure of the saviour is more and more idealized and spiritualized as civilization progresses.

The same process of idealizing and spiritualizing the figure of a saviour went on in all pagan countries in the Orient as well as in the Occident. As we trace the several steps in the Heracles myth, so we are confronted with the same result in the Orient. In India the process was indeed faster, or may be it was begun earlier. In the ancient Brahman religion we meet with the deified Krishna, the rollicking hero, the lover of sport and dance, the saviour from oppression and the bringer of joy; but his type is supplanted in the

fifth century B. C. by a new and a higher ideal, suggested by the respect for wisdom, for enlightenment, for *bodhi* or gnosis. The people now looked forward for the incarnation of profound comprehension and perfect virtue, a sage; and the development of the thought reaches a climax in the Buddha-conception which justly commands the admiration of Occidental students of Orientalism. The life of Gautama Siddhartha was shaped under the influence of these conditions, and Professor Fausbøl, the great Danish scholar, used to say, "The more I know of Buddha, the more I love him." We need not ask in this connection whether Buddha is historical or no,—just as little as we need care whether the details of the life of Jesus are historical. It is the ideal which exerted its influence in the history of mankind as a formative presence in the hearts of the people, and we know that this living ideal has been a most potent factor in history; the transient figure of the man in whom it was either supposedly or truly actualized is of secondary importance. Nor do we care here to trace historical connections; we are confronted with a law in the history of religious thought. So for instance the Buddha ideal (or if you prefer, the historical personality of the Buddha) has been worked out on pagan ground in perfect independence of other ideals, such as the Christ ideal of the Christians and the spiritualized figure of a Heracles among the Græco-Romans.

PAGAN PARALLELS RECOGNIZED.

We know little of the later period of the Babylonians, but we have a rich literature of the religion of Zarathushtra which originated in ancient Iran and was embraced by the Medes and Persians, the Aryans who resided among the Semites and for some time dominated the Orient with great ability.

The religion of these Aryan people is a most remarkable faith which was destined to play a great part in the world. It entered the Græco-Roman world in the shape of Mithraism and it anticipated the dualism of Neoplatonism by two or three centuries.

We deem dualism to be a necessary phase in the development of religion and think that it contains a truth which finds its solution but not its abolition in a subsequent monism. There is a duality in the world which cannot be denied, although it can be solved in a higher unity and thus be explained as two sides of one and the same process. Existence originates through the contrast of duality, and thus only can it manifest itself in multiplicity. This truth remains

true even when we have succeeded in reducing it to a monistic conception.

Even orthodox Christians who still adhere to a literal belief not only of the dogmas but also of the historicity and uniqueness of a special revelation, have to recognize as soon as they know the facts the similarity of the pagan saviours to the Christ of the Christians. Here is a remarkable instance and it is interesting to note the explanation offered for this coincidence. Commenting on Dr. Hugo Radau's brochure, *Bel the Christ of Ancient Times*, Rev. Alan S. Hawkesworth, the author of *De Incarnatione verbi Dei*, says:⁹

"The general conclusion is the by no means startling one, that the men of ancient Babylon felt the very human need for comfort and hope amid the ever present grim facts of suffering and death; and thus created for themselves in their own image, as they must needs have done, a redeemer who should conquer death and hell and bring to weary souls redemption and immortality.

"This, we say, is both as it should be and as it must be in all ages and among all races. The Egyptians had Osiris, their suffering redeemer. Greece and Rome had the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries and Mithras. The Aztecs, the Incas, and the primitive American Indians all had quite similar faiths. And were we to hereafter discover a hitherto unknown hyperborean race, we may be confident that whatever philosophy and religion they may have created, will be along these age old lines. For its roots lie, ineradicably, in the fundamental needs and aspirations of man.

"And it is a familiar commonplace of Catholic theology, that it was this universal desire for and expectation of the Man-God Redeemer, that imperatively demanded and necessitated its fulfilment in the Incarnation of Him, who was "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; and the "Desire of all nations." So that here as in lesser cases prophecy, whether heathen or "revealed," was merely insight into what by dire necessity had to be. And Christianity, therefore, is not, as Puritanism heretically conceived, an artificial "scheme of salvation," foisted upon an unwilling and utterly alien world. But is, on the contrary, the *Catholic faith*, which summarizes, completes, and makes secure all the various partial broken insights and wavering desires for good, in the heathen religions and philosophies; which heathen faiths are indeed, by their very nature, nothing more than the instinctive gropings of men after truth and God, if "haply they might find Him." They had faults and defects unquestionably,—many and obvious. But these, in

⁹For Mr. Hawkesworth's review see the April *Monist*, p. 309.

nearly every case, were simply the defects of imperfect insight springing from the unavoidable limitations imposed by racial capabilities and environment. In short, they were "right in their assertions, but wrong in their negations." So that Christianity comes, as the Catholic faith, not to destroy, but to *fulfil*,—and to fulfil not merely Judaism, but all the other ethnic beliefs; and only supersedes, because it so fulfils.

"Hence, not only Bel, but all the gods of the elder world were in a very real sense the "Christs" of their several times. And, in each and every case, much of their mythology and doctrines can be paralleled by something in Christianity,—indeed, must be paralleled, if that is to be the final truth.

"But to turn this the wrong way about, as some may seek to do, and claim that Christianity is therefore nothing better than a revamped Babylonianism, or Buddhism, or Parseeism, as the case may be, is surely to woefully misread the story! It is quite as if some one claimed that the events in American history were by no means new, but were word for word, and act for act, not merely similar in some respects to, but identical replicas of the words and events in Babylonia 8000 years ago!"

Mr. Hawkesworth is a scholarly High Church Episcopalian; who in a private letter characterizes himself as "Broad, Evangelical, High Churchman. Broad, but *not* Latitudinarian; Evangelical, but not Platitudinarian; and High, yet not Attitudinarian." It is instructive as well as interesting to know the opinion of a man of this type, with special reference to many curious similarities that obtain between the ancient paganism and Christianity. He says in his letter:

"I may say, too, that my statements, in my review of Dr. Radau's book, concerning the heathen gods and religions, were not my individual opinions merely. If they were, they would have but little value on such a subject. But they are rather the commonplaces of all orthodox theologians. And when I say 'orthodox,' I, of course, do *not* mean what is frequently understood by the term in America; namely an ill assorted 'hodge-podge' of Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Revivalist 'doctrine.'

"Not only St. Augustine, but St. Athanasius, and *all* the Church 'Fathers,' and later 'Doctors'—like St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. John Damascene—taught the doctrine I mention.

"The Hegelian pulse of 'sub-lation,' in his logic, by which each category develops its latent contradictions, collapses; and is then restated in a revised, truer, and more ample form; thus 'fulfilling,'

and by so fulfilling, thereby abrogating the previous categories; is precisely the way that Christianity fulfills and abrogates all the partial ethnic faiths.

"Thus, 'becoming' has all the truth in, and reconciles the contradictions in 'Pure Being,' and its equally valid opposite, 'Pure Nothing.' But, in its twofold form of 'coming to be' and 'ceasing to be,' it unfolds contradictions of its own, which are, in turn, subsumed and sublated in '*Daseyn*'—. But, you know the march of that wonderful dialectic.

"And furthermore; even as each of the more perfect categories, yet needs the previous incomplete and faulty categories as a pre-requisite underpinning (so to speak), so also does the Christian Catholic Faith imperatively need, because it is Catholic, the preceding Jewish and Heathen Faiths. St. Clemens Alexandrinus, and the other Fathers, say that, not merely the Jewish, but all the Heathen Faiths, were 'schoolmasters' (*παιδαγωγοί*) to bring men to Christ.

"Preaching the Christian faith to a people who never had had any religious ideas, would surely be like talking 'Calculus' to savages ignorant of elementary arithmetic! Christianity presupposes the inbred belief in sin, atonement, and redemption. It is inbred, because all religions have it, more or less. And all have it, because of the fundamental facts of life.

"After all, a 'heathen'—or 'countryman,' *paganus*—is simply the natural man and the Christian is, or ought to be, the natural man of the '*nth* power,'—the ideal man. Even as the Christian priest is all that the Christian layman is, and more; and the bishop all that the priest is; and so on.

"I would like to put the argument in a quasi-mathematical form, like this:

"Many Christian doctrines = Many Babylonian doctrines, say.

"Now this equation, as it stands, might have the orthodox interpretation that Christianity is perfected 'Babylonianism.' Or it might bear the interpretation that Christianity is merely a rehashed Babylonianism. But the same equation holds even more truly for *all* the other religions, none of which have, in general, things in common with each other. For

Christianity	=	Parsecism,
"	=	Egyptian secret doctrines,
"	=	Confucius,
"	=	Buddhism,
"	=	Judaism,

and so on.

“So we might say that Christianity is the Σ or Summation of the Infinite Series.

“Finally, it is not the dead showcase of beetles and butterflies (so to speak), like the Eclectic systems of the neo-Platonist, and modern Eclectics; but is a vital and living organism. All the partial truths in the various faiths being integral and coherent parts in a vital whole. It cannot be the rehash of any one for it reproduces *all*. And it cannot be simply the eclectic rehash of *all*; for it holds their doctrines in living coherent unity.”

I quote the letter of Mr. Hawkesworth *in extenso* because it sums up the orthodox Christian view in the tersest way I have ever seen, and it proves that consciousness of the continuity between Christianity and its pagan predecessors is still alive among many well-informed theologians. The statement is the more noteworthy as it reached me after the completion of my own essay. I insert it simply as a witness, and it is not astonishing that this testimony comes from an Episcopalian, for the Episcopalians have always distinguished themselves by their love of preserving historical connection.

It is true that the pagan saviours are prototypes of Christ and the pagan religions are prophecies of Christianity. This is as natural as the experience that the bloom of a tree finds its fulfilment in the matured fruit.

We do not mean to philosophize here, but we insist on the necessity of the historical law which is strictly regulated by the broader law of cause and effect, and which renders it necessary that every new phase in the development of mankind should be prepared by its precedents. The continuity of the process is nowhere broken, and when a new era begins which seems to change the entire appearance of mankind it will be found to have been gradually prepared below the surface of events.

Christianity was prepared in those parts of the world where it was destined to prevail—among the Gentiles and especially the Aryan nations. All our studies in the history of the several pagan religions and the results of comparative religion point in the same way and our scholars have frequently been puzzled by the facts. As a remarkable instance I will quote Prof. Lawrence H. Mills, the great Zend scholar of Oxford, a theologian of high standing belonging to the Church of England. He says in the introductory comments to his most recent essay entitled “Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia”:

“What is here intended is to call attention to the better-known,

though long since reported fact, that it pleased the Divine Power to reveal some of the fundamental articles of our Catholic creed first to the Zoroastrians, though these ideas later arose spontaneously and independently among the Jews."

Professor Mills insists on the independent origin of the same ideas among the Jews of the exile who as we may well assume came into close contact with Persians and gained their confidence to such an extent that Cyrus, the Persian king, on his accession to the sovereign power of the Babylonian empire reestablished the exiled Jews in their old home at Jerusalem. I will neither deny nor insist on an independent development of the same ideas; there are enough instances of parallel formations in history to render it possible in the case of the Jews. Professor Mills continues:

"I wish to show that the Persian system must have exercised a very powerful, though supervening and secondary influence upon the growth of these doctrines among the Exilic and post-Exilic Pharisaic Jews, as well as upon the Christians of the New Testament, and so eventually upon ourselves."

Now the truth is that the saviour-idea developed more rapidly and reached a higher plane among the Gentiles than the Jews. While the Persian Mithras is very much like the Christian Christ, a superpersonal presence of preeminently moral significance, the Jewish Messiah remained for a long time on the lower level of primitive paganism, a national hero who was a ruthless conqueror and gory avenger of his people. How crude still is the Messiah of Henoah! But even here Gentile influence can be traced. And it is noticeable that the Jews of the Dispersion developed a nobler ideal of the Messiah than the Jews of Judea.

It can not be denied that when they translated the word Messiah into Christ, the very substance of the idea imperceptibly changed and incorporated many features of the idealized saviour-conception of the Gentiles. Such was the Christ of the first century B. C. among the Jews of Alexandria.

THE CHRIST OF THE REVELATION.

A most important witness of the transitional phase through which the Christ ideal passed before it became the Christ of St. Paul, is found in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, chapters xii and xix, 6-21. Gunkel has pointed out¹⁰ that the author of this description of the appearance of Christ, though he calls him Jesus,

¹⁰ *Schöpfung und Chaos.*

knows nothing of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, nor of the Sermon on the Mount, nor of his crucifixion, nor of his resurrection. The Jesus of St. John is not a man, but a god. The report of his life is not a human story but mythology; it is not enacted on earth but in the universe, mainly in the heavens; his antagonist is the great dragon who with his tail draws down the third part of the stars. The mother of Jesus is not Mary, the wife of Joseph, the carpenter, but a superhuman personality clothed with the sun and having the moon at her feet, and wearing upon her head a crown of twelve stars, emblems of the twelve constellations of the zodiac. The dragon is dangerous even for the Celestials and the newly born Saviour has to be hidden from him and protected against his wrath. But he is overcome by the Lamb, or as the Greek text reads, by the young ram,¹¹ the sacrifice in which the saviour-god offers himself in the form of the animal sacred to him. We quote this remarkable chapter in full (Rev. xii) :

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come sâlvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of

¹¹ ἄρνιον.

Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The subject of the saviour-god who dies in the shape of a ram is continued in chapter xix, verse 6, where he victoriously reappears from the underworld to celebrate his marriage and is greeted by a great multitude of worshipers. We quote again in full:

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

“And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

“And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

“And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

This is not the meek Jesus; this is the Babylonian hero, a king of kings, who crushes his enemies and rejoices at the horrors of the battlefield. The redactor of the story is a Jewish Christian but the body of the legend has remained pagan and still bears all the symptoms of mythology.

Obviously this fragment is the echo of a Christianity which was quite different from that of the Gospel as we know it and it is scarcely probable that the author of these passages had ever seen any of the three synoptic Gospels, or even their prototypes.

If Revelations had not by some good chance found its way into the canon, the book would most likely have been lost and with it would have perished this valuable evidence of the existence of several rival Christianities, for we may assume that there were quite a number of such tentative formations of old traditions reconstructed in the spirit of the several authors.

WHY CHRISTIANITY CONQUERED.

We have seen that Christianity was not the only religion which claimed to be a world-religion and struggled for supremacy. There were several others, viz., neo-Platonism, Reformed Paganism, Mithraism, Mandaeanism, Manichæism, Simonism, and a few others. We know that it had much in common with all of them including those features which we now would point out as typically Christian, especially the saviour idea and a belief in the immortality of the soul. We shall have to ask now what distinguishes Christianity from its rivals and we may point out a number of features that helped to advance its cause.

Of the several reasons which insured the final success of Christianity we will here enumerate the most important ones.

1. First in order in our opinion stands the human character of the Christian saviour which rendered the story of salvation realistic and made it credible.

2. Another point in favor of the personality of Jesus was his passion and martyr death. Nothing sanctifies so much as suffering. Compassion and sympathy are powerful emotions and make zealous converts.

3. Jesus was perhaps the only saviour who was not compromised by any relation to the old pagan gods.

4. It appears that the narrative of Christ's life especially in the form of the Fourth Gospel, is more sober than the story of any other saviour.

5. Christianity was less dualistic and less ascetic than most of its antagonists. We know that most of them, especially neo-Platonism and Manichæism were very stern in their psychology and ethics.

6. Another reason was the democratic, we might almost say the plebeian spirit of the primitive Church and the simplicity of its ritual which made religion immediately accessible to the masses of the people. The ancient mysteries communicated the revelation of their religious truths to a select class of initiates, and Mithraism

has preserved this feature which made its congregations resemble Masonic lodges with their several degrees.

7. We believe also that the cross of Jesus appealed to the mystic in whose mind still lingered the significance of crucifixion as an ancient offering to the sun, and who contemplated with satisfaction the contrast of the deepest humiliation of a shameful death to the highest glorification of the risen Christ. It will further be remembered that crucifixion was the death penalty of slaves and so the slaves saw in Christ a representative of their own class; but slaves and freedmen constituted an enormous part of the population of Rome and must have been a formidable power in the capital. The Crucified One was an abomination to the Jew, an object of contempt for the few aristocrats, but he was the brother of the lowly, the down-trodden, the slave.

There may be many other reasons for the supremacy of Christianity, but we will mention only one more, which may appear to be quite indifferent, but has, in our opinion, been extremely effective. This is the connection of Christianity with Judaism.

The Jews of the dispersion were ever present before the eyes of the Gentile world, and their very existence served to call attention to Christianity and to support its claims.

The theories and doctrines of the rival religions of Christianity appealed to things distant, to abstract ideas and seemed to hang in the air, while Christianity could produce living witnesses in the shape of the Jews. The Jews contested the conclusions which the Christians drew from their literature, but they did not deny the main facts in question and supported the proposition that the God of Israel was the only true God who had chosen the Jews as the vehicle of his revelation.

The history of Israel was appropriated by the Christians, and at the very start the Jewish canon furnished them with a respectable literature which was both venerable by its antiquity, and imposing by the wealth of its contents. It took a man of uncommon scholarship to understand the Hebrew scriptures, let alone to refute the arguments based upon them.

It seems strange that Judaism which had originated in contrast to paganism and consisted in a denial of its salient doctrines, should be deemed the proper authority from which a paganism *redivivus*, which under the name of Christianity was destined to become the state religion of the Roman empire, should claim to have descended after the extinction of the old paganism. But the very

contrast in which Judaism stood to the ancient paganism rendered it fit to serve as a medium of purification.

Judaism repudiated the polytheistic mythology of ancient paganism, which had become effete among all classes of the Græco-Roman world. Now when a new religion, a monotheistic paganism, a purified religion of the Gentiles, rose from the ruins of the old paganism, it sought for an authority that could worthily father the new movement and justify its condemnation of the objectionable features of its own past. None seemed better adapted to this purpose than Judaism for the very reason of its hostility to the old paganism.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]