

IRENÆUS and GNOSTICISM.

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P R E F A C E.

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The field that discloses itself to the view of a student of Irenaeus is so vast that it would be the veriest dream to envisage it within the compass of a single volume, and more so of a thesis. The present writer has been saved from such a venture, for the limits of his theme are embodied in the title "Irenaeus and Gnosticism".

Even so the field might be interpreted in too wide a sense. The Coptic-Gnostic writings, the "Pistis-Sophia" and the "Books of Jeu," and obviously the Gnostics of Plotinus, the writer has ventured to consider out-with his limits, as they were not within the knowledge of Irenaeus.

What has seemed to him to be strictly within his precise subject is a study of Irenaeus' life and character, his Alexandrine or Hellenistic environment, leading up to his great work, the "Adversus Haereses". This work he has discussed in two chapters. The first will deal with the principal Gnostic systems as he encountered them. The second will try to answer

the question, How did Irenaeus counter the Gnostic peril?, for it is only by seeing through his eyes and hearing his defence that we can assess the great book's true value.

The Gnostic leaders are however too great to be dealt with incidentally, and the writer will discuss in turn Basilides, Valentinus, his pupils Heracleon and Ptolemaeus, and Marcion. He will then take up the lesser Gnostic systems of Irenaeus, mainly the Ophite sects. Chap.X deals with the source-problem of the 'Gnosis'.

The last two chapters are intended to discuss the connection of Gnosticism with Christianity. In chapter XI the writer will endeavour to show that in the New Testament there were points of contact, and perhaps a foreshadowing of the Gnostic systems. In the concluding chapter, the Evolution of Gnosticism, the writer will endeavour to trace what, in his opinion, was the course of the Gnostic movement, how it grew in its various branches, their mutual borrowings and coalescing, their intellectual and moral and cultural life, their influence on the Church, and their final absorption either in the Church or in Manichaeism.



Many cognate subjects have greatly attracted the writer. It is difficult to abandon such topics as the Canon of Scripture, the formation of the creed, the evolution of the Catholic Church, the theological opinions of Irenaeus. All of these are not of mere incidental importance, but of vital importance.

The writer has, however, tried to keep to his thesis, and any reference to these or other subjects, perhaps necessary, and unavoidable, are only incidental.

Five excursus have been added, one of a literary nature, other four on subjects which, while in themselves intriguing, would have impeded the main argument. A bibliographic sketch is appended.

Glasgow,  
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A. D. L.

I.

The Life and Work of Irenaeus.

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## LIFE OF IRENAEUS.

The materials at our disposal are very scanty for the task of constructing an adequate account of the life of Irenaeus. We have no certain date of his birth, or his death, or even of the issuing of his great treatise. Still we are not without clues, ~~and~~ some of them of considerable importance, so that we can establish the dates of his career with fair accuracy.

To begin with, his name, Εἰρηναῖος . is not only Greek, but it is a designation conveying a kind of character, lovingly given him by his Christian friends, and taking the place of some eastern, probably Syrian, equivalent. 'Irenaeus' so describes his character that <sup>(1)</sup> Eusebius makes reference to its appropriateness. His connection with the Church of Lyons is indicative of his Greek origin. The connection of Lyons with the East was one of long and very ancient standing. Massilia was colonised from Phoenicia as far back as 600 B.C., with avenues of trade extending to Lyons, and throughout

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(1) H. E. v. 14.

southern Gaul. We have the names of the first Bishops of Lyons and these names are Greek. The predecessor of Irenaeus, Pothinus, is obviously Greek. It is suggestive that the account of the persecutions of the Church of Lyons in A.D. 177 was sent to the churches of Asia. There is, further, the significance of his writings. In the Preface to Book I of the 'Adversus Haereses' he acknowledges that he is neither accustomed to the art of composition, nor practised in the elegance of phrasemaking.<sup>(1)</sup> This is a perfectly natural confession for one to make, who, to reach his Gallic people, had to speak in a barbarous and Celtic dialect, and may, like any missionary of today, have got out of the way of using his native language with customary fluency. But anyone who reads the original version of the treatise will agree that his Greek style is not an acquired style, but that of one to whom Greek was almost a mother tongue. He had probably been able also to speak and read Syriac, as quotations that must have come from the Syriac Scriptures are found in his book.

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(1) μήτε συγγράφειν εἰθισμένον, μήτε λόγων τέχνην ἕσκηκότες  
(Adv. HAER. I. Praef. 3)

The date of his birth is uncertain. Estimates of the date vary between 97 and 147 A.D. Hervey, arguing from the letter to Florinus and the letter to Victor, Bishop of Rome, has come to the conclusion that the date is circa 128 A.D. Lightfoot decides for 120 A.D.

The letter to Florinus gives a glimpse of his early life in Smyrna. Probably he spent his youth <sup>(1)</sup> there, and along with Florinus attended the instructions of Polycarp, who was then far advanced in years. His expression 'while yet a youth' <sup>(2)</sup> covers in its meaning a longer period than boyhood, any year, in fact, between ten and thirty. It is doubtful whether anything can be made of the reference to his companion in studies 'passing the time in the royal palace' <sup>(3)</sup>. This may refer to the brilliant functions at the time of the visit of the Emperor Hadrian in 123 and 130 A.D. Lightfoot thinks that the phrase may refer to the proconsular Court of T.Aurelius Fulvus in 136 A.D., two years before he became the Emperor Antoninus Pius. This would suggest Lightfoot's date, 120 A.D.

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(1) ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμῶν ἑλικίᾳ (Adv. Haer. III, 3. 3).  
 (2) παῖς ὢν ἔτι (Epistle to Florinus).  
 (3) πράττοντα ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ αὐλῇ (Ibid).

Harvey makes a kind of psychological study of the famous letter. He assumes that Irenaeus wrote the letter at an age when the memory of distant things is more acute than that of things more recent. In fact, Irenaeus uses some such words. Possibly some would be more inclined to think that the age of 70 would be the more likely age for such a failure of memory than Harvey's '60'

About the same time as this letter was written, Irenaeus sent a letter to Victor communicating to him a caution about Florinus who had apostasised to Valentinianism. If Irenaeus had conceived the idea of writing that letter to Victor in 196 A.D., when the latter had condemned Theodotus, or in 198 A.D., when he excommunicated the Eastern Churches, he would have abandoned the idea, as Victor needed no stimulation of his vigilance. The time most likely would have been that of his accession to the bishopric in 188 A.D. On Harvey's judgment this would fix the date of Irenaeus' birth at 128 A.D. Possibly that might be corrected, as indicated, to 118 or 120 A.D., which is Lightfoot's date.

The picture of Irenaeus' youth in Smyrna, drawn so lovingly in the letter to Florinus, is one of the gems

of ancient times. Reference has already been made of the lapse of Florinus into the Gnostic heresy. Possibly Farrar reads too much into the phrase about the royal court, where he suggests that Florinus had an eye to worldly success when 'he was faring prosperously in the royal court'<sup>(1)</sup>, and that Gnosticism presented more chances than adherence to the Church. However that may be, Irenaeus pleads with the most touching of all appeals, the memories of youth's golden days.

"I can tell", he writes, "the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit and converse, and his goings forth and comings in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his body, and the discourses which he held before the people, and his intercourse with John, how he would speak of it, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, how he would recount their words: and concerning the Lord, what things they were which he heard from them both as to His mighty works and His teaching, as Polycarp, having received them from eye-witnesses of the Life of the Lord, used to recount them consonantly to the Scriptures. These things I listened

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(1) 'Lives of the Fathers', Chap. II 'Polycarp'.

to diligently by God's mercy, noting them not on paper, but in my own heart and ever by the Grace of God. I meditate upon them faithfully (γνυσίως).<sup>(1)</sup>"

This story captivated the heart of Renan - the old Saint seated on the terraced hillsides of Mount Pagus over Smyrna, gazing on the enclosing mountains and the sparkling gulf, so that, as he spoke, "an echo of Galilee thus made itself heard, at a distance of a hundred and fifty years, on the shores of another Sea." Unfortunately the appeal was made in vain. Irenaeus tells us that his old fellow student became a partisan of the error of Valentinus.

Irenaeus retained all through life a reverent affection for his aged master, Polycarp. In Book III 3, 3, he writes - And Polycarp also, who had not only

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(1) ὥστε με δύνασθαι εἰπεῖν καὶ τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ καθεζόμενος διελέντο ὁ μακάριος Πολύκαρπος, καὶ τὰς προόδους αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς εἰδόθους, καὶ τὸν λαοκρατῆρα τοῦ βίου, καὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἰδέαν, καὶ τὰς διαλέξεις αἷς εἰποιεῖτο πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος, καὶ τὴν μετὰ Ἰωάννου συνενκαστιοθῆν ὡς ἐπήγγελλε, καὶ τὴν μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τῶν ἑσρακικῶν τοῦ Κύνιον, καὶ ὡς κπεμνημόνευε τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν. καὶ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου τίνα ἦν ἢ πρὸς ἐκείνων ἀγκυρόει καὶ περὶ τῶν δυνάμεων αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ὡς παρὰ τῶν αὐτοπτῶν τῆς γωγῆς τοῦ λόγου παρεληφθῆς ὁ Πολύκαρπος ἐπήγγελλε πάντα σύμφωνα τῆς γραφῆς. ταῦτα καὶ τότε διὰ τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ ἐπιέμαι νεωνὸς σπουδῆς ἕκτουσ ὑπομνηματιζόμενος αὐτῶν, οὐκ ἐν λαῶτι, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ἑκῆ κραιδίᾳ, καὶ αἰεὶ διὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ γνυσίως ἕτε ἀναμνησκώμεθα (ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ ΤΟ ΦΛΟΡΙΝΟΥ II)



been trained by the Apostles, and had conversed with many of those who had seen Christ, but had also been constituted by the Apostles, Bishop over Asia, in the Church of Smyrna:- Whom we also saw in our early life; for he tarried with us long, and in extreme old age, by a glorious and distinguished martyrdom, departed this life; having always taught these things, which he learned from the Apostles, which the Church delivers, and which alone are true." The death of Polycarp is assigned by Lightfoot to 155 A.D., so that he was born before 70 A.D.

Irenaeus, like many brilliant young Orientals, made his way to Rome. That is much more probable than that Pothinus took him with him to Gaul when he became the first Bishop of Lyons, as Warren in the "Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church" thinks.

The postscript to the letter of the Smyrnaeans, which Lightfoot holds as genuine, states that a certain Gaius had copied this letter from the writings of Irenaeus, a former pupil of the holy Polycarp, and that this Irenaeus was living in Rome at the time of the saint's martyrdom and had many pupils, and that on the very day when Polycarp was martyred, in Smyrna, Irenaeus

heard a voice as of a trumpet saying, "Polycarp has borne testimony."

In the letter of Irenaeus to Pope Victor, is related a happy incident which he may have seen with his own eyes. Polycarp came to Rome a year before his death to discuss with Anicetus, the Bishop of Rome, regarding a difference between the Eastern and Western Churches in the question of the proper time for observing Easter. Eusebius tells us that the two bishops *μικρὰ σχίσματα πρὸς ἀλλήλους*, but so harmoniously was it arranged that Anicetus gave Polycarp the highest honour he could confer by allowing him to celebrate the Eucharist in his presence, in his own church.

Valentinus and Marcion had then many followers in Rome. Cerdon and Tatian were there, and it is said that in his visit Polycarp won many heretics back to the faith. Rome in those great years of religious ferment when Gnosticism was shaking the Church to its foundations, was the second and most important training ground of Irenaeus. His great Treatise bears evidence of close contact not merely with the Gnostic schools, but with the clergy, and possibly the Apologists like

Justin Martyr who were working out the doctrinal basis of Catholicism.

We have now to determine how it came about that Irenaeus went to Gaul and became the Bishop of Lyons, and successor of Pothinus. Unfortunately we are thrown back upon conjecture. Farrar thinks he may have been like Crescens (in 2.Tim iv,10) sent as a missionary to Galatia. It seems however more probable that Irenaeus remained in Rome lecturing and teaching for several years. Such a knowledge of the Scriptures, such facility in using it effectively in the defence of the faith, would not likely have been stimulated in the work of a missionary among uncultured people. More probable is Hitchcock's view, that he remained in Rome until 164 A.D., when a persecution under Marcus Aurelius broke out. Among the many Christian victims was Justin Martyr, whose 'Syntagma' was known to, and used by Hippolytus, one of the pupils of Irenaeus.

Irenaeus was now in about his fortieth year, and probably was compelled to take refuge in the Church in Gaul, with which Church he was bound to have some connections - Greek Presbyters from Gaul visiting Rome, students sent there for training, and he himself a Greek

from Smyrna.

We are in possession of the fact that Irenaeus became a presbyter in Lyons, where he must have thrown himself wholeheartedly into the pioneer work of the Church. If he ever hankered after the Roman auditorium, he never confesses it, but his pathetic apology, an apology quite unnecessary, for his deficient literary style, is an eloquent witness that this man of learning sacrificed the scholar's life for the toil of the evangelist.

In 177 A.D. a terrible persecution fell upon the Church in Lyons. Was Irenaeus in Lyons during the persecution? If he was, it is very difficult to see how he could have escaped.

The letter written from Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia describes the tragedy through which the Church passed. It has been assumed that this letter which, by the way, is the earliest trace we have of the Christian Church in Gaul, was really penned by Irenaeus. It is not probable that Irenaeus was an eye-witness of the persecution. Had he been in Lyons he could hardly have escaped. We know that he was sent by the Confessors of Lyons and Vienne to intercede with

Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome, on behalf of the Montanists. It may be that he was despatched on other missions to Rome. The hypothesis which meets best the facts is that he was in Rome, either on the first mission referred to, or on some other, when the harrowing intelligence came to him of the executions in Lyons. The report sent in a letter to the churches in Asia and Phrygia is preserved by Eusebius (H.E. v.1), which is accepted as genuine.<sup>(1)</sup> It tells us that Pothinus in his ninetieth year, sank under the effects of tortures, and continued many days in a loathsome prison. Blandina was scourged, her body scorched upon a red-hot iron chair, her limbs torn by wild beasts, and at last her life taken, but under all her tortures she endured faithful even unto death. I am, she confessed, a Christian and nothing wicked is tolerated among us. The boy Ponticus showed similar heroism. The dead bodies of the martyrs were laid in heaps upon the streets until at last they were burnt, and their ashes strewn upon the Rhone.

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(1) This remarkable letter we owe to Eusebius of Caesarea. Renan calls it "the pearl of the Christian literature of the second century."

This atrocious savagery is hard to understand in the principate of the serious-minded Stoic, Marcus Aurelius. It must however be borne in mind that though the Christian religion remained a "religio illicita", there were no state prosecutions of Christians as such. Trajan's rescript makes that clear. But the door was always open to the public informer, the "delator," and the rude populace of Lyons, no less than of Rome, was easily roused by the cry "down with the Atheists". Indeed, as a matter of fact, we are quite sure that, though the Church was in the main free from state interference, it was at the mercy of the ignorant mob. Floods or fires or famines were quite enough to fan the fanaticism of the populace against the most helpless scapegoats. Often also, when the heathen games were celebrated, and the temples thronged, the Christians who would not join their fellows or contribute to the expenses, or would shun the sometimes licentious merry-makings, became objects of hatred, and brought upon them the ominous cry of "ἄπει τοῦ θεοῦ".

It is extremely improbable that Marcus Aurelius knew anything about the merits of the case. It is

true that several 'apologies' were written defending the Christians from the false charges commonly directed against them. But it is exceedingly improbable that Marcus Aurelius ever saw them. In his "Meditations" he only mentions the Christians once, and then to attribute their eagerness for martyrdom to obstinacy and love of notoriety. (μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν ὡς εἰ χριστιανοὶ ἀλλὰ λογιζόμενως καὶ . . . . ἀτραγῶδως.) Such minor matters as trouble with Christians, in any city of the Empire, probably never came to the notice of the Emperor at all.

The mission on which Irenaeus was sent to Rome, of which we have some knowledge, was to intercede with Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome, on behalf of the Montanists.

Montanism was in essence a movement of reform. It was puritanic in spirit. It was a healthy reaction against the excessive spiritualising and allegorizing tendencies in both Church and heretical circles. It endeavoured to restore Church discipline in view of the nearness of the Lord's Coming, in which it fervently believed. It championed the rights of the laity and membership of the Church against continued growth of

hierarchical tendencies. It exalted the rôle of the prophet as against the ecclesiastic. Many earnest Christians threw themselves eagerly into the movement. Had Montanism been wisely guided it would have been an untold blessing to the Church. But it was marked by extreme narrowness, extravagant claims, and many eccentricities.

Montanism spread very rapidly over the Empire, and its chief champion was Tertullian of Carthage. It may be doubted if Tertullian with all his scholarship and eloquence did the movement any good. He defended the prophesyings and puritanism with excessive bitterness and passion. In the end Montanism was defeated. Under the guidance of its leading men it would have reduced the Church to a narrow sect, and made the prospect of a catholic church impossible. But its spirit entered the Church and has never left it till this day.

Montanism appeared in Gaul as elsewhere. The churches with which Irenaeus was connected did not altogether approve, nor blame Montanism. They were opposed to its extreme forms and demands. Eusebius tells us that the letter sent by the clergy in Gaul was 'most



pious and orthodox' and it is likely that while they repudiated all errors of schism (such as in fact took place in Carthage), they pleaded with Eleutherus to deal gently with the Montanists in Rome. Irenaeus was chosen as the bearer of this letter, *Εἰρηνύκης Ἐνεκκ*, and no one could have been so well qualified for such delicate negotiations.

Jerome informs us that it was while the sentence of death was hanging over the clergy of Lyons that this message was sent to Eleutherus in the person of Irenaeus, (a martyribus *eiusdem loci*). Irenaeus was therefore not among those who were condemned by the authorities, and had freedom of action. Eusebius, H.E. v,4, quotes the letter commending the bearer, which contains a kindly play on the messenger's name. "If we could think that a figurative name conferred goodness, we would emphatically commend to you 'Irenaeus, which is indeed his real character' as a presbyter of our Church." Jerome states that Pothinus was still alive when Irenaeus was despatched on this errand.

We can safely assume that Irenaeus had much sympathy

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(1) H.E. V. 24. *Ἐιρηνῶϊος ὅπερ ἔστιν ἔπ' αὐτῷ.*  
 The full text is — *καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἔχειν σε αὐτὸν ἐν παρὰ θέσει, ἡγλωτῆν ὄντα τῆς διαθήκης τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἐἰ γὰρ ἤδωκεν τόπον τινὶ δικαιοσύνης περὶποιεῖσθαι ὡς πρεσβύτερον ἑκκλησίας, ὅπερ ἔστιν ἔπ' αὐτῷ, ἐν πρώτοις αὐτῷ παραθέμεθα*

with the Montanists. He was a man of peace, and indeed it is suggested that his was the pen that indited the letter. He knew good Christians both in Asia and in Gaul who sympathised with Montanus in his assertion of spiritual freedom, and in his teaching that the Holy Spirit still inspired the hearts and actions of believers. Irenaeus was primarily a mediator in things not essential. It was only when he saw that Gnosticism attacked the very substance of Faith, that he realised that there was no via media. He realised that the Church might goad the Montanists into schism, whereas the Church might profitably give heed to what those Reformers so sincerely believed. We infer from Tertullian that the appeal had a happy issue. Eleutherus began to take a more favourable view of the Montanists when Praxeas intervened. He then withdrew his letters of peace, and thus, says Tertullian, <sup>(1.)</sup> Praxeas: took in 'hand two works of the Devil; he expelled prophecy, and 'introduced heresy, he drove out the Paraclete and crucified the Father."

When he was in Rome at that time, Irenaeus probably lectured on Gnosticism. Critical examination of his \_\_\_\_\_

(1.) "Ila duo negotia diaboli Praxeas Romae procuravit, prophetiam expulit et haeresim intulit, Paracletum fugavit, et Patrem crucifixit."  
 cf. A. W. H. Noy (Kumb.) I p 178 note

great book has discovered two accounts of Valentinus combined. The treatise issued some years afterwards was doubtless based on these Roman lectures. The only confirmation we have of these lectures is a statement of his pupil Hippolytus, in a fragment preserved by Photius, that he had heard these lectures.

During his absence, in Rome, from his Church, the blow fell upon Lyons. The martyrs, including the aged Pothinus, gave up their lives. The See in Lyons was now vacant. All we have to go upon is the statement of Jerome - "Postea jam Pothino prope nonagenario ob Christum martyrio coronato, in locum ejus substituitur." This presupposes an election or at least an invitation from the surviving presbyters to Irenaeus to become their Bishop, and events proved that they had not merely made a wise choice, but gave a place of authority to a man who was in every way capable of rendering the Church a service which no words could exaggerate, in resisting a corrupting and deadening system of heresy, and in laying the foundations of an enduring system of doctrine.

It is perhaps needless to speculate as to the manner of his ordination. There was no other Epis-

copal See in Gaul but the vacant See of Lugdunum. . Besides, Irenaeus was in Rome, and nothing is more probable than that he was ordained to the Bishopric by his friend and father, Eleutherus of Rome.

The labours of Irenaeus in Gaul were mainly missionary. He had to itinerate among the Celtic tribes, establishing Churches, and appointing teachers and preachers. He himself acknowledges that his readers need not expect skill in words, or power of expression, or niceties of diction, for he has lived so long among the Celtic tribes, speaking their barbarous dialect. This indicates a man whose bishopric was no sinecure. He founded the Churches of Besançon and Valence. It was during those years - a milder period, the principate of Commodus who, one of the most dissolute of Emperors, relaxed in great measure the disabilities of the Christian communities, - <sup>that</sup> Irenaeus gave his leisure to the composition of his great Treatise. The work was written, according to Eusebius, during the episcopate of Eleutherus. Theodotion's version of the Old Testament limits it to not being earlier than 181 A.D. It represented, as has been said, the labour

of many years. His main reason for writing the book was to demolish the Valentinian heresy, for on his own statement the refutation of Valentinianism was practically the refutation of all other heresies. Eclecticism so marked the system of Valentinus that to us it sounds like a disconnected dream and appears like a house of cards of varied hue; yet it was full of poetry and fascination, and agreed so well with the tendencies of the times, that it probably numbered more adherents than any other heresy.

The heresy of Marcion developed later, and had a better foundation, structure and organisation, and for that reason was more dangerous than the former. Irenaeus indeed purposed devoting a special treatise to the refutation of Marcion.

The importance of Irenaeus as a theologian is unquestioned. Harnack considered his Treatise far superior to the theological writings of Tertullian. He left no part of Christian training and doctrine untouched. His treatise against the Gnostics, so far from being a compilation of negations, or a work of elaborate destruction, is an amazing statement of Christian truth,

driven home to intellect, conscience and life again and again with the most copious and attractive illustration.

When we realise how often Christian writers were disfigured by angry arguments, and unbridled vituperation, by methods savouring more of the world than Christ, saturated with the pugnacity and uncompromising stubbornness of the times, we more than marvel at this man, providentially raised up to publish the Christian faith, behind which was a life, of meekness, tolerance, scholarship, courage and self-denial, a life that breathed the fervour and sweet reasonableness of the Apostolic Age.

All that remains to be said of Irenaeus is the part he played in the Paschal controversy. Reference has already been made to that question. We have seen that Polycarp and Anicetus agreed to leave matters as they were, respecting the varying and conscientious views of the Eastern and Western Churches. The question then remained an open question. But it was raised again by Victor of Rome in the interests of the uniformity of the Church, in itself a laudable enough motive.

Victor however was not an Irenaeus, and resolving

to bend all Christendom to Roman rule, caused synods to be assembled in 198 A.D,. He excommunicated Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, and by this highhanded ecclesiasticism sounded the first note of discord between the Churches of the east and the west, and opened the way that proved so tragic and fatal to Roman-Christian unity.

Irenaeus, with characteristic courage, ~~came out into~~ ~~the open and~~ despatched a letter to Victor, urging on him more moderate counsels, beseeching him not to isolate his Church from the rest of the body catholic. According to Anatolius the letter effected a conciliation. But the diversity of use continued and the question remained a stumbling block till it was finally settled, in favour of the Western view, at the Council of Nicea.

Nothing is known of the time and circumstances of the death of Irenaeus. It is doubtful if the title of martyr properly belongs to him. It happens that Jerome calls him martyr, but the word may have been inserted by a scribe from the margin. Gregory of TOURS, who speaks of him as martyr, is an author deserving of little credence. On the other hand, Syrian divines not infrequently quote from Irenaeus, speaking of him

as the disciple of Polycarp the Martyr, but the title of martyr is not given to him. Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Ephraem Syrus, Augustine, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexandria, all the early Syriae fragments, the existing Latin manuscripts (except Cod. Voss) all withhold the title Martyr.

The active part taken by Irenaeus in the Paschal controversy justifies the supposition that he may have lived on through the first five or six years of the third century, dying between the age of seventy and eighty.

In addition to the work Irenaeus had purposed writing against Marcion, we are told by Eusebius that Irenaeus had written a book entitled "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching", and that it was addressed to a brother named Marcianus.

The manuscript which contains this treatise was found in 1904 in the Church of the Virgin at Eriwan in Armenia by Dr. Karapet Ter-Mekerttshian, one of the most learned of the Armenian clergy. It was edited by him, with a German translation in 1907, in the *Texte und Untersuchungen* (xxx.1.) and Dr. Harnack added a



brief dissertation and notes. An English edition with a translation from the Armenian with introduction and notes was published in 1920, by the Dean of Wells, Dr. J. Armitage Robinson.

The same Armenian manuscript contains an Armenian version of the Fourth and Fifth Books of the 'Adversus Haereses'. They come immediately before the 'Epi-deixis', and are embraced with it under the single title of the latter work. The Armenian version of the "Refutation" is of value, as enabling a scholar to check the Latin version. Both versions apparently adhere very closely to the Greek original.

The date of the manuscript is probably between 1270 and 1289.

That of <sup>the</sup> Clermont MS. of the "Refutation", on which Massuet formed his text, dates from the tenth century. The Arundel MS. of the same is perhaps two centuries later and that of the Voss MSS. not earlier than the fourteenth century.

A careful reading of Dr. Robinson's version, and the copious Latin references from the 'Adversus Haereses', would leave no doubt - even if doubt were possible - that it is Irenaeus who is speaking. The

same way of using the Scripture, the same favourite conceptions, such as Christ summing up all things into Himself, <sup>(1)</sup> the same quaint argument about the two virgins, Eve and Mary, <sup>(2)</sup> the same ingenious illustrations <sup>(3)</sup> that are peculiar to himself, like that of the shadow, or the mystery called Passion that saved the Hebrews <sup>(4)</sup> in Egypt, or the two Hands of God, the Son and the Spirit, <sup>(5)</sup> in the making of man;— all these and many more bring back to memory the figure and the spirit of the 'peace loving bishop'.

The 'Apodeixis' is not a confession of Faith, nor indeed any loosely constructed compendium of doctrine. Dr. Robinson describes it as "a sort of 'Vade mecum' for an intelligent Christian, explaining his faith, placing it in its historical setting in relation to Judaism, and confirming it by the citation and exposition of a great number of Old Testament passages."

It is absolutely non-controversial. It therefore

- (1) Apodeixis 6: ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (ε/φθ I. 10) frag. in Adv. Haer.  
 (2) Ibid, 33.  
 (3) Ibid, 71.  
 (4) Ibid, 25. The same interpretation of Pascha, as if from πᾶσχα is in Adv. Haer. IV, xx, 1: "pronuntiavit eum, Pascha nominans."  
 (5) Ibid, 11. Cf. Adv. Haer. IV Pref. 3: "et per manus ejus plasmatus est, hoc est, per Filium et Spiritum sanctum, quibus et dixit 'Faciamus hominem?'"

stands outside the limits of this particular study, and no critical examination of it can be undertaken. It is perhaps a very true description of the equipment of a Christian bishop or pastor, after Irenaeus' own heart. This preacher, is a man of one book. His text is the whole word of God as a divine plan leading up to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Bible told to simple people, the narrative woven together with great poetry and imagination and skill, every luminous point seized, a triumphant march down the centuries guided by the Spirit of God.

Dr. Robinson emphasises the dependence of Irenaeus on Justin Martyr, whose first and second Apologies must have been very familiar to him. We can also observe the peculiar fondness he has for the Old Testament, not as a mere storehouse of texts, but as the very Voice of God. The Old Testament is holy ground, and this will enable one to understand his passionate diatribe against Marcion, and to feel that he wrote not in mere anti-Gnostic spirit, but as one whose very heart had been wounded by a man who totally rejected the Old Testament and excluded it from his Canon.

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II.

The Hellenistic Age

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THE HELLENISTIC AGE.

It is quite obvious that the intricate problem of Gnosticism as revealed in Irenaeus cannot be adequately studied without a knowledge of the Hellenistic period. Gnosticism was a product of that period. Its sources, ~~of course,~~ are largely outside that age, but all its phenomena and its character were conditioned by that world of thought and of religion. The Hellenistic period deserves intimate study, as it is the background of the thought of Irenaeus. We find him dealing with philosophical and theological conceptions that are scattered freely through Philo, Clement and the Apologists. His exegesis is the exegesis of the time when the interpretation of the Bible was conducted by the allegorical method, and not only the Bible, but the poems of Homer and Hesiod. His extensive use of the argument from prophecy links him to all the Christian writers who preceded him.

There is no period that is more important to the student of church history than the Hellenistic, which witnessed not merely the rise of Christianity but its crystallisation in creed and in church order. And yet

it was until recently one of the most obscure periods of history. As Professor Wendland writes, <sup>(1)</sup> "It is not so long since the age of Hellenism, (i.e. the history of the world empire of Alexander, the Hellenistic realm that came into existence through him, its change into the Roman world empire down to the incorporation of Egypt), was as much lost to the knowledge of the cultured, as the history and literature of the Jews between Ezra and Jesus."

It is probable that no change in the affairs of the world made such a momentous mark on the thought and life of European civilisation as did the conquests of Alexander. <sup>(2)</sup> The breakdown of the city-state, so rich in its intimate influence on master minds like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and the absorption of these small self-contained units in a world-wide empire, had great repercussions on religion, philosophy and life generally. The world became a unity united by commerce, and by a common tongue, the Attic dialect simplified into an easy everyday speech.

The Alexandrine world was centred in the metropolis

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(1) "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur", p.2.

(2) Cf. Ibid., chapt.II.

which Alexander founded in 332 B.C., behind the screen of Pharos Island. He never returned to his city, but his corpse was ultimately entombed there. Near the mausoleum (the Soma) stood the famous Museum, the centre of the leading Greek university, and with the university were associated, as lecturers or students, the great figures of Early Christianity. Philo was born in Alexandria and lived there all his life. Clement of Alexandria came to the city in middle life, and may have spent twenty years in the Catechetical School as student and teacher, till he was expelled in 202-3 A.D. Origen lived in Alexandria until he was forty years old, and left for Caesarea. Plotinus, born in Egypt, the precise locality unknown, studied in the university under Ammonius Saccas, and left at the age of thirty-nine to teach in Rome. Both the great Gnostic masters, Basilides and Valentinus, taught in Alexandria, though Valentinus was mainly active in Rome.

No city was better situated for the common working out of the problems of the new world than Alexandria. It was a carefully planned city with wide streets and colonnades, magnificent temples, the vast temple of Serapis,

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(1) Cf. Ency. Brit. article, "Hellenism", p.238. (E. R. Bevan).

and the two famous libraries. It contained a population of over a million, with probably over a hundred thousand Jews. At any rate, it was the largest Jewish city on the Mediterranean. The Hebrew Scriptures were translated there into Greek, forming the Septuagint version of the Old Testament.

Alexandria was preeminently the meeting-place of nations. Guided by its flashing lighthouse on Pharos, ships from Greece and Asia, Rome, Spain, Carthage, arrived night and day in its harbour. In its broad avenues jostled men and women of all nations, and of every profession, a typical commercial scene, a Corinth under an African sun, full of passionate excitable life, given to sport, <sup>(1)</sup> "sparkling with wit and repartee", set forth to all time by the inimitable Idyll of Theocritus.

One would have expected to find the savants of the Museum reflecting the liveliness of the city, but if it were so, men like Philo, Origen, Clement and Plotinus show no signs of it. <sup>(2)</sup> The great thinkers and authors of the age were men of the study and the library, quite ignorant of the market place, indifferent to the interests of the crowd. Politics were repellent to Philo.

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(1) Cf. Theocritus, Idyll, xv: 'Gorgo and Praxinoe at the Festival of Adonis.' Edition by H. Snow, p 54.

(2.) Cf. The Alexandrine Age (Tollin) parson. But for a modified view see "Philo's Contribution to Religion" (H.A.A. Kennedy).



To Origen the crowds in his city meant nothing. Clement though perhaps he could have said "odi profanum vulgus et arceo", had the redeeming grace of being fond of children. Plotinus was ashamed of possessing a body. This aloofness from the community, this excessive antipathy of gown to town - though the cleavage has always to a certain extent existed - tended towards a deep cleft between philosophy and religion on the one hand, and actuality on the other, which revealed itself as a fatal defect in the great Christian Gnostic Systems, and perhaps in the Christian Church as well.

The temper of the Alexandrian Age was eclectic. It was specially so in Alexandria, where Stoic and Epicurean, missionary cynic and indifferent sceptic, were thrown together in the great open-air life of a metropolis. The Alexandrines were not creators. No Socrates, or Plato, or Aristotle had arisen. Aeschylus and Sophocles and Euripides had no successors. No Homer had appeared. The best the Alexandrines could produce was Apollonius Rhodius in his "Argonautica". The "atticising" affectation, which spurned the vulgar 'Koine' and harked back to the past, was a loyal tribute to the superlative greatness of the men who made Athens the

wonder of all the ages. Nevertheless, the "atticising" movement stifled the literary outflow which would have proved that the language of the people of the First Century was capable of as great flexibility and grandeur as the pure Attic of Plato. To fill the space of greatness, romanticism stepped in with epigrams and idylls, and other lighter flowers of literature.

Greek now moved in a vast arena, crowded with men of other nationalities, tongues and dialects. It was an age when the unity of Alexander's conception was being hammered out, and hammered out in vain, for the great Empire of the West was creeping eastward to engulf the Greek speech with the victorious accents of Rome. In those conditions geniuses and transcendent masters of the pen could not have been expected.

What did happen was that the Alexandrines acted as the alchemists of not only the best in Greece, but the best in Judea, and Egypt, and Babylonia, and Syria<sup>(1)</sup>. It was an eclectic age. All who met in Alexandria or Smyrna, or Rhodes or even in Rome, learned to reconcile their views with admirable elasticity. No spiritual tradition

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(1) Cf. Brit. Enc. article, "Hellenism" (Ed. R. Bevan).

was intractable. The ancient creed of Egypt lost its formidable and repellent strangeness by the simple academic method of allegorisation. It could be aligned to Greece without any difficulty. Moses could be easily included among the Hellenic sages. Eastern savants wandered West by way of Alexandria, and accommodated the teaching of Zoroaster to the forms of Hellenic thought. Indeed, knowledge, from all quarters, was welcomed by the Ptolemies. The man stood for more than the matter, and the distinguished teacher was sure of a place.

As has been said, it was not a creative period. It was assimilative, tolerant and reconciliatory. Plato was accepted as a Christian before Christ, just as Tertullian had claimed Seneca as a Christian. The <sup>con-</sup>junction of the Christian Gospel with Platonism was doubtless the most natural and obvious, but there was the strange blending of the Jewish and Platonic theology in Philo, and in the Book of Wisdom; and, strangest of all, the incorporation of oriental elements from Syria and Persia in the Gnostic systems. Clement of Alexandria scrupled not as to where he gathered his material, as indeed he frankly acknowledges in his saying, "many streams flow into the river of truth: the bees get their honey from every kind of flower."

The most powerful influence in the Alexandrine period was that of the Platonic philosophy. It had not been so at the beginning of that period. Alexander's tutor had been Aristotle, and Demetrius of Phalerum, a Peripatetic, was invited by Ptolemy Soter to found the Museum and its library. The atmosphere of the Museum and library was thus mainly scientific. It was dominated by great mathematicians, geographers, geometers, astronomers, anatomists and surgeons. And possibly this type of university might have endured, but for the change in the political and economic centre of gravity to Rome. The Imperial City attracted just that type of scholar, for Rome was preeminently practical in her welcome to scientists. The change that took place in Alexandria in the first century B.C. was from Aristotle to Plato.

This second period opens almost invisibly, but the Platonic atmosphere is visible in Philo, who, writes Dr. H.A.A. Kennedy, "would probably have called 'the most sacred Plato', as he names him, his master."<sup>(1)</sup> Philo's cosmogony, as Dr. Kennedy states, had as "its main source, whether used directly, or through such a medium as Posidonius - apparently Plato's Timaeus, modified by

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(1) "Philo's Contribution to Religion", p.2.

an adaptation of the Stoic conception of God, and considerably affected by Jewish presuppositions." Clement held that Greek philosophy in particular was the preparation of the Greeks for Christ: Plato was "Moses atticising"<sup>(1)</sup>. He maintained that Plato's best thoughts were borrowed from the Hebrew prophets, or else <sup>that</sup> he received them straight from God. Origen, though himself a teacher, regularly attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas, and made a thorough study of the books of Plato and Numenius, of the Stoics and the Pythagoreans.

The influence of Plato ~~was~~ naturally greater on the Neo-Platonists. Plotinus treated Plato as his master, and, as in the case of Clement, the authority of the "Timaeus" had to be accepted as beyond criticism. Thus early began the ascendancy of Plato's great cosmological dialogue, which lasted down to the mediæval period. The Middle Ages drew their cosmology largely from the Timaeus, practically the only work of Plato known directly to that <sup>(2)</sup> period.

The influence of Plato, as will be shown later on, upon the great Gnostic masters, Basilides and Valentinus, is profoundly marked.

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(1) Ency. Britt., VI, 489. 'Clement of Alexandria (Bigg & Donaldson)  
 (2) Sandys (History of Classical Scholarship) says that Plato's Republic was lost for a thousand years. Barker, Greek Political Theory, p.352.

The school of Alexandria had thus changed over completely from a philosophy of realism to one of idealism. The world of sight and sense was of little or no value. It was "τὸ μὴ ὄν." Accordingly, with nothing solid, substantial and real to correct or check the exuberance of their thought, it is not surprising to find their systems soaring into regions of sheer imagination, into uncharted seas of pure fancy which are hopelessly beyond the reach of the intellectual compass or plummet.

The Alexandrine age undervalued history. It is difficult to realise, when reading Irenaeus, that he has any other conception of the Scriptures than as a storehouse of proofs and types of doctrine, or illustrations of the ways of God. The idea of the Jewish nation feeling after God, rising from crude concepts to a clearer faith, is quite foreign to his mind. The men and women of the Bible are not human beings like himself. The romanticism of the saner and healthier, if pagan, period of Alexandria has quite vanished. We are in an unreal world, which to all these Platonic thinkers is the only reality.

Irenaeus is a child of his age in his facile yet fatal use of allegory. As early as the Fifth Century B.C.

inventive individuals sought to solve the contradictions of the Homeric religion, to the advanced morality and piety, by allegorical explanations. Homer had even then become a problem. His pictures of the gods revolted the moral sense, but on the other hand, the poems had become a kind of book religion. They were sacrosanct. Homer had his "nimbus." How could Homer be accommodated to the new age? The expedient of allegory presented a solution. The Stoics had occupied themselves with the allegorical interpretation of the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, of divine figures and myths.

By most arbitrary etymologies the gods of popular faith were converted into physical and spiritual potencies, their myths, attributes, accompaniments, accommodated to Stoic interpretation, and thus to extend piety and morality. As Professor Wendland says, Homer came to be a  
 (1) problem. The allegorists acknowledged the older criticism as authoritative and were in agreement with the Sceptics and Epicurus, that it is impossible to attach human sor-

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(1) "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur, p.66: "Homer war zum Problem geworden. Die allegoristen ..... meinen, in ihrer Methode allegorischer Deutung das unfehlbare mittel gefunden zu haben, die Ehre der Dichter zu retten, die radikalen Konsequenzen. Platos und Epikurs abzulehnen und aus dem Urborne Ältester aller Weisheit immer neue Offenbarungen zu schöpfen."

ows and passions to the gods or to speak of their conflicts and their sufferings. But by the method of allegorical meaning they found the unfailing means of saving the honour of the poets. Homer was the spring of all wisdom and knowledge, out of whom all thinkers have created, the ungrateful Plato above all: the modern physics, and theology, cosmography and geography were entirely known to him. There was only the alternative, to accuse Homer of godlessness or by allegorical interpretation to point out that one requires only to disclose the hidden sense of offensive passages in order from them to create the mysteries of deepest wisdom.

We observe the same in St. Paul, as, e.g., when he speaks of Christ as the Rock Which followed the Israel-<sup>(1)</sup>ites, according to the Rabbinic legend; or of the Law and its bondage typified by Hagar the bondwoman and her son Ishmael; <sup>or of</sup> the Gospel of freedom from bondage by Sarah the free woman and her son Isaac, the offspring of the promise.

This spiritualising was the result of a philosophic view of religion, and this philosophic view was the out-

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(1) Cf. 1. Cor. X. 4 and Gal. IV. <sup>quoted by</sup> Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. I, p. 223; The history of the Old Testament was here sublimated to a history of the emancipation of reason from passion.



come of a lasting influence of Greek philosophy and of the Greek spirit generally on Judaism. In consequence of this view, all facts and sayings of the Old Testament in which one could not find his way, were allegorised. "Nothing was what it seemed, but was only the symbol of something <sup>in-</sup>visible." We shall, later on, see that this allegorical method <sup>is</sup> the characteristic feature of the exegesis of Irenaeus, as indeed it was ~~of~~ Philo, Clement, Origen, Plotinus, and the Gnostic fathers.

All that was concrete, actual and real in life, all that was of historical value, being thus ruled out, the stage was set for a religious philosophy, and a 'Weltanschauung' that moved wholly in the ideal world.

The Alexandrine thinkers were 'a priori' philosophers. Their method was from the universal to the particular, from the 'one' to the 'many.' Inductive reasoning had more than a millenium to wait for its entry into human thought.

The principle which dominated all thought was the absolute transcendence of the Supreme Being. Ontologically, God was above, beyond, utterly removed from all contact. He was completely separated from the world. <sup>(1)</sup>

The second principle was the corruption, the defile-

(1) Cf. Clement's conception of God: "above every expression, every thought, every conception, invisible, unspeakable, infinite, unnamable."

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 ment, the inherent evil of matter. Between the Supreme Ineffable Being and sinful matter there was a vast chasm, and obviously the problem was how to bridge that chasm, for otherwise all thought, all religion was at an absolute standstill. All the philosophers were aware of this, and not least among them Plato, who on the one hand had to posit the existence of the younger gods in the Timaeus, and practically to deny the existence of matter, calling it "τὸ μὴ ὄν".

Philo, who was a Platonist and a Jew, who accepted Plato on the same moral level as Moses, could not have constructed a consistent scheme. He was bound by his philosophy to deal with God as remote, and by his Jewish leanings, as 'near at hand'. But the thought of God's transcendence is paramount. Dr. Kennedy remarks (2) that Philo's thought was steeped in Greek metaphysics. It was part of his work to lecture to students, and doubtless the character of his audience necessitated an accommodation to their Hellenistic views. The Divine Being was shut off from all possible contamination that might arise through His association with the shifting imperfections of the world we know. Philo frequently suggests that

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(1) See also "Hatch Hibbert Lectures, Ch.ix, p.238 ff.  
 (2) "Philo's Contribution to Religion", p.9.

all we can really say of God is that He is.

But the Jewish element in Philo, being more fundamental, and less amenable to the spirit of the time, brings God back to the world. He calls the Universe the House of God, and attributes to God all that is good in the world. <sup>(1)</sup> These two elements are irreconcilable. A God, without qualities, is a conception quite irreconcilable with all that is implied in the Old Testament idea of "the living God". Both elements are in Philo's thought, uncoalesced. Philo, Jew and Platonist, is a unique reflection of the Alexandrine culture.

Clement came into the Church, from heathen surroundings when he was in middle life. If Philo was the stronger Jew than Platonist, Clement was Greek philosopher first and Christian afterwards. He is the finished article of Christian Alexandria. He was an eclectic par excellence. He quotes liberally from the Old and New Testaments, especially from the Wisdom literature and from the First and Fourth Gospels, Clement is in the full Alexandrine current. He teaches that God is unbegotten, incorruptible, without needs, above time and space, alone possessing real being, and not immanent in matter.

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(1) See also Philo's Aspiration: De Som I 23, quoted by Angus "Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World", p.7. "Strive then O soul, to become the house of God, His holy temple, His loveliest abode."

God is absolutely ἀπαθής, and consequently had no part or lot in the passion of Christ, or in the sufferings of martyrs.

In true Socratic fashion he discusses a matter which had evidently exercised thought at his time;—We observe the same thing in Philo - the longing of the creature to see God. It is one of the central facts in the system of Valentinus, the cause of the fall of Sophia. Clement teaches that we approach God by excluding one by one the physical properties of matter - breadth, depth, length, etc. What remains is a "monad". If position is removed only bare monad remains. Elsewhere he states that God is beyond monad. He is above every expression, every thought, every conception, invisible, unspeakable, infinite, unnamable. Clement's abstraction has been called "the deification of zero".

Origen is the third shining light in the Alexandrine firmament. Although he comes later than Irenaeus, having been born fifteen years before the end of the Second Century, he is representative of the currents of thought when Irenaeus was writing his great Treatise.

There is an enigmatic saying in the Timaeus, "To discover the Maker and Father of the Universe is a hard task, and when we have discovered Him it is impossible

to speak of his nature at all." Both Clement and Origen quote the passage. So also did Celsus for his own purpose, but Origen held that he had overpressed it. It is not true, he said, that God is wholly unknown and inaccessible. Harnack writes, <sup>(1)</sup> "By proclaiming the reconciliation of science with the Christian faith, Origen did more than any other man to win the old world to the Christian religion." In addition to his attendance at the lectures of the Platonist Ammonius Saccas, he made a thorough study of Stoicism. Yet when discussing the Stoic doctrine of immanence, i.e. that the Divine Nature was corporeal, though of a tenuity and rarity beyond that of ordinary bodies, a highly refined phase of material substance,—which would have been a "way out" from the 'cul de sac' of Platonic inaccessibility,—he rejected the Stoic doctrine. But, mirabile dictu, when describing God as Light, Fire, Spirit, he is at pains to assert that nothing corporeal is implied. The truth is that he held the Divine transcendence with a personal bias against its absolute interpretation. But Philosophy was not Origen's chief metier. He was preeminently a Christian and an expositor of the Scriptures. Harnack says that

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(1) Harnack in article, "Origen", Ency. Britt., V.20, p.270.

with all his abstractions he represented the Deity in a more living personal way than the Greek philosophers. His favourite quotation, "God shall be all and in all" opens the door for the Supreme Being into His Creation.

In Alexandria there was the great school of Neo-Platonism. The whole career of Plotinus is subsequent to the death of Irenaeus. Mention is made of him here only, because the school, of which he was the leading exponent, shared in the same doctrine of the absolute transcendence of God. Plotinus was an extreme Platonist. His language is arresting in its extreme negatives. These negatives seem to culminate in this, that "the One has no will and no Self-consciousness".

This rigorous isolation of the Supreme Being was not a mere doctrine into which the Alexandrines drifted under the influence of Platonism. Nor was it a mere craze, a periodic madness of the intellect. It was largely a reaction from the inanities, the vulgarities and the moral corruptions of the various popular idolatries. The multiplicity of gods shocked more than St. Paul, when he strolled through Athens. The thoughtful and earnest minds of this great age, that had the world as its parish,

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(1) The best study of Plotinus is "The Philosophy of Plotinus", Gifford Lectures, by W.R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul.

strove to keep the Deity free from all this vulgarity and obscenity. The "One" must be saved at all costs from the "many". Basilides exclaimed, <sup>(1)</sup> "I will say anything rather than admit that Providence is evil." The Jew was jealous for the purity of his God, and the same motive showed on the soil of philosophic Alexandria. To acknowledge that God was forever unknowable and invisible and unapproachable was an excessive price to pay for a pure Deity. On such premises, religion and, more so, Christianity, was logically impossible. But men are not ruled by logic, and neither, as we shall see, are theologians and philosophers.

Sooner or later that chasm between the unapproachable "One" and "the many" must be bridged, and the bridging of the chasm is what we call "mediation". It was suggested that while God might not come into contact with the concrete and earthly, He might mediate His divine power. And some such suggestion was called for, was imperative, for after all the world was a fact, and so were men. How did the world come into being? God must have had something to do with it. Why then did He make it? The problem of Creation greatly preoccupied the Alexandrines. It was a fundamental problem in Gnosticism.

(1) πάντ' ἔρω γὰρ μᾶλλον ἢ κακὸν τὸ πρὸν οὖν εἶναι  
Frag. from. Clem. alex. Strom. II 12-81.

The answer ready to hand was supplied, by that sacrosanct authority, the Timaeus. Plato writes, "Being Good, God did not grudge the joy of existence to others, and therefore produced the Universe."<sup>(1)</sup> Both Philo and Clement quote the passage, and the Christian Fathers unite in asserting a Good Creator. The Gnostics alone, and especially Marcion, attribute the world not to a good Creator, and not to the God of Love as revealed in Jesus.

Much more important was the question, How, by what means, did God create the Universe? It was held by some that it was inherent in the Divine Nature to create. The quiescence of God was not inaction. Philo held that the Universe was God's concern, that it was necessary to Him for His employment.<sup>(2)</sup> In other words, the existence of God entailed the existence of a Universe.

Another suggestion, deriving mainly from Plato was that the world came from God by generation. This is not on all fours with the Biblical conception of fatherhood, as we encounter it in the doctrine of the Trinity, but a more ontological idea - derived existence. The perfect always generates. This idea of generation dominates the Gnostic system of Valentinus, each pair<sup>of aeons</sup> generating the

(1) Plato, Timaeus. 30 b. No book, excluding the Bible, impressed itself on the Alexandrine and mediaeval thinkers as did the Timaeus.

(2) Cf. Hatch, "Hibbert Lectures", Ch.VII, p.182.



pair that succeeds. Generation is closely allied to emanation, a "flowing forth," as a stream from a spring. Indeed that is the phrase in Plotinus of the emanation of his Trinity <sup>(1)</sup>. If then it is admitted that God made the world, whether by the Divine Will, or by emanation, procession, generation, then the doctrine of God's transcendence is ipso facto abandoned.

But if God made the world, why is His Creation so imperfect? This is the "whence the evil?" <sup>(2)</sup>, the unanswered question of the ages. Needless to say the Alexandrines did not solve the question. They only relieved God of responsibility by the doctrine of 'intermediate being.' The theory, of course, does not safeguard the Divine Goodness. "Qui facit per alium facit per se."

This was no idle hypothesis. In the minds of all men, Jew, Greek, Christian, heathen alike, there were deeply embedded beliefs in a multitude of intermediate spirits. The Jews had their angels and cherubim; St. Paul spoke of "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers" <sup>(3)</sup>. The Universe was believed to be full of powers of Good and Evil, demons as well as angels; even the stars were alive. Marcion safeguarded the system by

(1) ὁ πρῶτος, ἔξ ἑρῶτος

(2) πῶθεν τὸ κακόν

(3) Colossians, I, 16. εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες

εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι.

leaving the responsibility for an imperfect world to the Demiurge, the God of the Old Testament. The Valentinians filled their Pleroma with lesser deities and their world below with inferior beings. Their 'Bythus' dwelt in unexpressible isolation. The world was carried on by his emanations.

The conception, however, which the Hellenistic period can claim as its own is the 'mediatorial conception of the Logos'. God, says Philo, has an unspeakable number of powers. In the creative utterance, God said, "Let us make man". These, included in the personal pronoun "us", share the task of Creation. Though immaterial they have the capacity to act on material things. Matter, which has neither form nor quality, receives, from these spiritual powers, its characterisation and determination. They are subject to no change, incomprehensible, known only by results. At the head of this hierarchy stands the Logos. <sup>(1)</sup> Philo deduces his conception from the Old Testament. He subjects to allegorical exegesis such passages as those depicting the six cities of Refuge, the Cherubim, the Flaming Sword, the Ten Commandments, Abraham and the Angels, showing how God entrusts tasks

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(1) Hatch, "Hibbert Lectures", p. 246, suggests that the intermediate Being or Beings derive ultimately from primitive psychism, which peopled the whole universe with life and animation." He quotes from Benn: "Greek Philosophers, 2, 252.

(1.)

to those powers. God negotiates none of them Himself. Philo refuses to leave even punishment in the hands of God. These are inflicted by subordinate ministers. To take but one of Philo's illustrations; of the three visitors to Abraham at Mamre, one represented God. Only two visitors went to Sodom, to announce its destruction - these were the "powers".

The Deity thus abides in uncontaminated goodness, in moral isolation. It is a picturesque but illogical solution, but it fuses both Hellenic and Hebrew elements.

Clement of Alexandria takes over Philo's teaching on the offices of the Logos, but he will allow no subordinate powers. God acts and rules only **by** the Logos. The clause in the Nicene creed - "by Whom (δι' οὗ) all things are made" is the constant expression of Clement. The Logos is God's counsellor in Creation, also his minister.

(2.)

The Johannine text - "without Him was not anything made" - is Clement's favourite quotation. All things celestial and terrestrial, spiritual powers, the universe, stars, the course of human history, the life of man, all originated and controlled by the Logos.

God, though unapproachable, can be known by the Logos who is the Revealer of God. Only through the Logos can we know God. The coming of Christ, as the coming of the

(1) Cf. Philo's Contribution to Religion, (H.A.A. Kennedy), 'mediation' p 157  
 (2.) John I.3. καὶ ἄνευ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.

Logos, he speaks of as a wonderful event, and the work of the Church, its ministry and sacraments, receive their enduring value because they are controlled by the Logos.

De Faye speaks of Clement as "foncièrement pédagogue" and if this magnificent harmonisation of the Platonic philosophy with the Christian Gospel impressed the students who crowded his lecture hall, he has shown that he had in his teaching a no less impressive doctrine which the simplest worshipper could carry away, his imperishable account of the Christian Gnostic.

Probably no doctrine has so profoundly affected Christian thinking from the time of Philo onward as the doctrine of the Logos. If it did not solve the problem of God and the world, it gave a great picture of a Mediatorial Person, Who was as Counsellor of the Most High, the co-Maker of the world, God's Viceregent and administrator, the unchanging dynamic force in all time, the Reason and the Mind of God.

Origen must be hastily passed over. His greatest contribution to the theory of mediation is the doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son. God cannot be Father, if there be no Son. "There never was a time when the Son did not exist."

The Alexandrines were far more at home in the unseen

spiritual world than they were in the actual world of  
 the present.<sup>(1)</sup> Their interest in it was casual and de-  
 tached. That does not mean that they had no interest  
 in the world. Dr. Kennedy in his study of Philo brightens  
 up the somewhat indifferent outlook on the world suggest-  
 ed by Dr. Tollinton. Philo described with pathos his  
 unmixed delight in the contemplation of the world and God.  
 He followed with absorbing interest the coming forth of  
 bud and leaf in spring. He was charmed with the beauty  
 of light. He was a lover of the sea and ships. He knew  
 well the athletic festivals of the Graeco-Roman world.  
 He was a man of general cultivation, a lover of art, an  
 appreciative student of Homer and Euripides. As for  
 Clement,<sup>(2)</sup> no one who reads the "Pedagogue" will say he  
 was indifferent to worldly affairs when he knows so much  
 about social life, furnishing a house, dress, jewels, the  
 care of the body, and so forth.

But all the same these Alexandrian teachers were not  
 of the earth earthy. Their *πολιτεία* was in heaven. They  
 never marshalled the facts of their observation of the  
 world into a coherent whole. They were not of the  
 calibre of Eratosthenes or Euclid or Ptolemaeus. They

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(1) Cf. The Alexandrine Age (Tollinton) *passim*.

(2) Cf. Clement of Alexandria (Butterworth), Intro., p.xvi,  
 xvii.

attached far more value to what a great man said than to what they observed with their own eyes. Knowledge of the Universe and of mankind they gathered from the book of Genesis or from the Timaeus of Plato and the leaders of the Stoics. Plato's word on all cosmological matters was final. So also one text, "let us make man" settled for them the fact that God was Creator, and not a mere Fashioner of existing matter; and in spite of their monotheism they had to admit duality in the Divine Nature. The astronomical lecturers had arrived at a wonderful approximation to the exactness of modern days, but to Philo, Origen, Clement and the Gnostics generally the sun and moon were only for seasons and astrological signs, and the stars were baneful divinities.

What interested these Hellenistic thinkers was not science, but such recondite questions as why evil was permitted in the world, how was the world created, ex nihilo, or how? the harmony of the spheres, the nature of matter, the doctrine of Providence. The fact is that the interests of the Alexandrine fathers were religious and not scientific. The Universe was made for man, and had to serve man's highest needs.



III.

The Gnosticism of the 'Adversus  
Heresies'

-oOo-



THE GNOSTICISM OF THE ADVERSUS HAERESSES.

It would be manifestly unhistorical and uncritical to study the "Adversus Haereses" face to face with the Gnostic systems, when differentiated and disentangled by modern scholarship. Irenaeus did not have to encounter the authentic Gnostic heresies that issued from the lecture rooms of Basilides and Valentinus, or even of the latter's two disciples Heracleon and Ptolemaeus, but, as De Faye has brilliantly pointed out, the Gnostics of a generation later than the two distinguished pupils. It was the Gnosticism of his own time, with all its extravagancies and corruptions that roused his indignation, and made him realise that it was a very real peril to the Church of which he was one of the bishops.

The Gnosticism of the 'epigoni' of the last quarter of the second century may or may not have been a corruption of the doctrines and ritual of the great masters; at any rate it was a development, and as Gnosticism had still many a long year to run, it must have been a coherent and formidable antagonist of Christianity.

And furthermore, the appositeness and value of the reasoning of Irenaeus can be best appraised when we see before us the account that Irenaeus has given of these systems.



Except for a few fragments, the writings of the original Gnostics are definitely lost. What we know of these sects is largely coloured by the animosity of their enemies. Tertullian was too clever a rhetorician and too fierce an opponent to give the Gnostics even-handed justice. Hippolytus was too perfect an ecclesiastic to yield to the temptation to set forth the good points; it was ad majorem gloriam both of himself and his Church to expatiate on the faults and scandals. But critics generally absolve Irenaeus from any charge of taking an unfair advantage. He tells us, in his frank and modest preface, "I have come across the commentaries of the very pupils of Valentinus and have met some of them and have studied their tenets, to make known to you, beloved, the marvellous and profound mysteries." <sup>(1)</sup> Besides he gleaned, in his residence in Rome and elsewhere, from lectures and from casual conversations, facts which he <sup>(2)</sup> diligently noted down - "my condensed notes", and "what I have weakly described".

Doubtless Irenaeus has not done justice to Gnosticism,

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(1) Ἐπίσκοπος δ' αὐτῶν καὶ συμβουλοῦ καὶ καταλαβόμενος τῶν γνώμων αὐτῶν, μενύσκει σοι ἀγαπητῆ, τὰ τερατῶν καὶ βαθῆ μυστήρια  
 ἰδ. καὶ Pref. Bk I.

(2) τὰ δ' ὀλίγων ὑφ' ἑμῶν ἐργάμενα --- τὰ ἄσθενῶς ὑφ' ἑμῶν ἀπυγνῶσθαι μένα (ἰδ. Pref. Bk I.)

but it is a faithful and sincere picture that he has given and it probably represented - better than any scholarly reconstruction of Gnosticism on the eve of the Third Century - the conditions which Irenaeus had to meet. It is in the first of the five books of his treatise that he deals with Gnosticism, as he encountered it, and that book is chiefly occupied with the school of Valentinus. The account of Valentinus which Irenaeus gives is that of his pupil Ptolemaeus. He and Heracleon were the leaders of the western school of Valentinianism, and therefore the more accessible to Irenaeus. We shall first sketch Valentinianism, and though it may appear formal and stiff, it will be best to have the actual words.

The Valentinian School. This system showed its oriental bias by the presupposition that matter was evil, and that, therefore, by no possibility could the Supreme God have any part in the work of Creation. The Supreme Deity is called Bythus, Proarche, or Propator. He was incomprehensible, invisible, without beginning or end, and uncreated. He was an Aeon, pre-existent and perfect. He abode in great tranquillity and calm, throughout boundless ages.

There exists with Him also Ennoia (Thought), also denominated Charis (Grace) and Sige (Silence). At some

unknown time it occurred to Bythos to put forth from himself what should be a beginning of all things, and this as seed he deposited with Sige as in a womb. <sup>(1)</sup>

Sige brought forth Nous (Mind), similar to his Father, and alone able to comprehend the Father. This Nous was given the name 'Monogenes' (Only Begotten), and Father and principle of all things. There was produced also Aletheia, (Truth).

This was the first and aboriginal quaternion of Pythagoras (i.e. Bythos, Sige, Nous, Aletheia). Further, Monogenes, "having become aware of the purposes for which he was produced", produced (*προβαλέειν*) Logos (the Word) and Zoe (Life), "thus becoming the Father of all who should be after Him and the principle and formative power of the whole Pleroma." <sup>(2)</sup> Next from Logos and Zoe were produced as in marriage, <sup>(3)</sup> Anthropos (Man) and Ecclesia (the Church). This was the aboriginal *Ogdoad*, the root and substance <sup>(4)</sup> of all things.

These Aeons, as they were produced for the Father's glory, wishing also themselves to glorify the Father by something of their own, produced offspring as in marriage. These, Logos and Zoe, ~~Anthropos and Ecclesia~~, brought

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(1) ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ προβαλέσθαι .. ὑπὲρ τὴν (2) καὶ ἀρχὴν καὶ μορφωσὶν πάντων τοῦ πλῆρωματος I. 1, 2  
 (3) κατὰ συζυγίαν (4) βίβαν καὶ ὑπόστασιν τῶν πάντων I 2. 2

into being other ten Aeons. It is said also that Anthro-  
pos with Ecclesia produced twelve Aeons.

(1)  
"These were the thirty Aeons of their false doctrine,  
kept hitherto in Silence and unknown." "This is the in-  
visible Pleroma they speak of with its threefold division  
into ogdoad., decad., and dodecad."

The last Aeon in the dodecad, Sophia (Wisdom) made  
(2)  
a spring far forward, and was affected in some way with-  
out intercourse with her partner Theletos (Desire). Now  
the "Passion" Sophia conceived was searching after the Fath-  
er. She longed to comprehend His greatness. Her at-  
tempt was foiled by a power which guards all things except  
the "unspeakable greatness". This power was named Horos,  
(Order or Limit). Sophia was thus restrained, relin-  
quished her intention, convinced that the Father is in-  
comprehensible.

The account is added to by some, to the effect that  
Sophia moved out of the Pleroma into the void, and brought  
forth a quickening of a shapeless thing called "Achamoth."  
This formless substance the Valentinians asserted was the  
origin of matter, that is to say matter arose out of the  
ignorance, grief, fear and astonishment of Sophia in her  
fall.

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(1) τῆς Πλήρης αὐτῶν I. 2, 3 (2) προήλατο δὲ πάλυ I 2, 2

Horos received also the name of the Cross (Stauros) and Redeemer (Λυτρωτής), the Asserter of Liberty (Καταπιστής) (τύς ἐλευθερίας), the Assigner of Boundaries (ὁροθετής) and Maintainer of Causes (μεταγωγός).

The fruit of her <sup>(α)</sup> fancy, 'Achamoth,' was separated from her, with the accompanying 'passion,' but she remained in the Pleroma.

The Pleroma being disturbed by the rash act of Sophia, means were taken that none of the Aeons should ever suffer as she had. Therefore Monogenes produced another pair, Christ and the Holy Ghost, to fix and con-  
(1)  
solidate the Pleroma.

"The Aeon Christ instructed the thirty Aeons on the subject of their syzygies. <sup>(2)</sup> But with regard to the knowledge of the Father, He announced to them that He was <sup>(3)</sup> incomprehensible and uncontainable, and that it was not possible to see Him or hear Him, save through Monogenes. And the cause of their eternal endurance was this incomprehensible nature of the Father." The Holy Spirit made them unite in glorifying this great Being. In gratitude for the restoration of harmony, disturbed by the vagaries of Sophia, each of the thirty Aeons contributed something

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(α) ἰ.ε. σοφία

(1) εἰς πύξιν καὶ στυριγμὸν τοῦ Πληρώματος Ἰ, 2, 5.

(2) φύσιν συζυγίας ἰβ. II 25

(3) ἄχώρητος ἔστι, καὶ ἄκατάληπτος. 96. II. 2. 5.

to the formation of another Aeon, Jesus or Soter - the Flower of the Pleroma, for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead." (Col.II,9).

Meanwhile the shapeless abortion,<sup>(1.)</sup> 'Achamoth,' was struggling to reach the light, and pitying her, Christ touched her with His Cross and she became the soul of the world, receiving from Him the form of being, but not of knowledge. She was excluded from the Pleroma by Horos, uttering the sacred word "JAO". From her struggles to reach the light, psychic existences were formed, among whom was the Demiurge.<sup>(2)</sup> From her tears were produced all liquid substance, from her laughter all that is luminous, from her grief and perplexity, the bodily elements of the world. Achamoth turned again to supplicate Christ, Who, having on the first occasion returned to the Pleroma, was unwilling to leave the Pleroma a second time, and therefore sent her the Paraclete, or the Saviour, with a host of angels, the Father having given all things to His hands.

Jesus then gave her shape, which is according to knowledge, and from their union proceeded spiritual or pneumatic existence.

The immediate<sup>(3.)</sup> work of creating the world was then performed by the Demiurge. He is described as "the off-

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4.1. 4.1. Ἐμορφος καὶ ἀνείδεος, ὡς πρὸς ἔκτρωμα

(2.) I. 4. 1.

(3.) I 5. 1.

spring of ignorance", and "the fruit of a defect"<sup>(1)</sup>.

He was inferior to the Supreme Bythos, but superior to the third principle, ὕλη. This ὕλη, the corporeal elements which sprang from the ἀπορία of Achamoth, He fashioned into shape and brought cosmos out of chaos. He himself is in the middle class, the "psychic", and consequently ignorant of the "pneumatic" above him. The Demiurge then made the seven heavens, separating the 'psychical' from the 'hylic', each under the control of an angel. Then he created man, with a 'psychic' soul and body, to whom Achamoth succeeded in imparting a spiritual germ or spark, which made him superior to his creator. Envious at this, the Demiurge thrust man down to the earth, and instructed the Jewish prophets to proclaim him Jehovah. But, possessing the spiritual germ, these prophets uttered prophecies inspired by a higher source.

He also created a Messiah, with psychic soul and an immaterial body, to which was added from Achamoth a pneumatic seed.<sup>(2)</sup> This lower Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, passing through her as water through a tube.<sup>(3)</sup> In his thirtieth year - corresponding to the number of the Aeons - the Aeon "Soter" descended at his baptism,

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(1) κάρπος τοῦ ὑστερήματος

(2) σπέρμα πνευματικόν (I. 7, 2)

(3) καθ' ἕπερ ὕδωρ διὰ σωλήνος ὁδεύει (I. 7. 2)

and to him the Demiurge, learning of his mission, gladly submitted. Before the Passion, the Aeon 'Soter' left the 'lower' Christ, and only the 'lower' Christ suffered, in order that the "Mother" might display him as type of the higher Christ, who was extended on the Stauros or Cross, and who gave Achamoth substantial form.

Achamoth who had, unobserved by the Demiurge, conveyed pneumatic seed into the man created by the Demiurge, set him in paradise above the third heaven, in the *τέταρτον ἄγγελον*. Banished by the Demiurge to the earth, he received, instead of the first ethereal garment, a material body.

When men had spread upon the Earth, there were constituted three different categories: <sup>(1.)</sup> Pneumatic, Hylic, and Psychical. The Pneumatics ~~are~~ are free from the bondage of every outward law, and, not subject to the impulses of the senses, a law to themselves, they travel towards the Pleroma. The Hylics were alien to all spirit and law, the sport of lusts and passions, and were doomed to irremediable destruction. The Psychics, by the discipline of outward law, may attain, not indeed, to a perfect divine life, but to outward righteousness, though, on the other hand, they may sink to the status of the Hylics. The Psychics were most numerous among the Jews, wherefore



the Demiurge chose them as his own, and gave them a strict law and promised them a Messiah. The Hylics were mostly among the heathen, and utterly hateful to the Demiurge. The Pneumatics, with their innate longing after the Pleroma, the Demiurge did not understand, and yet, without knowing it, he chose many of them for priests, kings and prophets.

The Psychics required faith as a pre-requisite of Salvation, and miracles were needed to produce it. The Pneumatics needed no such help, and whatever might be their actions, they were saved by knowledge or *gnosis* alone, being admitted to the wisdom of the perfect. (1)

For the Hylics no salvation at all was possible. (2) Of those whom the Soter was to save, he took on himself the first fruits: from Achamoth the spiritual principle, from the Demiurge, the psychic Christ with which he clothed himself, putting on a body that was psychic and "from the economy" (3) (i.e. psychic, but not material, and only visible and tangible). He assumed nothing that was Hylic, the Hylic being outwith salvation. The Psychic class included the Christian Church, men confirmed by works and faith

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(1) τὴν τελείαν γνώσιν (2) καὶ γὰρ εἶναι τὴν ὅλην δεκτικὴν  
(3) ὁωτυρίαις  
ἔπο δὲ τῆς οἰκονομίας, 'a dispositione' I 6, 1

and lacking the perfect Gnosis. The Pneumatics are saved not by their works, but through their being spiritual by nature.

The Gnostics used certain means of purification to deliver the "sp<sup>(A)</sup>inther" of life from matter. They engaged in a series of mysteries, of which most conspicuous were Baptism and the Eucharist.

The Valentiniens made a distinct contact with Christian history in asserting that the "Soter" remained, according to their theory, a year upon the Earth. The Jews refused to receive him, crucified what they thought was the Soter, but was really the Psychical Messiah. Even the Psychist Messiah's sufferings were only apparent, since the Demiurge had given him an ethereal body.

The end of all things arrives, when all that is pneumatic and psychic is released from matter, and Acha-moth is brought into the Pleroma and united *κατὰ συζυγίαν* with the Aeon Jesus. The Pneumatics enter the Pleroma and are assigned as brides to the angels. <sup>(1)</sup> The psychics attain only to the middle state, where the Demiurge remains to rule over them. <sup>(2)</sup> The Hylics and the whole material universe is then utterly consumed with fire.

(A) "spark"

(1) *συμψυχοποιήσασθαι τοῖς πνεύματι*  
*τῶν σωτηρίας ἁγγέλων Ι 7, 1*

(2) *τοῖς πνεύματι μεσοτύτοις*

Another branch of the Valentinians was that of Marcus and the Marcosians (I 13-21). Marcus gave Valentinianism a new interpretation. What he applied to the speculation of Valentinus was the mystical arithmetic of the neo-Pythagoreans. There is reason to believe that Irenaeus uses in this section a Marcosian document of which Marcus was the author.

The teaching of Marcus is presented in the form of a revelation. One day <sup>(1)</sup>, the Supreme Tetrad in the form of a ~~woman~~, that is to say, the two premier Syzygies of the Pleroma, appeared to Marcus, and declared to him, quite alone, the origination of all things, which she had never revealed to god or man. The Father, in the beginning - when He willed that the 'unspeakable' should become subject to speech, emitted a Word like Himself. That Word was of thirty letters and four syllables. Each letter had its own writing, and character, and sound, and images. No letter has knowledge of the letter above itself.

The names of the letters as they are spoken and ordinary (~~κοινά~~) he named 'Aeons', and 'words' and 'roots' and 'seeds' and 'plenitudes' and 'fruits.'

Numbers were not mere digits, but 'elements', and if the mystery of numbers were solved, so was solved

(1) Πανυπερτέτατην --- Τετράδα κατ'ελευθερία σχήματι  
 συναικείω I 14, 1.

the mystery of all things in heaven above and in earth below. While Irenaeus laboriously transcribed the almost unintelligible arithmetical jargon, it is doubtful if any clear conception of it was in his mind. We are obliged to conjecture charitably that the bewilderment which this Cabalistic jargon must have created in the minds of neophytes was received as something ineffable and mysterious.

Much was made of the circumstance that the first four numbers, 1,2,3,4, added together, made 10, that is the Decad. The Duad, i.e. 2, proceeding thus to the number of the mark, 2,4,6, made 12, that is the Dodecad. Then, numbering from the Duad to the Decad: 2,4,6,<sup>8,</sup>10 added make 30, the number of the Aeons of the Pleroma. These and other obvious coincidences formed the intellectual stock-in-trade of the followers of Marcus. Their only novelty lay in their being an intriguing and imposing way of setting forth Valentinianism, bringing it, so to speak, 'up to date.'

As a specimen of the religious charity which

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(1) The 'mark' was the sign (=6), and it not being a letter, indicated a defect in the numerical alphabet, and this was called a 'Passion.'

harassed Irenaeus there is given a description of the Simonites. In I 23 1-4 Irenaeus gives us the history, teaching and practices of his 'mystic priests'.

(1)  
De Faye classes Simon among the 'legendary Gnostics'. It is possible', he says, 'that there existed in an undetermined epoch, a 'goeth' who bore the name of Simon, who seems to emerge from the precision of certain details which tradition has preserved. The detailed story told by Irenaeus (2) need not delay us here, save just to say that the bishop had been led, like Justin Martyr, whose writings he knew well, into the error of confusing the Simon of the 'Acts of the Apostles' with a certain Simon of Gitta or Gittae. The members of the sect of Simonites may or may not have associated themselves with the Simon of the Acts. It was their teaching that was especially the affair of Irenaeus, and the bishop is speaking of these itinerant companies as they roamed through Gaul.

The Simonites had their 'mysteries' and priests, and a ritual which embodied considerable loose living.

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(1) De Faye, *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme* pp.429-431.  
(2) Cf. St. George Stock, in *Encycl. Britt.* 'Simon Magus.'

They had their exorcisms, and incantations, love philtres and alluring charms. They exercised themselves with familiar spirits and dream divinations. <sup>(1)</sup> They worshipped the image of Simon in the guise of Zeus, and of Helena in that of Athene.

In the Philosophumena of Hippolytus, the notice of Irenaeus is reproduced, but in it the teaching of the Simonians is given that morality is a matter of circumstance, not of nature. <sup>(2)</sup> Menander is as enigmatical a figure as Simon. His doctrine includes the creation of the world by angels; salvation being victory over the angels through the knowledge given by magic; immortality promised to the disciples.

Saturninus, also called Satorn~~us~~, taught that the Supreme God cooperated in the creation of man by angel powers sending a ray of light, <sup>(3)</sup> an image of light, that should be imitated as an example, and enjoined as an ideal. But ~~all~~ men have not received the ray of light. Consequently two classes of men stand in abrupt contrast with each other.

- (1) παρέδρους καὶ ὄνειροπόμπους -- Ἰσοκρούσιον I 23, 3  
 (2) οἱ νόμοι --- παρανομίᾳ ἐδιδάξαν --- τότε ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ σὸν διὰ τῶν νόμων παρεσιόραθιν. Ἰσοκρούσιον ἑπιτομή ἑπιτομῆς ἑπιτομῆς  
 (3) mala est bona. H. R. Philo. οὐ γὰρ ἔστι φύσις κακὴν ἀλλὰ θέλει (E. 19)  
 ὅτι τινὲς ἔχουσιν ἕως ἴδ. Haas. I. 24.

The spark of life hastens back after death to those of the same kind as it, and the other materials of those frames are dissolved. The truly Good first appears in the Aeon Christ, Who assumed nothing cosmic and did not even submit to birth. He destroys the works of Satan (that is the begetting of children; and eating of flesh) and rescues the men who have within them the spark of life.

The ~~great~~ figure of Basilides appears rather incongruously with Satornil. Whether we have in the notice of Irenaeus (xxiv 3-7) an authentic account of the teaching of the great Gnostic is open to serious question. This may be reserved to a later chapter.<sup>(1)</sup> What is of immediate consequence is to visualise the system of Basilides as Irenaeus encountered it.

The System, according to Irenaeus, has at its head the unborn Father,<sup>(2)</sup> from Whom 'Mind' is first born, from it Logos is born, then from Logos, Phronesis, and from 'Phronesis', 'Sophia', and 'Dynamis', and from these the 'virtues' and 'princes' and 'angels', those whom he

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(1) CH. V. "BASILIDES"

(2) For the notice of Basilides only the Latin translation is extant. "Nun primo ab innato Patre."

calls "the first" and that by them the first heaven was made.

Afterwards, by derivation from these, others also were made and they made another heaven like the former, and similarly others, made by derivation from these, Antitypes of those which are above then formed another, a third heaven, and so on, by one Prince and Angel after another, were made three hundred and sixty-five heavens. This, they say, is the reason why the year has three hundred and sixty-five days.

The angels who rule the last heaven, which we behold, divided among them the earth and those nations that are upon it.

The chief of these angels was the God of the Jews, and because He wished to subjugate the other nations to the Jews, all the other Princes resisted Him, and acted against Him. Seeing their destruction, the Unborn Father sent 'Nous' (He Who is called Christ) to free such as believed in Him, from the power of those who framed the world. He appeared as a Man on earth, and wrought mighty works. The result was that He suffered, but in the person of Simon the Cyrenian. The Cyrenian was changed in form, that he might be seen



to be Jesus. Jesus took the form of Simon and stood and derided them.

Being an incorporeal Power, and the Mind of the Father, He ascended to Him that sent Him, invisible to all. We should therefore not confess Him who was crucified, but Him Who came in the form of a man, and was called Jesus, and sent by the Father, that by this arrangement (per dispositionem hanc) He might do away with the works of the makers of the world.

Basilides despised things offered to idols, but used them without scruple, and accounted the practice of all other deeds, and of all kinds of lust, as a thing indifferent. Magic, images, incantations, and invocations and all kinds of curious arts (perierga) were his practice. Devising certain names, as it were, of angels, they declared some to be in the first heaven, others in the second: and they proceeded to lay down the names and principles and angels and virtues of the three hundred and sixty-five heavens. And also they gave the name in which the Saviour ascended and descended to be 'Caulaca<sup>(1)</sup>u'.

He that learns all this, the angels and origins

(1) οὗτοι εἰσὶν οἱ τρεῖς ὑπέρογκοι λόγοι. — 1 — — Κουλακαῦ, τοῦ ἀνωτάτου Ἀδαμαντος.  
 Ζαυλασαῦ, τοῦ κάτω θνητοῦ. Ζεγσαῦρ, τοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄνω βεβύσαντος  
 Ἰορδάνου Ἱερρολυτὸς Φηικός IV  
 Κουλασαῦ is the archetypal heavenly man — cf. κωνύβη I pp 201, 202.

of them, becomes invisible to all the angels and princes, as Caulacdu was. As the Son was unknown to all, so must the converts be. These would be ready for denial, though it was impossible for them to suffer. They were no longer Jews, but not yet Christians, and they must not utter their mysteries at all, but keep them hidden in silence.

The local positions of the three hundred and sixty-five heavens they distributed mathematically. They had adapted their theorems to this peculiar doctrine. And at their head was Abraxas, having in himself the three hundred and sixty-five numbers.

The Gnostic sect that Irenaeus terms Carpocratians was a considerable group of Gnostics who had professed a principle of extreme immorality.

They held that the world was made by angels far inferior to the unoriginate Father. Jesus, they taught, was born of Joseph, a man differing from others only in this, that his soul, being strong and pure, remembered what he had seen in that circuit of the unoriginate God, and that virtue was sent to him, that he might escape the makers of the world, and having passed through all, might ascend to Him.

The Ebionites are dealt with in a sentence or two. They agree that the world was made by God. They use only St. Matthew's Gospel, and reject St. Paul. They are circumcised and persevere in a Jewish form of life.

Cerdon, another legendary figure, lived in Rome under Hyginus. He taught that the God proclaimed by the Law and Prophets is not the Father of our Lord, the former God being revealed and 'just', the other unknown and 'good'.

Marcion who comes next in the catalogue of Irenaeus, was worthy of a greater place than among the unintellectual and immoral Gnostic coteries. Marcion receives neither mercy nor consideration from Irenaeus. Marcion was the successor of Cerdon, having come to Rome from Pontus. He is condemned by Irenaeus for being a blasphemer, an evildoer, a lover of wars, of inconstant judgment and self-contradictory. Jesus, he held, came from the Father, into Judea, in the time of Pontius Pilate. He was manifested in human form

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(1) Bellorum concupiscentem et malorum factorem et inconstantem quoque sententia et contrarium sibi ipsum dicens (Adv.Haer. I 27, 2).

to abolish the prophets, and the Law, and all the works of God Who made the world, whom He called Cosmocrator. (1) He mutilated St. Luke's Gospel, excising the narrative of our Lord's birth, and much in our Lord's discourses, when Christ confessed the Maker of the world to be His Father. He mutilated St. Paul also, ejecting references to the Creator, and whatever St. Paul had written regarding the second Advent.

Salvation, he taught, is of souls only, and of those who have learned his doctrine; the body, being from the earth, cannot partake of salvation. His teaching touched strange extremes. For example, Cain and the Sodomites and Egyptians were saved by the Lord, when He descended to Hades, while Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and the prophets such as pleased God, did not partake of salvation.

The student passes into a strange world, when he begins the Barbelo-Gnostic section.

Irenaeus now proceeds to describe the sect, which he connects with Simon, of flourishing dimensions, (2) "showing themselves like mushrooms from the ground."

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(1) *Dei qui mundum fecit quem et Cosmocratorem dicit I 27, 2.*  
 (2) *Σίμωνος* is a variant reading for *Βαλντινίου*. "Simonians" 15 in the Latin version.— *ex his qui praedicti sunt Simoniani, ... et velut a terra funghi manifestati sunt*"

Their connection with the Simonites was perhaps the most likely theory in the Irenaeus circle.

The description is too involved and tedious to draw out in all its detail. A brief summary will probably be of more service.

Modern critics usually refer to this sect as Barbelo-Gnostics. Irenaeus mentions that the sect believe in "a certain Aeon, undecaying, with a virgin spirit, whom they name Barbelo." The following is the system.

A certain unnameable Father was fain to manifest Himself to Barbelo. Thought (Ennoea) confronted him and asked Foreknowledge ( Prognosis). Foreknowledge appearing, both asked Incorruption (Incorruptela); then afterwards Life Eternal (Vita Eterna): in all which Barbelo rejoicing produced a light like unto it <sup>(1)</sup> (lumen). She was the beginning of enlightening and of production to all things.

The Father, seeing the Light, anointed it with His mercy and made it perfect. And this Light was Christ, who asked for Mind to help Him. After these the Father sent forth the Word (Logos).

Then unions were made (Γενεσις ὅμοια) of Ennoea  
 (1) generasse simile ei lumen Ad. Haer. I. 2.1.

and Logos, of Incorruptela and Christ, of Vita Eterna and Thelema, and Nous to Prognosis. And these began to magnify the great Light and Barbelo. <sup>(1.)</sup>

Subordinate existences were then sent forth, the "self-begotten" and "Truth" and others of lower rank. These creations established all things, and then the Self-begotten produced a perfect and true Man, Adamas. With the Man was produced Perfect Know-  
<sup>(2)</sup>ledge. Hence were displayed the Mother, the Father, and the Son, and it is added that from Man and Knowledge was born the Tree (<sup>ξύλον</sup><sub>lignum</sub>) which they call Knowledge (Gnosis)

Afterwards from the first angel was emitted <sup>(3)</sup> (Emissum dicunt) the Holy Spirit, called Sophia and Prunikos. He then, disappointed in alone being without a consort, produced a work, called the Protarchon, who created the world. He took from his Mother great powers and departed with her into the lower parts and made the Firmament, where he dwells. And being Ignorance, he made the Powers which are under him, the angels, firmaments and all earthly things.

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(1.) Et magnificabunt hi<sub>(1)</sub> magnum lumen et Barbelon (I 29, 2)

(2) Emissam aulem cum homine ab autogene agnitionem  
perfectam

(3) προβλεψῆναι λέγουσι Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ὃ Σοφίαν καὶ  
Προύνικον προεργόρευσαν.

Also, being conjoined with Self-Will ( $\text{ἑαυτοῦ δειν}$ ) he produced Vice, Jealousy, Envy, Fury, and Concupiscence. Then the mother, 'Wisdom', fled away to the higher places and became a cycle of eight (octonatio). He, thinking himself alone, said "I am a jealous God and there is none beside me".

Book I. concludes with a brilliant sketch of a Mystery Sect. It is an unnamed sect, introduced in the vague "alii autem rursus portentuosam loquuntur." Harvey holds that it is the sect of the Ophites. Theodoret identifies it with the Sethiani whom he incorrectly identifies with the Ophites. De Faye names this unnamed sect the "Adepts of the Mother".

What this sect should be called, or whether it should be left anonymous, will be discussed <sup>(1.)</sup> subsequently. Perhaps its name was immaterial to Irenaeus. Its flagrant and pagan character was all too plain. The section is I 30.

Observe first the name of the Father, Light. He is called also the First Man. He emanates a second principle, the "son of man", or the Second Man. <sup>(2)</sup> There

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(1) CH. IX THE MINOR SECTS OF IRENAEUS

(2) Adv. Haer. I 30: Ennoeam autem ejus progredientem, filium dicunt emittentis, et esse hunc Filium Hominis Secundum Hominem.

is a Third principle, the Holy Spirit, also called the first Woman. Below them are the four elements, Chaos, the Abyss, Water and the Darkness.<sup>(1)</sup> Christ is born to the union of the first Man and the second Man and the Woman. These four hypostases, principles formed the incorruptible Aeon. It was called "church". The woman, unable to bear the greatness of the Lights, flowed over to the left, so that Christ, on the right, was caught up with his mother to the Aeon.

This virtue which overflowed conserved a "dew of light" (humectatio luminis), was called Sophia or Prunicos. She plunges into the 'waters', from which she takes a body. The "light" was hemmed in by the waters but kept her from drowning. Recovering herself, she endeavoured to return to her mother, but her body impeded her. But, aided by the light, she was raised up, exhausted, and formed, from her body, the heavens. Finally she was freed from her body and the body she abandoned "was named Woman from that other woman." She had then a son, who retained from her a longing for immortality. He in his turn begat a son, and so on to the seventh. The Seven Sons made a

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(1) κάτω δε τούτων --- τέσσαρα. στοιχεία, ύδωρ, σκοτός, άβυσσον χάος, Ι. 30.1.



hebdomad, and with the mother an ogdoad. These sons are Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adoneus, Eloeus, Oreus, Astaphaeus. The first of them, Ialdabaoth, 'despising' his mother, engenders angels, virtues, powers and dominations, he formed also sons and grandsons, 'sine ullius permissu'. His sons conspired against him, and in dejection he turned to matter below him and therefrom begot a son, <sup>(1.)</sup> "Mind twisted into the form of a Serpent," the cause of all wickedness and death. This serpent like Nous strove with his Father in Paradise.

Ialdabaoth announces himself God and Father. His mother bids him 'lie not'. Then, exclaiming 'let us make man in our image, the six sons create the man - an immense crawling monster without strength. Ialdabaoth gives the monster the life, the soul, but unknown the mother imbues him with the higher principles, so that he abandons Ialdabaoth.

Then Eve appears, attracting by her beauty, the sons. She bore sons who were the angels. The mother persuades Eve to transgress the command of Ialdabaoth. Eve and Adam eat of the forbidden fruit,

(1.) "Nun in figura serpentis contortum". Ἰὼν ὄφιομορφον.

tempted by the serpent.

Ialdabaoth expelled them from Paradise, and took from them the "dew of light", and with them the serpent.

Adam and Eve, once with light transparent bodies, degenerated into darker and sluggish bodies, with relaxed and languid souls. They, lacking the sweet odour of the dew of light, learned to know each other. A son is born. The serpent incites Cain to slay Abel. Prunicus causes Seth to be born, then Norea and the man, from whom issued the remaining multitude of men, plunged by the lower Hebdomad into wickedness. The mother always opposed them and retained her own 'light'. The 'seven' are the seven Planets, and the outcast serpent Michael or Samael.

Ialdabaoth, angry with Man,<sup>who</sup> refused to worship him as God, brought the Deluge upon him. Prunicos or Sophia saves Noah and the Ark, through the 'lumen' they had from her, and the world was re-peopled. Of these Ialdabaoth chose Abraham with whom he made a covenant, and Moses by whom he brought them out of Egypt, and made them Jews. Other prophets were chosen

and distributed among the sons of Ialdabaoth. The latter glorify their Father.

Prunicos, through those prophets, spoke much of the first man and the Aeon, and the supreme Christ, warning men of the 'light' and of the first man and of the descent of Christ. The princes were alarmed, and thus Prunicos, unknown to Ialdabaoth, caused John the Baptist and Jesus to be born, by Ialdabaoth.

Sophia (the name Prunicus is henceforth dropped) became exhausted, and implored the aid of her mother, who, moved by the repentance shown, obtained from the first man, that Christ should be sent to her. Christ descended through the seven heavens, likening himself to the sons, and draining them of their power, entered the man Jesus whom Sophia had prepared.

Many of his disciples did not know of Christ's descent. He thereupon performed miracles, and proclaimed the Unknown Father, and Himself the son of the first man. The princes were enraged, and they and the Father of Jesus took measures to kill Him, but just before the Cross, Christ and Sophia departed, and Jesus was crucified, but Christ sent down to him

a power which raised him up in the body of resurrection. Jesus leaves with the Cosmos the perishable elements of the body. He remains eighteen months after his resurrection. To a few of his disciples whom he knew were capable, he revealed the great mysteries and so he was received into heaven, set down on the right of Ialdabaoth and there, unknown to him, received the souls of those who had known him, and who have "put off" the flesh. These souls will escape to the empire of Ialdabaoth and the consummation will be, when the whole of the spirit of light with which things are imbued, is gathered in and caught away into the Incorruptible Aeon.

This account, condensed from the original, and in spite of its inconsistencies, must have made great appeal to the 'simpliciores' of Irenaeus' day.

Careful reading, to say nothing of criticism, will readily lead one to agree with Irenaeus that "as from the Lernaean Hydra, a many-headed wild beast has been generated out of the school of Valentinus."<sup>(1.)</sup>

Irenaeus<sup>thus</sup> concludes this long resumé of Gnostic systems with words that reveal a very lively, wide-awake, alert mind, and not the laborious recluse of a cell.

(1.) "A quibus, velut Lernaea hydra, multiplex capitibus fera de Valentini schola generata est" I 30. 14

IV.

The Argument of Irenaeus against  
the Heresies.

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THE ARGUMENT OF IRENAEUS AGAINST THE HER-  
ESIES.

The first book of the great work of Irenaeus is occupied with a more or less detailed account of about sixteen systems. It is in the second book that the "Refutation" begins, but it is only fair to say that, in the first book, while giving an honest picture of the systems of his opponents, he intersperses a considerable amount of acute criticism, as he himself acknowledges.<sup>(1)</sup>

Before proceeding in this chapter to discuss and assess the value of the arguments of Irenaeus against his exceedingly learned and well-equipped antagonists, we are bound to ask by what standard or standards did Irenaeus weigh the Gnostics in the balance and find them wanting?

It is obvious that Irenaeus recognised as his most serious antagonists the schools of Basilides and Valentinus. They were primarily intellectuals. Their systems undermined the philosophic basis of the Christian faith. These two separately or combined formed

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*(1) Etiam sententias exposuimus eorum qui priores exstituerunt describentes eos sibi metipso ostendentes, multo autem prius ipsi veritati. ADV. HAER. II. praefatio.*

the chief target of his militant equipment. Whether we view these thinkers, including other Gnostic sects, as, to a greater or less degree, an intellectual movement within the Church - the older view; or as representing currents of thought outside the Church and occasionally occupying its territory - the modern view; they brought into the field of critical inquiry such cardinal problems as that of the Supreme Being, the Creation of the world, the manner of its creation, the question of intermediate Beings, the Logos, the Holy Spirit, the nature of man, his soul, his destiny; the future of the creation and of man.

It will be impossible - within the imposed limits - to deal with the criticisms of Irenaeus in regard to the Gnostic solutions of all these problems.

It will perhaps be best to begin with their most profound dogma, that of the unknown and unknowable God. According to the Gnostics, and Valentinus in particular, the All Father, whom they called Proon and Proarche or Bythos, was the beginning of all things. He Himself was incomprehensible, invisible, without beginning or end, and uncreated. Irenaeus takes up the challenge thus,

Such a deity must be all-embracing; He cannot be contained or limited. But the 'Bythos' of Valentinus and the 'good God' of Marcion is contained within His own province, or within the Pleroma. Outside the Pleroma is the 'kenoma', or void space, where another God wields sway, creates the universe, presides over the fortunes of men and angels and demons. Clearly then the Gnostic primary conception lacks consistency. Their 'Bythus' or 'good God' is not to be compared with the God of the Christian faith, Who, not by compulsion, but of His own free will made all things, since He alone is God, alone is Lord, alone is Creator, Alone is Father, alone is the Container of all things, and Himself gives all things their existence.<sup>(1)</sup>

A thing within is comprehended and enclosed by what is outside of it. Therefore what is outside the Pleroma is greater and more stable than the Pleroma and its central Being. The Valentinian Proarche cannot then be supreme.

One of the principles which regulated all contemporary pagan thought regarding the Deity was that, matter being impure, sinful and contemptible, the

(1) II 1, 2.



Supreme Being could be permitted no contact whatever with the world. The 'Bythus' of Valentinus could not be a Creator. And yet the world had to be accounted for. As we have explained in a former chapter, the common expedient was to create the conception of intermediate beings. The chief of these beings was the Demiurge. Other systems had as intermediaries, 'virtues' 'princes' and 'angels' (Basilides). Marcion's intermediary was the 'God of the Old Testament'. Irenaeus groups them by quite legitimately saying that the Gnostics held that the world was framed <sup>either</sup> by angels, or by some 'fabricator', ~~either~~ because he could not go contrary to His mind, Who is Father above all. This obviously exposes the Supreme Being to a double criticism of weakness or carelessness. <sup>(1)</sup>

It would argue an impotent God, as though incapable Himself of asserting authority, and of forbidding such interference with a work for which He alone had power and authority, whether He willed to create the world or not. It would also display weakness to permit angels, or Demiurge or any other power or virtue to create a world against His will. This of course was an obvious

(1) II. 2.1

difficulty which all Alexandrine thinkers had to meet in the hypothesis of mediation. But, adds Irenaeus, God could still, if He so willed, create the world by other powers, no matter how many or how far distant from them, just as the king, who made the preparations for the battle, deserves the credit of the victory won by his soldiers. Although Basilides<sup>(1)</sup> "saw that the angels or the artificer of the world were made by a long succession downwards from the first father; nevertheless, the real cause of the things that were made will be traced back, as a stream, even to Him from Whom that kind of succession emanated."

A frequent thought with Irenaeus is that God is absolutely independent of us. He does not need a world, for which He needs no other instruments for its making. His *Vicegerent* (Logos) is sufficient and able to form everything. "For all things are made by Him, and without Him was nothing made."

This God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as St. Paul said, "One God the Father Who is above all and through all and in us all."

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(1) II, 2. 4.

Hellenistic theology and philosophy found a serious difficulty in the problem of evil in the world - "πρόθεν τὸ κακόν";. In the poetical imagery of the Valentinian system the problem is stated by the fall of Sophia from the Pleroma, who sinned through her longing "to compass the greatness of the Father." The (1) offspring of Sophia was Enthymesis or Achamoth, out of whose nature, the substance of the world was formed. Of this substance, or, more specifically, the psychic and hylic substance, Enthymesis formed the Demiurge, the Creator of the world and the stars and all men.

To charge the Gnostics with having a Demiurge who was the 'fruit of a defect' would not have greatly troubled them, for with the material world they had very little concern. They would not have taken up the challenge. Consequently Irenaeus takes another course. Both he and they have a Demiurge, a Creator, who must be estimated not by words, but by deeds. "What work of theirs can they indicate as evincing greater power or glory, or intelligence than the works of Him Who has arranged all these things? What heavens have they

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(1) τὸ μέγιστος τῶ Πατρὸς καταλαβεῖν

made fast? What earth have they established? What stars have they sent forth? What constellations have they caused to shine? What rivers have they made to flow and what springs to well forth? With what flowers and trees have they adorned the earth, or what multitude of beautiful animals, rational and irrational, have they created? Who can enumerate all the other things which have been established by the power, and controlled by the wisdom of God? What shall I say of those existences which are beyond the heavens and which do not pass away? To what similar achievement of their hands can they, who are the workmanship of God, point to? " Further, if the Demiurge is the 'fruit of a defect', and consequently infects all creation with his defect, that defect must be traced back to the Supreme Father. "Qui facit per alium facit per se." The Supreme Father cannot then be perfect and all-wise and all-powerful. In permitting a Demiurge to carry out the whole work of Creation beyond any control or contact by Him, He was a limited God, and not the God Who made the heavens and the earth, "predestining all things according to His inscrutable and ineffable plan,

Who made things just as He willed."

More than that, the Gnostic Demiurge practically convicts the Supreme Father as the Author of an evil, "allowing Error to be established and to increase, and in later times attempting to remove it, after many have perished through the contagion."

Irenaeus with the thought probably of the good <sup>(1)</sup> God, and the Demiurge of Marcion in his mind, says, "the fault they find about the fabricator of it (Marcion's Demiurge) and about the things which were made material and temporal, will recoil upon the Father" (recurret in Patrem). If God had the power to forbid a corrupt Demiurge from making an evil world, and did not, then He was a slave of necessity.

But can He Who is God over all, free and independent, become a slave to necessity? If so, then necessity is greater and more absolute than God, since what has more power is before all in dignity.

The Aeons of the Gnostic systems, when we consider that they are mainly abstract qualities personified, prejudice one at the outset, for in this respect Gnos-

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(1) II, 5, 3.

ticism seems to part company with commonsense. But we would do well to remember that the Platonic doctrine of the 'Forms' or 'Ideas' was then very much in the ascendant. Things on earth had their spiritual counterparts above. As has been said, the step from a personified quality to a personality was a short step in those days.

Irenaeus however manifests a very scientific and commonsense mind about them. First of all<sup>(II.14.1)</sup> he says the conception of Aeons is a mere plagiarism from the ancients. Antiphanes<sup>(a)</sup> described the origin of the universe. He declares<sup>(1)</sup> that Chaos is sent forth from Night and Silence and then from Chaos and Night, Love issues, and from him Light, and then the primary generation of the gods. Plato speaks of the creation of the world by the younger gods, and the formation of men by these lesser deities.<sup>(2)</sup> "This myth they have borrowed merely changing the names, e.g. substituting 'Bythus' and 'Sige' for 'Night' and 'Silence', 'Nous' for 'Chaos', and the 'Word' for 'Love'." Instead of the first order of the Gods they have invented Aeons: in the place of the

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(a) his 'Ἀφροδίτης γοναί' is cited by Athenaeus. 'The generation of Aphrodite'  
 (1) Cf. Aristophanes *Aves* 694, as a close likeness.  
 (2) Cf. Plato, 'Timaeus'.

secondary deities they speak of 'the economy' of the Mother outside the Pleroma, calling it the second ogdoad.

Then he goes on to say that they have borrowed from Thales, from Homer, from Anaximander's τὸ ἀπείριστον<sup>(1)</sup> their τόποι κενώματος; the Gnostics claim that they are the seeds of the Mother taken from the 'Anaxagoræ irreligiosi semina'; the theory of shadow and void, from Democritus and Epicurus. Irenaeus further points<sup>(2)</sup> out the influence of Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Plato on their doctrine of the eternity of matter. The theory of the Saviour as the creation of the Aeons, all of whom contributing the flower of their being in Him, is nothing but the Pandora of Hesiod. Then the expedient of translating the whole world into numbers, the even and the odd, the unit as the beginning of all, the Duad, the Tetrad and "the manifold origination" of the rest,—all are wholly Pythagorean. In other words, Gnosticism was only a medley from all sources, not a reasoned system of doctrine.

The Valentinian system describes the Aeons issuing from God successively. This Irenaeus says may be

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(1) I, 3, 6.

(2) II, 14. 4.

the manner in the nature of man where perception passes to thought, from thought to reflection, from reflection to reason, but God is not anthropomorphic. "In Him Who is God over all, being, as He is, all mind, and all Logos, and having in Himself nothing earlier nor later, nor anything belonging to another, but continuing altogether equal and alike and one, no such emanation in that kind of order is possible."

Life is emitted in the sixth place, but "they should set it before all, because God is Life and Incorruption and Truth." And then he archly adds, "But to count Sige (Silence) along with their First Father, and to assign her to Him for a wife, and not to include Life in the reckoning, how is it not beyond all foolishness?"

A third important element in the systems of Valentinus and Basilides, Barbelo Gnostics and Marcus was the Aeon 'Logos.' There were two conceptions of the Logos, originally Stoic, and borrowed therefrom by Philo: the 'Logos endiathetic', the Word abiding in the conception or thought, and the 'Logos prophetic', the Word uttered. The Gnostics held the 'Logos pro-



phoricos'. Harnack quotes Zahn to the effect that Christ as the Logos is represented in the Apologists sometimes as "the thought of the world within the mind of God, sometimes as a real entity which enters into a new relation to God in becoming an active force." It is not the thought which God thinks, but the thought that thinks in God, an essence having intercourse with something else in God, without which He would not be rational. This uncertainty was cleared away by Irenaeus and Tertullian who held to the Johannine dogma that the Son of God is the Logos. The Logos, being Christ, became central in the thought of Irenaeus. How then did he deal with the Gnostics?

The Gnostic doctrine of Christ or the Logos, as Irenaeus points out again and again, is a mass of confusion, contradiction and absurdity. In the Pleroma there had been emitted, by the syzygy of Nous and Aletheia, the 'Logos' Aeon. Then in gratitude for the restoration of harmony, disturbed by the calamities of Sophia, each of the thirty Aeons contributed something to the formation of another Aeon "the flower of the Pleroma"<sup>(1)</sup>.

(1) Ι 2, 6. Τελειότατον κάλλος τε καὶ ἄστρον τοῦ Πληρώματος  
τέλειον καρπὸν τὸν Ἰγροῦν, ὃν καὶ Σωτήρα προσαγορεύθηναι  
καὶ Χριστὸν καὶ Λόγον πατρωνομικῶς

This Aeon was called Jesus, and Saviour, Christ and Logos. Subsequently the Demiurge created a Messiah, of a psychic soul and immaterial body, to which was added a pneumatic soul from a higher source. This lower Christ was born of the Virgin, "passing through her as water through a tube, and that to Him, at his baptism, descended that other, that Saviour from the Pleroma, made up of all, in the form of a Dove."<sup>(1)</sup>

All those, separately and conjointly, constituted the Gnostic Christ, and was consequently vulnerable from every side.

Irenaeus begins with a tone of humour. "It is impossible that when the Logos is present, Sige (Silence) should also be present; or again, that when Sige is present the Logos should appear. For these things are mutually destructible."<sup>(2)</sup>

The advice of Christ to the Aeons that they should not seek the Father is an indication of the distance Valentinus or his followers had travelled from the Scriptures, led by their adherence to the unsupported

(1) I. 7, 2 διὰ Μαρίας διόδευσαντα καθάπερ ὕδωρ διὰ σωλήνος ὀδύσει

(2) II. 12. 5

Alexandrine assumption that God was incomprehensible and undiscoverable. Surely, says Irenaeus, this is incongruous and contrary to the Lord's saying, 'seek and ye shall find'?

The quality which marked the members of the Gnostic Pleroma was immunity from suffering. Cut off by Horos from an evil exterior world, they knew no sin and no suffering.

Consequently the Scriptural story of the death of Christ was emptied of all meaning, and equally so His life. The Christ of the Gospels was only an appearance. The Gnostics were Docetics, a doctrine coming from the Alexandrine and Oriental philosophising about the imperfection and impurity of matter. Marcion, the Ophites and later the Manichaeans, held that the acts and sufferings of Christ, including the Passion, were only apparent. Marcion regarded Christ's body as a "phantasma". The Valentinians, and Basilidians, attributed to Christ only an ethereal, but not a truly human body.

Christ therefore did not live the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth was the true son of Joseph and Mary, and at his baptism the "ἄνω Χριστος"

descended, and left him on the Cross. He was the lower Christ. The Basilidians, according to Epiphanius, held that it was <sup>(1)</sup> Simon the Cyrenian who suffered, and that on the Cross Simon was changed into Christ's likeness, and Christ into the likeness of Simon, and Christ stood unseen, jeering at the dying Simon.

The only suffering the Gnostics spoke of was the suffering of Sophia, but as Irenaeus naively points out, what did her passion bear but a weak and worthless fruit, whereas our Lord's passion bore the fruit of courage and virtue.

It is indubitable that it is due to the reaction against the acute docetism of the Gnostics that Irenaeus propounds so extremely his views of Christ coming in the flesh, and his real dying, and the resurrection of the body.

The triplicated Christ Irenaeus can only subject to ridicule. No man of sense could entertain it. "Quis enim sensum habens, et veritatis vel modicum attingens <sup>(2)</sup> sustenebit decentes." He is profuse in his quotations from the Old Testament, showing how Christ and only one

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(1) Harvey 'Saint-Pierre' p 200 (2) II 19. 8.  
note 5.

Christ was foretold, how His manner of life and His death were foreshadowed, how His disciples and the Apostles testified to Him.

Then he pours scorn on the meticulous correspondences the Valentinians discovered in the life of Christ, and in their system of thirty Aeons. They affirm this to have been the reason why the Saviour (for they are unwilling to call Him Lord - a notable point -) for thirty years did nothing openly: declar-  
(1)  
ing the mystery of the Aeons.

But there were more than thirty Aeons, for after the restoration of Sophia, Monogenes produced another pair, Christ and the Holy Spirit.  
(2) The hours worked by the Labourers in the vineyard also fail as a Gnos-  
(3)  
tic argument. The dodecad is signified, they said, by our Lord's being twelve years old when He conversed with the doctors, and by His choice of twelve Apostles. The other eighteen Aeons are manifested by His abiding eighteen months, as they say, with His disciples after the Resurrection. The two first letters of His name,

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(1) I, 1, 3.  
(2) I, 2, 5.  
(3) I, 3, 2, 3.

the 'I' and the 'H', indicate the eighteen Aeons, and the ten Aeons are signified by the letter 'I' which stands first in His name. Further the calamity which befell the twelfth Aeon, they say, was darkly implied in the Apostasy of Judas. Then it was the twelfth month that He suffered, for they will have it that He preached for one year only after His baptism.

We can only charitably believe that the people whom the "epigoni" of Valentinus hoped to attract by these Scripture evidences, were the 'simpliciores' and not the 'eruditi'. But Irenaeus thinks it worth ~~his~~ while to meet the argument. When they said that He suffered in the twelfth month, or year, after His baptism, according to the Scripture, that he was to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Is. lxi 2), Irenaeus points out that the prophet was not speaking of a day of twelve hours, nor a year of twelve months. For the prophets spoke in parables and allegories. And most of their sayings are not to be interpreted literally. The 'Judas' analogy, he deals with as follows:

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(1) I, 20, 2.

(1)  
 "Judas was deposed and cast out, and Matthias ordained in his place. They ought therefore to say that the twelfth Aeon was cast out of the Pleroma, and another produced or emitted in his place, if he is at all signified by Judas. In regard to the twelve months' ministry, he accuses the Valentinians of failing to search the Gospels. He states three occasions when Christ went into Jerusalem to eat the Passover. Now these three times are not one year alone, every person will confess. And the very month when the Passover was celebrated is not the twelfth, but the first, which they may learn of Moses."

Another reply of Irenaeus may be given to the Gnostic teaching that Christ was thirty years old at His baptism and suffered in the twelfth month thereafter. It is interesting because he works into his reply his famous doctrine of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις or 'Recapitulatio'. Irenaeus made much of the Pauline texts, Romans xiii 19, Ephesians i, 10, where Christ is spoken of as "summing up all things in Himself". Unfortunately Irenaeus is in error in his estimate of Christ's age, but it is a weighty and well-reasoned reply, as we shall see.

(1) II. 20, 2.

(1.)

When Christ was thirty years old He was baptised. "He had then reached the complete age of a teacher, and came to Jerusalem, so as to be properly called by all men, Master." He was exactly what He seemed, no mere Gnostic or docetic Christ, "not rejecting nor overpassing man, nor annulling His own law for the human race in Himself, but sanctifying every age by the semblance which it bore to Himself. For He came to save all by Himself: all, who through Him are new born into God (qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, i.e. baptised), infants and little ones, and boys and youths and elder men. Therefore He passed through every age, being made an infant, to infants to sanctify infants, a child among children to sanctify such by piety and goodness. Among youths He became a pattern, sanctifying them in the Lord. So He was an elder among elders, in order to be a perfect Master in all things. Lastly He came even unto death, that He might be the "first born from the dead."

Now the Gnostics, he continues, take away "His more necessary and honorable age", in which He excelled all other teachers. For how had He disciples, if He



did not teach? And He suffered, they say, at the conclusion of His thirtieth year, before He had reached a riper age. Thirty extending to forty is a young man's age. But from the fortieth to the fiftieth year one's life declines to the older age, which our Lord had, when He taught, as is testified by the elders who met the disciple John in Asia (probably Papias).

But, further, the Jews who argued with our Lord make this point clear. For they said to Him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast Thou seen Abraham?" (John viii 57). This would be an appropriate remark to one between forty and fifty years. But not to a man who had just reached thirty years. Therefore Jesus did not preach for nearly twelve months, thus completing His ministry, but not very far from His fiftieth year. The Jews would know this, either from the Census or from His appearance.

But probably the most effective criticism of the Gnostic Christ was his remarkable picture of our Lord drawn especially for Gnostic eyes, in Book V, 18,2: "Witness is borne to this by John the Lord's disciple,

saying in his Gospel "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made." (A text much quoted by the Gnostics). Afterwards he said, "He was in this world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, to them who believe in His name." And again, meaning His "economy as Man" (dispensatio, *ὀικονομία*), he said, "And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." Evidently declaring to such as will hear, that there is one God the Father over all, and one Word of God, which is through all, by Whom all things were made: and that this world, is His very own, and made by Him at His Father's Will, and not by angels, neither in the way of revolt and decay and ignorance (apostasiam et defectionem et ignorantiam); nor by some virtue of Prunicus, whom some also call Mother: nor by some other world maker not knowing the Father.

For the Maker of the world indeed is the Word of God; and this is our Lord, Who in the last times was made man, existing in this world: Who invisibly contains all things that were made, and is established in the whole creation, as being God's Word, governing and disposing all things, and therefore into His own He came invisibly (<sup>v.l.</sup> invisibiliter<sup>(1)</sup>), and was made flesh and hung upon the Tree, that He might sum us all into Himself (uti universa in semetipsum recapituletur). And 'His own', even men, 'received Him not': as Moses declared, 'And thy Life shall be hanging before thine eyes, and thou wilt not believe thine own life (Deut. xxviii, 66, lxx). Whoso then received Him not, received not life. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." For it is He Who hath power over all from the Father, as being the Word of God, and true man, with invisible beings holding reasonable communion, and appointing them a law, after an intellectual fashion (sensualiter), all and each to abide in his own order; while over things visible and human He reigns openly, and bringeth upon all meetly His judgment: as David

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(1) Howay reads 'invisibiliter'

says, -"Our God will come openly and will not keep silence (Ps. L 2,3). Then also He declared the judgment He is bringing upon us - "A fire shall burn in His sight and around Him a mighty tempest. He shall summon the Heaven from above and the Earth, to discern His people." (1)

Such are the principal fields of battle in the Transcendental Sphere in which Irenaeus could not do otherwise than put forth, as he did, all his strength. But Gnosticism struck its blow at what came nearer home, was more intimate, and more deeply touched with personal religious feeling, - the doctrine of Redemption. It was not that the various Gnostic sects repudiated or ignored redemption. Gnosticism was primarily redemptive. Its deepest roots, coming from the distant Orient, were human longings for deliverance from evil powers, or an evil fate. Gnosticism, in all its systems, was far more a religion than a philosophy. It was indeed a kind of mystery-religion, of whose ritual Irenaeus contributes some vivid pictures (cf. I. 21). But between the redemptive conceptions of the Gnostics, and the Christian revelation, there was

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(1) V. 18. 3.

a gulf fixed that could not be bridged.

What vitiated the whole Gnostic conception of redemption was the fatal dualism between soul and body. Body being material (hylic), was sinful beyond any possibility of redemption. With this Oriental conception was mingled the Pythagorean doctrine of the imprisonment of the soul in the body, the Soma-Sema doctrine. The body was the prison from which the soul, utterly alien to it, must obtain release. Or it was, in a simpler and more primitive form, that the soul was entangled and befouled by the clinging evil of matter, and enslaved by the demons of sin, and must endeavour to ascend to the realms of light and liberty. The masses of mankind are not philosophical, but they are deeply interested in what is to happen to them hereafter. It is hardly credible that an ordinary assemblage could assimilate the elaborate and highly technical philosophy of Gnosticism. Probably all that was reserved for the elect. But for the common people, if the Gnostics did not have a gospel of redemption, they might preach in vain. But these were the people for whom the Bishop of Lyons had great concern,

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and what he said of redemption is living in the Christian creed today.

(1)

Basilides, according to Irenaeus, held that souls alone were capable of salvation; the body was, by its very nature, corruptible. Plato - (nomen praeclarum et venerabile with the Valentinians) held that the soul on its entrance into this life, was drenched with oblivion by the Daemon which is at the entrance. But, aptly rejoins Irenaeus, if he remembers the Daemon and the cup, he must of necessity know the rest also. The Carpocratians believed in the transmigration of the souls into all manner of bodies, and that a continual change of bodies is going on until one has been absolutely in every experience in the world. This opinion they bolstered up by our Lord's parable in Luke xii, 58, 59. Salvation is deliverance from the weary change of human prisons.

(2)

Marcion taught that salvation will be of our souls only, those souls which have learned his doctrine: but the body because forsooth it is taken from the earth, cannot possibly partake of salvation.

(3)

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- (1) I xxiv 5. Animae autem eorum soli esse salutem.  
corpus enim natura corruptibile existit.
- (2) Transcorporatum semper I xxv 4.
- (3) Impossibile esse participare salutem I xxvii 3.

The Valentinians similarly denied that the body could be saved.

(1)  
In the words of Professor Harnack, Redemption to the Gnostic meant "the separation of what had been unnaturally conjoined."

The Gnostics were not concerned with the body. Despite the brilliance of Alexandrian surgeons and scientists, the thinkers of the Age were dominated by this Oriental delusion regarding the evil of matter and of the body of flesh. Irenaeus was a fervent apostle of the intimate union of soul and body. He would not yield an inch to the popular docetic doctrines of the day, that Christ had only a seeming body and that He was wholly spiritual, and that His mission on earth was merely an appearance. The Resurrection of Jesus and of the true believer was a resurrection of the flesh.

(2)  
In a very fine passage Irenaeus speaks of the vital bond between soul and body, the unity of the human being. "For the body is not stronger than the soul, having breath therefrom, and life and growth and articulation; but the soul is owner and governor of

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(1) *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* " I, p. 236. note (2nd edition)

(2.) II. 33.4.

the body. Only it is so far abated of its quickness, as the body partakes of its movements; but it loses not its power of knowing. For the body is like an instrument, but the soul stands in the workman's place. As therefore the workman quickly contrives the operation within himself, but realises it more slowly in the instrument, because of the rigidity of the subject matter, and the quickness of his mind, tempered by the slowness of the instrument, makes the work go on moderately; so also the soul communicating with the body, though it be a little clogged by the blending of its speed with the slowness of the body, yet loses not altogether its own powers, but communicating as it were life to the body, ceases not itself to live. Thus also communicating to the same of other things, it neither loses the knowledge thereof, not the memory of what it has seen. "

He repeatedly refers to the immortality of the soul, indeed of all souls, in contradistinction to the Valentinian tenet that only the pneumatic souls could assuredly partake of salvation, the psychic souls on

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(1) II xxxiv 1.



conditions, whereas the **Hylic** or **Choic** souls were doomed to eternal destruction by fire.

He quotes the parable of Jesus and Lazarus, and thus comments <sup>(1)</sup> "For hereby it was clearly declared, first that souls continue, next that they pass not from one body to another; also that they have the figure of a man, so as to be both known, and to remember the things which are here; likewise that there abides in Abraham something prophetic; and that each sort of people receives its meet habitation, even before the judgment."

The most critical matter in the controversy with the Gnostic sects was the doctrine of the Redeemer. It has been said, with perfect justice, that the Gnostic Redeemer is wholly a pagan conception from beginning to end. It is inevitable that, in discussing the Redemption and the Redeemer, the personality of Christ already discussed will be again considerably referred to, and that at the very outset.

The central fact in the drama of Redemption is the figure of the Crucified. Was He a real Christ, as set forth in the Gospels and in the rest of the New

(1) II 34, 1.

Testament? Was He the Divine Son of God, Who, as St. John said, 'manifested forth His glory, and whose death St. Paul gloried in'?

Valentinus would have denied the former, for according to him "His body was real, but did not consist of ordinary matter.<sup>(1)</sup> It was a body framed by an occult art, to have the accidents of matter, visibility, palpability, impressibility, but not real materiality.

Carpocrates would have denied the latter. According to him, Jesus was the Son of Joseph and Mary, a man distinguished from other men only by his greater strength of mind and will, in virtue of which a special spirit of power had been sent down into Him from the Father.

To the Greek mind, a Divine Being must be without passion and without needs - ἀπαθής and ἀπροσδεής. The Hellenistic Deity was nothing more than a bloodless abstraction to our modern mind, but to the Greek mind there was the feeling that being supernatural, nothing in earthly experience could be associated with Him. The Homeric deities with their loves, and strifes, and

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(1) I. 6. 1.

περιτεθείσθαι σῶμα ψυχικὴν ἔχον οὐσίαν, κατασκευασμένον δὲ ἀργύτῳ  
τέχνῃ πρὸς τὸ καὶ ἄορατον καὶ ἀγγλάστῳ καὶ παθητὸν γενεῆσθαι  
Bul- in Latin version has visibile et palpabile et passibile

passions were so distasteful to the cultured Alexandrine, that they had to be set forth allegorically.

Accordingly Christ must be <sup>ἄπληθύν</sup> He either suffered in appearance only, or if the suffering was real, it was only the man Jesus, and not the heavenly Christ, who suffered. For, at the moment of crucifixion, Christ had left him. Hippolytus (5, 4, ~~8~~, 26) tells us of the system of the heretic Justinus, that the heavenly Being called Baruch, leaves the body of Jesus upon the Cross: and crying out to Edem, that is to material Nature, 'Woman behold thy Son' (γύναι, ἀπὸ ἐκείνης σου τὸν υἱόν ) reascends to the Supreme.

In the Gospel of Peter, the cry from the Cross is given, <sup>(1.)</sup> 'My strength, my strength, Thou hast ~~been~~ forsaken Me', where the same idea appears.

In the <sup>(2.)</sup> Excerpts from Theodotus "the theory is modified by saying that the Spirit that descended upon Jesus did not separate from Him at the Passion, but "contracted himself," so that death might not take effect. Otherwise death would have prevailed over the "Soter," which is absurd, <sup>ἄτοπον</sup>. The peculiar idea of Basilides has already been mentioned that the sufferer was not Jesus, but Simon of Cyrene.

- (1.) ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις μου, καὶ ἐλπίς μου  
 (2.) Εὐα. Πη. 61 οὐκ ἰδίᾳ γεννημένου ἀλλὰ τοῦ σαλευντοῦ, ἵνα καὶ ἐνεργήσῃ ὁ θάνατος.

V.

- Basilides

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BASILIDES.

Basilides is one of the enigmas of early Christian history. Most of the details of his life, of his writings, and his school come from the pens of the ecclesiastical anti-Gnostic fathers, and are quite sufficient to put him outside the pale. On the other hand, there are extant fragments of his and his son's writings which reveal quite another character, which if not marked by strict orthodoxy - the standard of which was fluid enough in these days - was unmistakably distinguished by seriousness, depth of thought, and by a very rigorous asceticism.

Basilides lived in Alexandria in the opening decades of the second century. Eusebius dates his first appearance from A.D. 133, but according to the same writer, Agrippa Castor, who lived under Hadrian (117-138) already wrote a polemic against him, so that we may reasonably suppose that his career began at an earlier period. Moffatt in his "Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament" (p. xxi), places him between 120 and 130 AD.

Irenaeus does not estimate his importance so greatly as he does Valentinus. He places him seventh in his catalogue, devoting to him only part of a section,

viz. I xxiv 3-7. But the bold sweep of his cosmological scheme - leaving aside the fragments of his moral teaching quoted by Clement of Alexandria - had undoubtedly influenced Valentinus towards a bolder and richer flight, had initiated conceptions to be found in most of the systems, so that we may consider him the pioneer champion of Gnosticism as it appears above the horizon of Alexandrian speculation.

The most ancient source for our knowledge of Basilides is that derived from the lost Treatise of Hippolytus. Fortunately what has been lost can be easily recovered from a reconstitution of the notice it contains of Basilides in pseudo-Tertullian, Philaster and Epiphanius. The facts are as follows:

(1) "Basilides says the supreme God is named Abraxas; by Whom 'mind' was created, which the Greeks call  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Thence the 'Word', from it, 'Providence', 'Virtue' and 'Wisdom'. Then from these, 'principalities' and 'powers' and 'angels' are made. Then infinite productions and emissions of angels. From these angels three hundred and sixty-five heavens are constituted, and the world, in honour of Abraxas, whose name has this number computed in himself."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Philaster Haer. 46.

(2) "He said that the unborn *Noûs* was first created: from *Noûs* ~~was~~ emanated the Logos, from the Logos, Phronesis, and from Phronesis 'Sophia' and 'Dynamis' and from these angels and archangels.<sup>(1)</sup>"

(3) "From 'Dynamis' and 'Sophia', 'Archai', 'Exousiai' and Angels, and from these 'Dynameis' and angels, came first the lower heavens. From the emission of these, other angels appeared and made another heaven like the first, and from the emission of those, other creatures were made, and these made another heaven, and those who issued again another.<sup>(2)</sup>"

"Thereafter they say that there are three hundred and sixty-five heavens, and the great archon of them is Abraxas, because his name amounts to three hundred and sixty-five. So the number of the name includes all things, and, on their account, the year consists of as many days. The angels who dwell in the last heaven, which we see, created the cosmos, and administer rule on the earth.<sup>(3)</sup>"

These quotations from Philaster, Theodoret, Epiphanius and Hippolytus (*Philosophumena*) enable us to

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(1) Theodoret Haer Fab. 164.

(2) Epiphanius Haer xxiv 1.

(3) Hippolytus Philosoph. vii 26.

form a conception of the Gnostic scheme of Basilides. Between the Supreme Being and this world, stretched a chain of Beings, a kind of hierarchy of Intermediaries. The angels fashioned the three hundred and sixty-five heavens, of which this world is the lowest. One of the angels was the God of the Old Testament. This Being had as his sphere the people of Israel. His ambition led him to conspire towards the leadership of all other peoples, which precipitated incessant strife. The Christ, who came from the Supreme Being to meet this catastrophe, had only the semblance of a body. When he was crucified, it was only in semblance. Simon the Cyrenian became his substitute. Basilides denied the resurrection of the body and taught and made use of magical arts. He further countenanced immoral practices.

Besides those statements regarding the teaching of Basilides there is a striking notice in the "Acta Archelai" to the effect that he had, previous to his coming to Alexandria, appeared publicly among the Persians. The quotation is as follows: <sup>(1)</sup> "There was amongst the Persians a certain preacher named Basilides, older than Mani, who lived not long after the time of our apostles, and who, being indefatigable in resource, and

(1) Fuit praedicator apud Persas etiam Basilides quidam antiquior, non longe post nostrorum apostolorum tempora --- dualitatem istam voluit affirmare quae etiam apud Scythianum erat



having proved that by that time all other subjects had already been dealt with, decided to proclaim the same dualism dear to Scythianus (the master of Mani).<sup>2)</sup>

(1)  
As reference to Persian dualism will be made elsewhere, a brief resumé from the "Acta" may be sufficient here:- "Away then with vain and curious variation (*inan- is et curiosa varietas*"- ostensibly of the Greek philosophy)! Let us rather investigate that which even the barbarians (*Barbari*) speculated, concerning good and evil, and what conclusions have resulted. Some of them maintained that there are two principles, which they call, respectively, good and evil, affirming that they had no beginning and were not generated, that is to say, that in the origins of things there were light and darkness, self existent. Each led its own proper life, such as it had chosen and was fitted for. For to each is dear what is his own, and nothing seems evil to itself. When darkness first saw the light it began to press on to have intercourse with it. The light however was unmoved, and suffered only the 'libido' of contemplation. The darkness received only an indication, that is the colour of light; light only gazed and re-

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(1) Cf. Buonaiuti, Gnostic Fragments, p.36. Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, p.92. *Acta Archelai*, Routh v 196. The quotation from the *Acta Archelai* is a resumé, all the more interesting as it reports - vaguely - Basilides' opinions, and raises the question of his alleged dualism. Vide quotation p.116. N.1.

flected itself, receiving nothing from darkness. Darkness, being an inferior by nature, thus received from the superior nature of light only an appearance and an indication of Goodness. For this reason complete goodness does not exist in this world and the goodness is of a very small quantity. And yet nevertheless, by means of this small element of light, creatures were able to engender a resemblance aspiring to these nuptials which they had consummated with light." <sup>(1)</sup>

With this notice may be associated the allusion in <sup>(2)</sup> Eusebius' History. According to Agrippa Castor, who was the first to attack Basilides, Basilides was an admirer of Barkabbas and Barkoph, as prophets. Isidore his son wrote his "exegetica" to the prophet Parchor. Parchor is obviously Barkoph. Barkabbas is mentioned as a prophet of the Nicolaitanes, or Gnostics in narrower signification, in Philaster (Haer. 33) and Epiphanius

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(1) "Basilides ait, Desine ab inani et curiosa varietate, requiramus autem magis quae de bonis et malis etiam barbari inquisiverunt, et in quas opiniones de his omnibus pervenerunt. Quidum enim horum (i.e. Barbarum) dixerunt initia omnium duo esse quibus bona et mala associaverunt: ipsa dicentes initia esse et ingenita: id est in principiis lucem fuisse ac tenebras, quae ex semet ipsis erant, non quae (genitae) esse dicebantur." Routh Rel.Sac. v 196.

(2) Eusebius, H.E. iv 7 6-8.

(Haer 26 2). Then in the "Acta Archelai" (c.63 p.91) there appears in conflict with Terebinthus "Parcus quidam propheta et Labdacus Mithrae filius." The name Parcus, Kessler traced to the Parthian male name Pakor (Πακώρως). With him and Mithras we are in Oriental surroundings. It may also be mentioned that Isidore refers to prophecies of Cham, who can be proved identical with Nimrod or Zoroaster.

There is therefore some ground for believing, with Professor Bousset, that Basilides had some connection with Oriental speculations, and that he ~~did~~ believed in two opposing powers of good and evil.

Indeed, Clement of Alexandria accuses Basilides of a deification of the Devil, and regards as his two doctrines, that of the Devil, and that of the transmigration of souls. Epiphanius too tells us that the teaching of Basilides had its beginning in the question of the origin of evil.

Bousset unhesitatingly ranks Basilides as a dualist influenced by the Babylonian and Persian religion. On the other hand De Faye does not agree. Perhaps Bousset may be right, if not about Basilides, at any rate with regard to

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(1) Θεϊκώζειν τὸν Διάβολον — Strom. iv 12 85.

(2) Ibid. v 11 75.

(3) ΕΠΙΦΑΝ. ΗΑΕΡ. ΚΚΙΝ. 6. ἔσχε δὲ ἡ ἀρχὴ αὐτῆς τῆς κακῆς προφάσεως τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑψτείν καὶ λέγειν, πόθεν τὸ κακόν.

his distant followers, and his system may have been an actual anticipation of the Manichaeian religion. The influence of Syncretism was very strong and pervasive. Teachers freely moved from group to group. Manuscripts were exchanged. The peripatetic philosopher who had to live on his popularity, adjusted his teaching accordingly, and it may quite well be that the tenets of the Basilidean school tended in that direction, and that its morality had degenerated to the extent that merited the castigation of Irenaeus.<sup>(1)</sup>

The account of Basilides in Irenaeus is singularly brief when one takes account of the greatness of the master. The cosmological system is substantially what has been already set forth from the excerpts from Philaster, Theodoret and Epiphanius, who obviously had the "Adversus Haereses" in their hands. His soteriology involves a Redeemer, an advent, and a deliverance, in which the Cross is quite extraneous. The work of the Redeemer was a plan to re-establish peace and liberty among the world-rulers, and among their peoples, whose peace had been broken by the ambitious efforts of the astral ruler, to whom had been assigned the people of Israël, the God of the Jews. Irenaeus writes the following:

(1) Adversus Haereses I 24 5. -- "*habere autem  
-- usum indifferentem et universae libidinis*"

"The unborn Father, seeing that the nations would be destroyed, sent His first born "Nous" Who came to be called Christ, that He might deliver them that believed on Him from the powers of the fabricators of the universe. <sup>(1)a.</sup> He appeared to their nations on the Earth as a man and performed works of wonder. Therefore he did not suffer, but a certain <sup>(1)b.</sup> Simon a Cyrenian, being compelled (angariatum), carried His Cross for Him, and, transfigured by Him, was crucified in ignorance and error, that he might be assumed to be Jesus, and Jesus Himself took the form of Simon, and standing by, mocked them. For, since He was a bodyless power and the "Nous" of the unborn Father, He was transfigured, as He willed, and so ascended to Him Who had compassion on Him, deriding them, inasmuch as He could not be seized and was invisible to all. And they who know all this are free from the powers that made the world."

If this was really the teaching of Basilides, it is impossible to account him a Christian. Jesus of Nazareth is absolutely unrecognisable. The story of the Cross is a travesty. So far from believing in Christ, he is reported to say "we ought not to confess

(1)a. Adversus Haereses, I 24.3.

( ) I 24.3 "... uti per dispositionem hanc opera mundi fabricatorum dissolveret."

(1)b. "qua propter neque passum sum, sed Simonem quendam Cyrenaeum angariatum portasse crucem eius pro eo" (Harvey Tom. I p. 200)  
καὶ ἀγγαρεύσασθαι ... τὴν σταυρὸν ... ἵνα ἴσθαι τὸν σταυρὸν (Μκ. xv. 21.)

Him that was crucified, but him that came in man's form, - - - - - and was thought to be crucified and was called Jesus, and sent by the Father, that by this arrangement he might do away with the works of the makers of the world."

Further, Salvation is of the soul only, for the body is by nature corruptible. The very prophecies too were from the Princes who made the world and the Law especially from their Prince, who brought the people out of Egypt. Things offered to idols are merely indifferent, to be used or neglected without scruple. So also is morality a matter of indifference. Most efficacious were the expedients of magic, images, spells, and curious arts.

A distinctly pagan element lies in the names of angels in the various heavens. <sup>(1)</sup> Through these the soul passes and repasses only by knowing the names. The Saviour also had His name, Caulacau, by which He ascended and descended.

The neophyte when he has learned all these names becomes invisible and incomprehensible to the angels

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(1) Hippocr. Philosophumena V. 8. οὗτοι εἰσιν οἱ τρεῖς ὑπέρσυχκοι λόγοι  
καυλακαῦ, σαυλασαῦ, γεγασάρ.

and powers, as Caulacau was. It is hardly necessary to comment on Irenaeus further. The Basilidean religion was simply deliverance from hostile astral powers, from the power of demons.

A strong Marcionite influence pervades the system. Marcion was teaching in Rome in the decade 140-150. He could scarcely have influenced Basilides, but he certainly could have influenced the Basilidean communities in Rome, with whom Irenaeus was acquainted. The "God of the Jews", the enmity against the Jews, the jeering at them on Calvary, all indicate Marcionism.

Such then are the extant descriptions of Basilides and his work. They are all necessarily biassed. Being Church authorities they were tempted to put things in the most unattractive light, to say nothing in favour, to omit things that were excellent, and to be careless of the credibility of their authorities so long as they provided good material for a philippic. Still, it is never wise to undervalue an opponent, and the accounts of the Fathers are of immense value.

It is, however, fortunate that we do have first hand material for an estimate of Basilides, whereas it cannot be said that the ecclesiastical notices are first hand. Clement of Alexandria was a keen student of the

Gnostics of two generations preceding him and made many references to them in his Stromateis. No less than twelve passages from Basilides or Isidore have been handed down, either verbatim or substantially. It must be admitted that a dozen fragments of an extensive literature is a very inadequate basis for a judgment on author or work. Yet the fragments cover some of the greatest problems, e.g. faith, election, the problem of evil and of suffering, the Passion of Christ, martyrdom, metempsychosis.

But before we pass on to the discussion of these absolutely authentic utterances of Basilides and Isidore let us see what the problem is that we have to solve. It is not the problem as to whether Basilides was a dualist or not, for that is of subsidiary importance, but whether we have any right to call Basilides a Christian Gnostic. To Bousset, for example, Basilides represents that form of Gnosticism that is closest to Persian dualism in its final form. It represents a further development of Iranian dualism, which later produced the religious system of 'Mani'. It must be admitted that a perusal of the accounts in the anti-heretic leaders would compel us to exclude Basilides

(1) Hauptprobleme S. 328 " Ein entschiedener Dualist-orientalischen Herkunft  
 12. Basilides. Sein System begann mit der Lehre, von dem Grundsätzlichen  
 Ewigen Gegenüber der Welt des Lichts und der Finsternis und  
 stellte im weiteren Verlauf die weitausläufige Vermischung dieser Welt und ihre  
 Entmischung dar. Gott und der Teufel waren ihm, wie es scheint zwei



absolutely. There is not one single link of contact with the Christian revelation. The unknown God, the hostility of angels, the Christ of appearance, the Calvary deception, the rôle of Christ's believers as haters of the Jews and Powers, the Gospel as a mere knowledge of astral names - such is indubitably pagan. Will the study of the authentic fragments render real help?

There are some twelve passages from Basilides and Isidore discussed by Clement. Let us take the following passage: <sup>(a)</sup> "For I say this, <sup>(1)</sup> whosoever shall endure the afflictions mentioned in consequence of having unknowingly sinned in other ways, are brought to this good end by the goodness of him who brings them, but <sup>(2)</sup> accused for other reasons, so that they may not suffer as condemned for what are admitted to be iniquities, as, for instance, adultery or homicide, but rather as Christians, which will so console them, that they do not seem to suffer pain. And if one is completely immune from fault and endures suffering, which

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*un auf-auf sich sich gegenseitig überlassen.*

(1) Clement Alex. Stromata iv 12-81. This passage refers to Martyrs.

(2) The text is obscure. The codices agree in *ΧΟΥΘΡΑΤΥΤΙ ΣΟΥ*

*ΠΕΡΙΛΑΒΟΝΤΟΣ ΑΛΛΗ ΕΣ ΑΛΛΩΝ ΟΥΤΩΣ ΕΠΙΚΑΘΟΜΕΝΟΣ*  
Schwartz proposes *ου δεδούτως* for *ούτως*. Stählin prefers on better grounds *ψευδω*. If this interpretation be accepted, the passage conforms to the Basilidean idea of metempsychosis, and of previous cycles of life.

(a) with reference to martyrs.

is a rare case, not even will he suffer anything through the machinations of power, but he will suffer as a child would suffer, who seems not to have sinned." And later he says, "As, then, a child, who has not sinned before, or committed actual sin in itself, but has within it that which committed sin, when it suffers, reaps the benefit, so, too, the perfect man, of nothing actually guilty, while he endures affliction, suffers not otherwise than as the child, having within him the capacity for sin, although, not embracing the opportunity to sin, he does not sin, so that he is not to be reckoned as not having sinned. For, as he who desires, within his heart, to commit adultery, and yet does not, is an adulterer, and he who wishes to commit murder and does not, is a murderer; so too he who is free from sin, if I see him suffer, even if no evil can be brought against him, I should ~~not~~ call him evil, on account of his wishing to do ill. For I will say anything rather than admit that Providence is evil."<sup>(1)</sup>

Later he speaks openly of the Saviour, as of a mere man. . "If then, leaving aside all these discourses, you seek to confound me by saying, for example,

(1) ἵνα μὴ ἐπιβῆ καὶ τὸν ἴσον τὸ πρὸς τοῦτον ἔ. 2  
The whole passage is quoted by Buonaiuti 'Gnostic Fragments' p. 33, 34

in respect of certain individuals, This man has then sinned, for this man has suffered, you will permit me to make answer: He has not sinned, but he was like a child suffering. And if you were still to insist in your argument, I would say: The man you speak of is man and only God is just. None, indeed, as one (Job xiv 4) says; ~~None~~ is free from pollution ( « καθαρὸς ... ἀπὸ πύθου » ).<sup>99</sup>

This passage, carefully chosen by Clement, because he saw in it an allusion to Christ, is the true Basilides in his fullest vigour and definiteness.

Christ may have been at the base of Basilides' mind. It can only be a guess that it was so, for it is not unlikely. But it was not the chief thought. Basilides was obsessed with the problem of martyrdom, the problem not of mere undeserved punishment, but the punishment of the innocent. Those martyrs in their torture and death touched soul and mind to the uttermost, and his mind writhed like a Laocoon between the conviction that suffering must involve sin, and the conviction that God is not the author of evil.

The suffering martyr is expiating some sin, possibly unknown to him, but were there not Christians whose lives had known neither wrongdoing nor scandal?

These Christians, then, must be expiating sins that exist virtually in them. They are innocent as little children are. They possess the disposition to sin (ἀμαρτυρικόν). They may have lived such shielded and untempted lives that they never had any opportunity to sin. May it not have been so with the martyrs?

It must be obvious how much Basilides is struggling in an impasse. He shows it himself. In a passage, feeling his difficulty, he is quoted as having advanced the hypothesis that the martyr expiates, if not the sins which he has committed in this life, at least the faults of which he was rendered culpable in an anterior existence <sup>(1)</sup> (ἐν ἑτέρῳ βίῳ). For the elect it will be an honour to expiate by martyrdom. This escape into the refuge of metempsychosis is not a mere phrase. It was one of the tenets of Basilides. Origen, commenting on Romans vii, says, "Basilides distorted the meaning of the words of the Apostle into foolish and empty fables, in agreement with the belief of the Pythagoreans, according to whom, souls pass from body to body. He forces himself to find this belief in the words of the

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(1) ελ. αλεξ. στρ 14 12 cf. Plato Tim 90

ἀλλὰ τῷ βασιλείδῃ ἢ ὑπόθεσις προαμαρτυρίας ὅτι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐν ἑτέρῳ βίῳ τὴν κόλασιν απομείνειν ἐπιτύχουσα. τὴν μὲν ἐκλεκτὴν ἐπιτίμως διὰ μαρτυρίαν, τὴν ἄλλην δὲ καθαρομένην ἀκέκαστα κόλασιν.

apostle, when he says: the Apostle said, I lived without a law once - that is before I came into this body. I lived in such a form of body as was not under a law, that of a beast, or a bird.'"

Basilides is bound by his two rigid tenets to hold the martyr down to culpability. If they expiate no sin whatever, then, contrary to all justice, God suffers punishment for them. He would be responsible for that iniquity. A punishment without a cause would reflect back on God, and that is precisely what Basilides will not allow. His language is too strong to admit of any doubt.

But there is still a word which he could say, if pressed to the wall in argument, <sup>(1)</sup> that a man, whoever you may name, is always a man, while God is just, for as one has said, No one is pure of stain.

The implication of this is serious. Was Clement right in seizing upon it, and charging Basilides with implying that Jesus is a man, and that he sinned? Logically Clement was right. On Basilides' hypothesis Christ must have been a sinner, not wilfully, but like the innocent infant who contained in himself the ἁμαρτυτικόν.

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(1) Clem. Alex. διὰ τὴν εἰς μέγιστον σφοδρότητα τῆς διαστάσεως τῶν λόγων, ἕως ἀνθρώπου ἔστιν ἐπὶ ὀνομασίας ἀνθρώπου εἶναι δίκαιον δεῖν τὸν Θεόν. καθάπερ γὰρ αὐτοὶ, ὡς περ εἶπε τις εἰς τὸ ῥήμα

Bousset agrees with Clement; De Faye does not, neither does Buonaiuti. The latter remarks <sup>(1)</sup> that "Christ held too high a place in the mystical speculations of the Gnostics for it to be possible for Basilides to attribute to the Passion an expiatory significance, an account of personal sin either of commission or intention."

Granted that Basilides was a Gnostic, he was not one of the metaphysical type. He did not live amidst transcendental entities like the majority of the Alexandrine thinkers, immured in the study and the library, knowing nothing and caring less for the market place, and indifferent to the interests of the crowd. In the reigns of Hadrian and the two Antonines, there were multitudes of Christian martyrs. 'Delators' were busy in their espionage and thousands of innocent lives were lost.

It is to the credit of Basilides that this touched his heart, and filled his mind with concern and anxiety. If he left the problem unsolved, or ran the risk of involving Christ in sin, at any rate like Elijah he was very jealous for the Lord of Hosts. He could not degrade his Creator.

(1) Buonaiuti, Gnostic Fragments, p, 34.

Is it possible then, that, as Irenaeus believed, (1) Basilides had preached the indifference of actions? This was not the opinion of Clement. He attributed to him a more ascetic rôle. Both he and Isidore, e.g. in the matter of matrimony and celibacy, preached continence, in accordance with the ascetic ideals of the day. The question was asked: If God pardons all sins, are any of them irremissible? Not all sins, says (2) Basilides, but only sins involuntary and of ignorance are forgiven. In face of such a pronouncement and what will now be cited, Irenaeus had been grossly misinformed, unless perhaps the charge was true of the descendants of Basilides, and contemporaries of the Bishop.

Fortunately we have a passage preserved by Clement which reveals the integrity and purity of heart of both Basilides and his son. Clement is discussing the question of marriage and celibacy, and, along with those of other Gnostics, he quotes the opinions of Basilides and Isidore. Both counsel abstention from marriage. They base their views on the words of Jesus in Matthew

(1) Iren., Adv. Haer. I 24 5 "habere autem et reliquarum operationum usum indifferentem et universae libidinis.

(2) Clem. Alex. Strom. iv 24 15 3

μόνας τὰς ἄκρουσίους καὶ κατὰ ἀγνοίαν ὑφίσταται.

xix 10-12. They distinguish those continent by nature or <sup>by</sup> profession, specially commending the ascetic Christian who renounces marriage, lest he be impeded in his high vocation. St. Paul's counsel to "marry rather than to burn" did not carry with it the encouragement of marriage. In the thought of Basilides, marriage was a last resource, a necessity to be tolerated.

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Isidore goes more sympathetically into the matter. In the extreme case, he counsels marriage. But where it is rendered impossible by youth, poverty or inferiority he has a word of wise counsel. Isolation is to be shunned, but the gathering of brethren should be cherished, and especially to get a brother's help. The fundamental fact of the ascetic life is that the sexual appetite does not imply necessity ( Φυσικὸν δὲ τὸ τῶν ἀφροδισίων οὐκ ἀναγκαστικὸν δὲ. )

Referring to the counsel not to withdraw oneself from the brethren, Isidore says "let him repeat, I have entered into the Holy Place, nothing can befall me". And at whatsoever time he nourishes suspicion or fear let him say, 'Brother lay thy hand on me that I may not

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(1) Hilgenfeld Ketzergeschichte, p.215. Clem.Alex.Strom. III, 1, 1-3.



sin'."

Basilides and Isidore combine, as we shall presently see, the true spirit of Christian humanity with a cosmological background common to all cultured circles of the Hellenistic period. They were children of the time, but were in the Christian community. Only thus will we understand the remarkable amalgam of Christian thought and astrological superstition, which the famous "passions" passages reveal.

Clement quotes Basilides as follows: "The followers of Basilides, he says, are in the habit of calling the passions 'appendages': saying that there are in essence certain spirits attached to the rational soul, through some original disturbance and confusion."<sup>(1)</sup>

This passage together with the quotation from Isidore's "the adventitious or adherent soul" ( *πρὸς τὴν προσφυσὸν ψυχὴν* ), the 'faith' passage in Clem. Alex. Strom. II 3, 10, and the 'martyrs' passage already mentioned, furnish us with a basis on which to construct the Basilidian conception of redemption, for the primary and commanding obsession of these thinkers is not super-cosmical speculation but sin and its problem.

(1) Clem. Alex. Strom II. 20. Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergesch.* pag 213 214  
οἱ δὲ ἐμὲ κασιγείδων προσαρτήματα τὰ πάθη καλεῖν ζώσασιν  
πνεύματά τινα ταῦτα κατ' αὐτῶν ὑπάρχειν προσφυστήρια  
τῆ λογικῆ ψυχῆ κατὰ τινα παραθεῖν καὶ σύγκυβιν ἐρακικῶν

The first passage is very concentrated. The human passions ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ ) are called "the appendices" ( $\text{ἡ προσαρτηματα}$ ). They are not innate with the soul. They come from outside. Indeed they are separate existences, and Basilides hypostatizes them as spirits ( $\text{πνεύματα καθ' ἑαυτά}$ ). The thought is Platonic and borrowed from the 'Timaeus'. These  $\pi\acute{\nu}\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  are workers of evil, and attach themselves to the soul - how, Basilides does not know; but says "through some original disturbance and confusion"; perhaps the precosmic confusion of matter, without God, described in the 'Timaeus'. Later, there supervene other natures  $\vartheta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ . They are the entity forces. In their turn they encroach upon the soul. They incarnate particularly certain bestial instincts, of the wolf, the lion, etc. He calls them the particularities ( $\text{ἰδιώματα}$ ) of these animals. It is the character of the animal, conceived as an entity, which exists by itself. These adventitious natures, penetrating within the soul, mould the desires to their image.

Basilides is just feeling his way as a Christian thinker through the thought world of his day. That world is the universe of the Seven Planets, each re-

volving in its proper sphere. The soul of man coming down from the highest sphere, through the stars, absorbs an impure quality which weakens its spirit.

Servius, the 'Virgil' scholiast, commenting on Aeneid vi. 714, writes inter alia, "Whence it appears that souls contract to <sup>the</sup> flabby inertia of Saturn, the fiery rage of Mars, the sharp lust of Venus, the ravening greed of Mercury, and the ambition of Jupiter, these qualities causing disturbance in the soul, and hindering it from putting forth its proper vigour and strength."<sup>(1)</sup>

The passions therefore are attached - Basilides does not say how; but they are external, and come to us adventitiously. They cling tenaciously and from them we seek to be redeemed. He does not say who created the evil forces. He may be charged with the implication that it must be God but it is a charge that he repudiates.

Basilides had more critics than the distant Clement. His own son, who straightened out many a crooked place in his father's teaching, saw danger in the appendage hypothesis. He said that an evil man might conclude

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(1) "...cum descendant animae, trahunt secum temporem Saturni, Martis iracundiam, libidinem Veneris, Mercurii lucri cupiditatem, Jovis regni desiderium, quae res faciunt perturbationem animabus, ne possint uti vigore suo et viribus propriis." Virg. Aen. vi. 714.

that he was more victim than blameable. He pictures him saying, "I have been compelled, I have been led, in spite of myself, I have done the deed against my will."<sup>(1)</sup> A natural rejoinder; but Isidore will have none of it. "We ought", he would say, "to exhibit ourselves by a reason superior to our inferior nature." Clement has preserved a statement of Isidore's that there are two souls in man, a good and a bad. On that ground therefore he adhered to the teaching of Basilides that we were responsible. We must, he said, by acquiring superiority in our rational part, show ourselves to be masters of the inferior creation within us.

For those sins we must suffer. Basilides' heroes, "the noble army of the martyrs", with all their innocency, suffered, but their suffering was their redemption. Suffering and expiation purify and correct. It is chastisement, *κολαστήριον* - having that remedial signification. Such experiences are the effect of the bounty of Him Who conducts all things (*χρηστότης τοῦ περιάγοντος*).

Briefly the two Gnostics held three essential ideas,

1. The idea of original sin, or at least of some *ἁμαρτυρικόν*

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(1) Theodoret: *Haer. Fab.* 1. 4.   
 ἔθιάσθην ἀπενέχθην, ἔκων ἔδρασα, μὴ βουλόμενος ἐνέργησα.

2. The idea that sin is inevitably followed by its penalty.
3. The Hellenic and Platonic doctrine of suffering, being corrective and educative.

These are the elements of their doctrine of redemption. In this conception of Redemption, Christ plays no part. Christ is a heavenly Aeon whose sojourn on earth was merely an appearance, Whose crucifixion was a subterfuge, and Whose mission was, according to Theodoret, "to deliver them that believed on Him from the powers of the fabricators of the universe."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is impossible to agree with De Faye, when, adverting to the silence of the fragments as to the rôle of Christ in the redemption, he says that it is certain, as far as we<sup>x</sup> see, that these Gnostics give Him the principal part.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nor can we say that Basilides had any Christian conception of faith - in Christ, or in God. There are four fragments in Clement. The first is that faith is

(1) Theodoret, Haer Fab. I 4.

(2) De Faye, Gnostiques et Gnosticisme, p.48: "Il est certain, cependant, comme nous le verrons, qu'ils lui faisaient la part principale." But see also Bousset, article, 'Basilides', Enc. Britt. "According to Clement the Saviour is termed ΠΝΥΜΕΝΟΝ ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ (Strom. ii 8 36) or ΔΙΑΚΟΝΟΣ (Exc. Theodote 16). But it is impossible certainly to determine how Basilides conceived the relation of this Saviour to Jesus of Nazareth."

"the assent of the soul to anything which does not excite sensation, not being present." We may compare that with the ἑλεγχόμενων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων ἑλεγχόμενων (Heb. xi 1). The second is that Basilides "conceives of election as foreign to the world, being of a supercosmic nature." The third reveals to us that Basilides had a concept of faith as a real entity deposited in the intellect by the benevolent will of the Father in virtue of which we are capable of achieving naturally a comprehension of the divine.

The passage in Clement (Stromata v 1 3) is very difficult, for we do not have the *ipsisissima* verba of Basilides, but Clement's conception of them. It is clearly not an act of the soul, though the first passage would agree with that, but a distinct entity, an essence, a real substance, living in the minds of the elect and those predestined to salvation. The conception is wholly Gnostic. Men bring with them in their journey through the spheres the accumulated burden of their passions, but also the "sovereign creature" of faith.

De Faye is right, it would seem, in his judgment that "the thought of Basilides appears to have been more intuitive than dialectical, more spontaneous than

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reflective."

The problem, which has been intentionally left to the end, is that of his great system of supra-sensible entities. It does seem as if the glove did not fit the hand. The elaborate staircase of mythical hypostases does not seem to harmonise with the Basilides of the Fragments.

We are left to the ecclesiastical authorities for our knowledge of the System of Basilides. The scheme in its reconstruction has been detailed at the beginning of this chapter. Is it reliable?

One part is not - the Crucifixion passage. Clement, who is silent about the cosmogony, would have denounced it. Another part is unreliable - the reference to the God of the Old Testament. This is Marcionite. Marcion was subsequent to Basilides. These two disfigurations characterise the later Basilidians.

The main edifice stands on surer ground. It is Basilidian borrowed from the 'Timaeus'. To his Alexandrian audience this heavenly arrangement was particularly Platonic and acceptable.

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(1) De Faye, Gnostiques, Basilides, "plus intuitive que dialectique, plus spontanée que reflective."

Both Bigg<sup>(1)</sup> and Mansel consider Basilides a  
 Pantheist. Mansel writes as follows:<sup>(2)</sup> "There is  
 almost a Stoic pantheism and fatalism. The supreme  
 God is impersonal, capable of no religious relation to  
 man, introduced to give the first impulse to the mechan-  
 ical movement of the world's self-development. As he  
 is elevated to the position of an absolute first prin-  
 ciple, he is stripped of the attributes which alone can  
 make him the object of moral obedience or religious  
 worship."

Attention must be drawn to the feature of the Aeons.  
 They reflect the cult of the seven astral powers that  
 rule the world, repeated in nearly every Gnostic system.  
 The name Abraxas contains the numerical value of 365. It  
 was known in antiquity that the Persian "Mithras" con-  
 tained that number. Mithras has become Abraxas. The  
 descent of 'Nous' to deliver believers from the 'powers'  
 of the evil Fabricator of the world, is oriental. The  
 denial of the Resurrection of the body is Oriental. Sal-  
 vation is deliverance from the body.

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(1) Early History of Christian Doctrine (Bethune Baker) 86.  
 (2) Mansel, "Gnostic Heresies", p.165.



VI.

Valentinus

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VALENTINUS.

The dominating figure in Gnosticism, during the second century, is unmistakably Valentinus. He was an Egyptian, as Epiphanius states, and was educated in Alexandria. If Epiphanius is to be credited, he was more than a member of the Church, he was even a teacher. Following the westward trend, he appeared in Rome during the episcopate of Hyginus, and was a well known teacher in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius, remaining there till the period of Anicetus. Harnack has fixed the time as between 135 and 160 A.D. Justin Martyr in his Apology (150 A.D.) mentions his attack on Valentinus in his earlier work against heresy, the "Syntagma", which fixes a date in the middle of Harnack's period. Irenaeus (Adv.Haer.ii 3,4) speaking of Polycarp, writes, "And he, sojourning in Rome under Anicetus, converted to God's Church many of the aforementioned heretics." (1) Tertullian reports that Valentinus came to Rome as an adherent of the Church, had aspired to the Episcopate

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(1) Irenaeus, Adv.Haer. iii 4, 3.

(2) Speravit episcopatum Valentinus, quia et ingenio poterat et eloquens sed alium ex martyrii praerogativa locum politus, indignatus de ecclesia authenticae regulae abruptit .... Adv. Valentinum cap iv.

because of his powerful intellect and oratory, but because a "confessor" was chosen instead, flung himself, in indignation, out of the true Church.

Epiphanius records that he retired to Cyprus, where he seceded from Rome. Bousset holds that he did not, like Marcion, break with the Church, from the very beginning, but endeavoured so long as possible to maintain his standing within it.

What material have we for a judgment on the man and his work? Let us deal first with the actual writings of Valentinus.

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Six fragments "of undeniable authenticity" have been found in the "Stromata" of Clement of Alexandria, and the "Odes of Solomon" are generally acknowledged to be by Valentinus. Then there is a short Christological passage in Epiphanius, "Panarion" (xxxii). On the other side we have the long account in the first book of the Adv. Haereses. Another is in pseudo-Tertullian (the lost "Syntagma" of Hippolytus). Tertullian's account of Valentinus is closely dependent on Irenaeus' exposition of the Ptolemaean system.

Epiphanius deals with Valentinus and his school in his book on "Heresies". In chapter 31, 1-8, he

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(1) Buonaiuti Gnostic Frag., p.60.

gives an account of the Valentinians, apparently an independent estimate. In 31, 5-6, he quotes a Valentinian book of doctrine. The rest of his work is extremely valuable to us for he transcribes Irenaeus verbatim, and we have thus Irenaeus' ipsissima verba Graeca, of inestimable value when set beside the extant Latin version. The latter is not Greek translated into the Latin of Cicero or even <sup>of</sup> Tertullian, but it is a meticulously verbal version, whose scribe apparently made it a matter of conscience to adhere to the Greek of Irenaeus in word and phrase and even order.

None of the Gnostics receive from Irenaeus such a bitter vituperation as do the Valentinians. He charges them with using "Idolothyta" and with immorality and yet they called themselves "the elect seed." <sup>(1)</sup> He calls them "physicians who humoured the appetites of their patients"; "worse than the very Marcionites"; the "most blasphemous of all sects"; "worse than the heathen"; "like Aesop's dog letting go his bread, and rushing for the shadow of it, and losing his morsel."

(2)

In a very graphic passage Irenaeus pictures the

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(1) Adv. Haer. I, 6, 3 σπέρματα ἐκλογῆς (semina electionis)  
 (2) Adv. Haer. iii 15, 2.

Valentinians of his own day - "For these introduce modes of speech for the multitude, with a view to those who are of the Church, whom they themselves call ordinary churchmen (κ<sup>α</sup>θ<sup>ο</sup>ικ<sup>ο</sup>ύ<sup>ς</sup>): whereby they captivate the more simple, and by affecting our way of discussion allure them to more frequent hearing. They also complain of us, that although their sentiments agree with ours, we ceaselessly abstain from communicating with them, and style them heretics, while their language and their doctrine are the same. And when, by their disputations, they have cast any down from the faith, and have made unresisting disciples of them, they speak out to them about the unspeakable mystery of their Pleroma. And they all are deceived, who think themselves able to distinguish from the Truth that which in words resembles it. For Error is persuasive and like the Truth, and it seeks out false colours. But Truth is without false colouring and therefore is entrusted to children."

Tertullian was a man of too strong prejudice to say a good word of any opponent, but for a graphic picture touched with sarcasm, Tertullian is unequalled. He says, "The Valentinians, who, without doubt, are a considerable body of heretics, comprising, as they do,

apostates from the truth, who have a leaning towards fables, and no discipline to deter them, and care for nothing so much as to obscure what they preach, if indeed they do preach who obscure their doctrine - they have formed Eleusinian orgies of their own, consecrated by deep silence, having nothing heavenly about them save their mystery. If you propose to them questions, sincere and honest, they answer you with a stare and a frown, saying: 'the matter is very profound'. If you try them with cunning questions, with the ambiguities of their deceitful tongue, they assert a community of faith with you. If you hint that you understand their opinions, they insist that they themselves know nothing. If you engage them closely, they destroy your vain hope of victory by self immolation. Not even to their own disciples do they deliver up a secret before they have made sure of them. They have a trick of persuading men before instructing them. Although truth persuades by teaching, it does not teach by first persuading."<sup>(1)</sup>

But in fairness we must ask, whether Irenaeus and Tertullian have given a true account of Valentinus? Did the Church Fathers do him justice?

How different was the judgment of St. Jerome! He

(1) Buonaiuti Gnostic Fragments pp. 59-60 .

tells us in his commentary on Hosea (ii 10): "The world is prolific in heretics, who, having received from God a keenness of intellect and genius, that they might direct the good things of nature to the worship of God, made for themselves idols from them. No man can build up a heresy who has not an ardent attitude, and possesses the natural Gifts, which are in masterly way created by God. Such was Valentinus, such Marcion, the most learned men whose words we read; such was Bardesanes, whose genius even philosophers admire."<sup>(1)</sup>

We however cannot help suspecting that we do not get the truth from the statements of opponents. The above quotation from Jerome is ~~uniquely~~ unique. The great calamity of the second century is that the works of the great Gnostic masters were destroyed. To burn them was doing God service. Consequently all we have of the great Gnostic thinkers are a few "Sibylline leaves", a few fragments that owed their immortality to the Christian writer or commentator, who preserved

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(1) Jerome, Osea ii, 10: Hereticorum terra foecunda est, qui a Deo acumen sensus et ingenii percipientes, ut bona naturae in Dei cultum verterent, fecerunt sibi ex eis idola. Nullus enim potest haeresim struere, nisi qui ardens ingenii est, et habet dona naturae, quae a deo artifice sunt creata. Talis fuit Valentinus, talis Marcion, quos doctissimos legimus, talis Bardesanes, cuius etiam philosophi admirantur ingenium.

their words in order to show their depravity, and for the pleasure of refuting them.

Very fortunately Clement of Alexandria has preserved in his "Stromata", certain precious fragments of the actual writings of Valentinus. They present us with an aspect of a rich and original genius. They reveal a Valentinus quite different from what we could legitimately surmise from the ecclesiastical writers.

A very striking but somewhat obscure passage occurs in the fourth Stromata, 13. <sup>(1)</sup> Clement adverts to a hypothesis shared by Valentinus and Basilides of a special class of men saved by nature, a class that came from above, for the abolition of death. They also held that the origin of death is the work of the Maker of the world. He puts the meaning into the Scripture "no man shall see the face of God and live", as if there were a death-dealing potency in God. Regarding this, he quotes the following words of Valentinus: "Just as the image

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(1) CLEM. ALEX. STROM. IV 13, in "KETZERGESCHICHTE" (Hilgenfeld).  
 ὅσοσον ἐλάττων ἢ εἰκὼν τοῦ ζῶντος προσώπου, τοσοῦτον ἕσσων  
 ὁ κόσμος τοῦ ζῶντος κίβητος. τίς οὖν αἰτία τῆς εἰκόνας;  
 μετακωσούη τοῦ προσώπου παρεσχημένου τῷ ζωγράφῳ τὸν τύπον,  
 ἴνα τιμωθῆ δι' ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. οὐ γὰρ αυθεντικῶς ἐυρέθη  
 μορφή, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὄνομα ἐπλήρωσεν τὸ ὕστρησον ἐν πλάσει,  
 συναρξί θὲ κὼ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἕοικετο εἰς πίστιν τοῦ  
 πεπλασμένου



is inferior to the living face, so the Universe is inferior to the living Aeon (the Supra-Sensible World). What is the cause of the existence of the image? It is the majesty of the face which offers the painter the model in order that the image may be honoured by his name (the name of the person, whose image it is). But the form is not found exactly to the life, while the name supplies what is lacking in what has been made. Also the invisible God contributes to accredit that which has been formed (i.e. the Cosmos)."

On reflection, it is abundantly evident that Val-  
 entinus is an ardent Platonist.<sup>(1)</sup> There are two worlds, one the Cosmos, the other the spiritual world. The visible world is thus an image of the invisible world, because it participates in the immaterial ideas, just as the picture takes shape and reality, as the spirit of the painter guides and inspires his brush. The further one is removed from the archetype, the more the image is effaced and obliterated. This Platonic conception dominates all the teaching of Valentinus.

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(1) Not the Platonic idea in its purity. De Faye, p.58: "Elle rappelle plutôt le platonisme du II<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans le doctrine des epigones de Platon, l'image comme aussi le reflet, ἀπαύγασμα sont terme courants et classiques. ἡ ἀπαύγασμα = effulgence, radiance, the light beaming from a luminous body. Cf. Heb.i 3.

The whole passage from the Stromata is too long to quote, and indeed it is difficult to determine how much of it is by Valentinus. Buonaiuti seems to indicate that it is only the Scriptural text and the comment, "As much as the image is inferior to the living face, so much is the world inferior to the living Aeon." The rest seems to be the deductions of Clement, but then, as he says, Clement must be regarded as having at his disposal the complete text of the Valentinian homily. De Faye seems to ignore this.

Buonaiuti thus interprets the excerpt. The world is like a picture, in which an unskilful painter - the Demiurge - has attempted to depict the features of the living Aeon. But since one may divine the names of the persons portrayed on the picture made by the painter, so they may find the name of the Aeon, because the Cosmos received lustre from the majesty (ἀπαύρασμα) of him of whose features it is a pale shadow.

The second fragment contains the parable of the Inn. (Clement, Strom. II, 20, 114). He has just been discussing the Basilidian passions, the ἑπιδρομήματα. He avers that it is equivalent to admitting, like the Pythagoreans, the presence of two souls in man. - Isidore by the way, held that there were two souls in man,

a good and an evil. Clement quotes a letter written by Valentinus to a friend on this subject, as follows: "Similarly in writing to certain persons, he uses the very words, concerning the appendages: one alone is good, whose presence is manifested by the Son. It is by Him alone that the heart can become pure, every evil spirit being banished from the heart. For a multitude of spirits dwelling in it, hinder it from being pure, and each of these spirits produces the effects which belong to it: they maltreat the soul, variously by evil desires. And it seems to me that he arrives at the soul a little as one who arrives at an inn. When the common people sojourn there, they make dents in the walls, they dig up holes, and often they fill them with filth. They have not any care for the place, under the pretext that it belongs to others. It is the same with the soul, when one neglects it, it remains soiled, it is the dwelling of a multitude of demons, but <sup>when</sup> the Father, the alone God, has regard for it, — it is sanctified. It shines with light. He is happy who has his heart in such condition, for he will see God."

Valentinus is apparently influenced by Philo, who has a remarkably apposite passage, in his "De Somniis" (I 23, Wendland 149): "It is clear that a very large

number of undesirable guests must be dislodged, in order that the one only who is good may make his entrance. Strive, then, O Soul, to become the house of God."

This beautiful "Inn" passage could not have been written by the representative of a community described by Irenaeus as "worse than the heathen". The structure of the passage is of course pagan. The conception of the passions acquired by the downward journey of the souls, as has been seen in Basilides, is purely Gnostic. Valentinus may have erected in this passage a heathen temple, but he has filled it with the power, the presence, the radiance of God. Valentinus is a Christian writing to Christians. He has expressed his faith in pagan figure, and there is revealed a feeling for moral purity, and a trust in the power of God to purify the soul.

(1)

The third fragment is part of a homily addressed to the initiates of the sect, a very curious and enigmatical passage. It runs as follows: "Ye are immortal from the beginning: ye are children of the life eternal, and ye desire to share death in order to spend it, and squander it, and that death might die in you, and by you. For

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(1) Clem. Alex. Strom. iv 13 91. Cf. Ketzergeschichte Hilgenfeld, p. 298.

ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἀθάνατοι εἰσθε καὶ τέκνα ζωῆς, εὖτε κτήνικος καὶ τὸν θάνατον  
 ὑθέτετε μερίσασθαι εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα διαπαντός αὐτὸν καὶ  
 ἀναλώσῃτε, καὶ ἀποθανῇ ὁ θάνατος εἰς ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν, ὅταν  
 τὸν τὸν μὲν κόσμον ἀλύσῃτε, ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ καταλύσῃτε, κυριεύσῃτε  
 τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς ἐπιούσης.

when ye dissolve the world and you yourselves are not dissolved, ye are masters of creation and of entire corruption."

This is a difficult passage, which no doubt the context would elucidate if we possessed it. Clement has not given it. Valentinus and Basilides held that there were a special class of men, sacred by nature, who came from above, for the abolition of death, the Pneumatics - a pagan oriental contact, but Christianised. Echoes of the Pauline phrases are in the passage. He reminds his readers that they are immortal because of the divine elements which repose in their bosoms. Sharing death, spending it and squandering it might signify yielding to the Demiurge or sinking to a lower existence. Bousset writes, "exalted joy of battle and a valiant courage breathe forth in this sermon in which Valentinus addresses the faithful"; the last lines of the fragment he translates "then are ye lords over creation and over all that passes away."

The crux of Gnosticism is its Christology. In all

(1) Clem. Alex. Strom. iv 13

(2) 1 Cor. xv. 48... τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ εἰσουλόμενοι  
16α. " 54 κατεπόθη ὁ θύρατος εἰς κῆρος

(3) Encyc. Britt. Article, "Valentinus" (Bousset)

the systems, as described by the ecclesiastical authorities, the place of Christ is dubious or non-existent. It is not so with Valentinus, though one is puzzled when studying his cosmology. In a fourth fragment (Strom. III.7.59), we find Clement noting that "completely binding Himself to all the necessities of life, He mastered them. This is also how He realised His divinity. He ate and drank in a peculiar manner, without waste. So great was His power of continence that His food did not decay in Him who was Himself free from decay<sup>(1)</sup>."

All the Gnostics were affected by "docetism". It was in the air that all men breathed. The Valentinians were at pains to isolate their Redeemer from all impure contact with matter. Just as He passed through Mary "as through a tube", so His food comes into no vital contact. The Christ of the fragment is a docetic Christ, an Aeon. The teaching of Valentinus substituted for Jesus of Nazareth, the Metaphysical Christ. Clement visits upon him no censure. He who (in the 6th Strom. viii 71) wrote that Jesus was ἀπαθής<sup>ς</sup> breathed the same air as Valentinus in this matter.

The fifth fragment occurs in a letter in which Valentinus sketches in certain words his idea of the creation of man.

(1) CLEM. ALEX. STROM III 7. 59 Ketzergeschichte Hildgenfeld p. 297.  
 Πάντα ἕφασκεν ὑπομείνας εγκρατής, ἡ θεοειγία Ἰησοῦς εἰργάζετο γινώσκων καὶ εἰπὼν ἰδίως, οὐκ ἀποδίδου τὸ φθαρτικόν· τὸσαύτη γὰρ καὶ τῆς συγκρατικῆς δυνάμεως, ὥστε καὶ μὴ φθαρῆναι τὴν τροφήν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἅπασι τὸ φθαρτικὸν κῆρὸν οὐκ εἶχεν

(1)

"And a kind of terror filled the angels at the creature, because he uttered things greater than proceeded from his formation (παρρησιζόμενος) by reason of the being in him, who had invisibly communicated a germ of the supernal essence. So also, among the tribes of men in the world, the works of men became terrors to those who made them - as for instance, images and statues. And the hands of all fashion things to bear the name of God, for Adam, formed into the name of man, inspired the dread which attached to the pre-existent man, as having his being in him; and they were terror-struck, and speedily marred his work." But there being but one First Cause, as will presently be shown, those men will be shown to be inventors of chattering and chirpings."

This is an obscure passage. It is thoroughly Valentinian. It is a poem of the creation of man, for

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(1) CLEM. Alex. STR. ii 9. 36 KIRCH. GESCH. N. 293. . και ὡς περ ἐν φόβῳ ἐπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ πλάσματος ἐπῆρξε τοῖς ἀγγέλοις, ὅτε μείζονα ἔφθάζετο τῆς πλάσεως διὰ τὸν ἀσφατῶς ἐν αὐτῷ σπένμα δεδωκότα τῆς ἀνοθεν οὐσίας καὶ παρρησιζόμενον. οὕτω καὶ ἐν ταῖς γενεαῖς τῶν κοσμικῶν ἀνθρώπων φόβον τὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνοθρώπων, τοῖς ποιοῦσιν ἐγένετο, ὅσοι ἀνοδοίαντες καὶ εἰκόνα καὶ πανθ' ἢ χεῖρας ἀνοοῦσιν εἰς ὄνομα θεοῦ. εἰς γὰρ ὄνομα ἀνοθρώπου, ὡς δι' αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ καθελωτότος, καὶ καταπλάγγυσαν καὶ ταχὺ τὸ ἔργον. ὑφείρισαν

Valentinus, besides being a philosopher, was a poet, as Tertullian confirms<sup>(1)</sup>. He is credited by many scholars today with the authorship of the *Odes* of Solomon. In this passage, then, we have Valentinus weaving into poetry the creation of man, and especially the problem of pain and evil. The advent of the first man, an εἰκὼν from the ἀπαύγαμα of the Aeon, the Primal Man (the Platonic image of the Idea), is the advent of a Being superior to all, as having the germ of the supernal essence invisibly communicated to him. His advent causes consternation, among the tribes of men. Accordingly, the angels, hearing him utter strange words, which his human figure belied, set immediately to work and marred the Being who seemed likely to become more noble than themselves.

This 'marring' is human suffering, and it reveals one who was anxiously concerned with the problem of pain and evil. To that, the Church theologians had contributed nothing, except how to escape from evil and obviate punishment. None of them asked, "unde malum?" Valentinus had thought it out and given his hypothesis. It was heterodox, but it was not the heterodoxy of a profligate and a charlatan, as Irenaeus and his friends alleged, but of a man who was honest in his search for

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(1) "Etiam cum Psalmis Valentini quos quasi idonei alicujus auctoris interserit".



the truth, A strange amalgam of pagan and Christian elements.

Another fragment will further illustrate a piety and earnestness which we should never infer from Irenaeus or any of the Church Fathers. The fragment occurs in that part of the sixth book of Clement's "Stromateis", where he demonstrates that the evangel had united in one brotherhood all men, whether Jew or Gentile, who believed in Christ Jesus. The fragment runs thus:-<sup>(1)</sup>

"Now he, who is the acknowledged head of the party of intellectual communists, Valentinus, has written in his Homily on Friends, many of the truths, which are written, though in common books, are found written in the Church of God. For the sayings which proceed from the heart are common.<sup>(2)</sup> For the law written in the heart is the people of the beloved, loved and loving Him. For whether it be Jewish writings, or those of the Philosophers that he calls the common books, he broadcasts the truth (κοινοποιεῖ τὴν ἀλήθειαν)."

(1) Clem. Alex. Str., vi 6 52. Ketzergeschichte iv, 301:

..... ὁ κορυθαῖος Οὐαλεντίνος ..... γράφει : πολλὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν ταῖς δημοσίαις βίβλοις εὐρίσκεται γεγραμμένα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ θεοῦ· τὰ γὰρ κοινὰ ταῦτα ἔστι τὰ ἔκ τῆς καρδίας ἕκαστου κοίτης ὁ γραπτὸς ἐν καρδίᾳ· οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ λαὸς ὁ τοῦ ἠγαπημένου—ὁ φιλούμενος καὶ φιλῶν αὐτόν. Δημοσίαις γὰρ βίβλοις, εἴτε τὰς Ἰουδαϊκὰς λέγει γραφάς, εἴτε τὰς φιλοσόφων, κοινοποιεῖ τὴν ἀλήθειαν

(2) Hilgenfeldt translates τὰ γὰρ κοινὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων. Theonaietis's translation "vaine" is incorrect.

(1)

Hilgenfeld remarks that the  $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{o}\tau\upsilon\varsigma$  has nothing to do with the communism of an Epiphanes. The common Scriptures with which Valentinus deals, are certainly not philosophy but the holy Scriptures in which Jews and Christians . . . . believe they possess God's revelation. Not the people who are united by an external word and law of God, but the Church which gives heed to the words from the heart and <sup>has</sup> the law in the heart, is the people of the beloved, that is of Christ.

We may sum up briefly what the fragments reveal of Valentinus.

In the first place he is a Platonist. Tertullian called him Platonicus Valentinus. He opposes soul to body, spirit to flesh. It was an influx of Oriental speculation which made the Platonists of Alexandria consider flesh an evil, and the seat of evil. One observes that trait in the Valentinian fragment of the docetic Christ, the body that eats and drinks, but does not

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(1) Die  $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{o}\tau\upsilon\varsigma$ . hat mit dem Communismus Eines Epiphanes nichts zu thun. Die 'offentlichen Schriften' von welchen Valentinus handelt, sind freilich nicht philosophische, sondern nur heilige Schriften in welchen Juden und Christen Gottes offenbarung zu besitzen glaubten . . . . Nicht das Volk, welches durch ein ausserliches Gottes-Wort und Gesetz verbunden wird, sondern die Gemeinde welche die Herzenworte vernimmt und das Gesetz im Herzen hat, ist das Volk des 'Geliebten', i.e. Christi.

eject. There is no signification of physical life. ~~Probably~~ Hippolytus was right in holding that Valentinus rejected the resurrection of the body.

In the second place Valentinus was a seriously-minded moralist. The "Inn" fragment is illuminating in this respect that evil passions are adventitious, as Basilides taught. They enter the hospitable soul, and soil it and make it a hostel of demons. In this he had abandoned the Greek intellectualism which held that evil was an error of judgment. Valentinus was a realist. This evil was flesh, which was thoroughly Gnostic.

In the third place, redemption consists in the dissolution or elimination of the 'carnal'. As to the precise method by which, according to Valentinus, we are redeemed by Christ, we are not informed.

(1)

But we have a strange quotation in Epiphanius. The quotation tells us that Christ came for the sole object of saving the race of "pneumatics." Christ carried His body from the higher regions. He passed through Mary "as through a tube." His body is the same as the fragments described. His coming to save only the "pneumatics" does

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(1) The work of Epiphanius, valuable as it undoubtedly is, reflects the almost boundless credulity of the author (Buonaiuti, Gnostic Fragments, p.21).

ἄλλο τούτου φάσκουσι πρὸς ἀλγῶν δ' οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ μόνον εἰς τὸ  
 εἶναι καὶ ἀναστῆναι τὸ ἴσως τὸ ἄνωθεν πνευματικόν

not harmonise with what follows, for there is then given the threefold division of humanity into three classes, the pneumatics, the psychics and the hylics. It is then explained how the three classes fare. Each category (Τάγμα) conforms to its affinities. The pneumatics go upwards, the hylics go to matter. The psychics are intermediaries capable of rising or sinking. The freedom enjoyed by the psychics of choosing the upward or downward way is greatly emphasised by the two disciples Heracleon, and Ptolemaeus, so that on the whole the threefold division may be attributed to Valentinus himself. The Pneumatics need only the gnosis and the formulae of the mysteries. The <sup>(1.)</sup>hylics are doomed to perdition, because of the principle that each substance proceeds to its own affinities. The <sup>(2.)</sup>psychics may obtain salvation by striving for it, by industry and righteousness.

Such may well have satisfied the later Valentinian formalists, but the question haunts the mind, would the

- (1.) τὸ δὲ ὑλικὸν τάγμα τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀνθρώπων μέγα δύνασθαι  
 χωρὶς τῆν γνῶσιν φασι μέγα δύνεσθαι κλίσει, καὶ θέλει ὁ ἕκαστος  
 ταύτου γέμενος ὀρμώμενος, ἀπολυθῆναι δὲ ἄλλο οὐκ ἔστι ψυχῆ  
 καὶ σώματι.
- (2.) καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ποικίλῃ κυβουμένων εἰς γὰρ καὶ ὁ ψυχικὸν  
 διηρησθησάντων ... τὸ δὲ ἕτερον τάγμα τῶν ἀνθρώπων  
 εἰ κόσμῳ ὄντι ποικίλῃ καλοῦσιν, ἐβ' ἑαυτοῦ δύνεσθαι καὶ  
 δύνασθαι, εἰ μὴ τι εἴη καλῶς καὶ δικαιοπραγίᾳ εἰς τὸ ἀπερῶσθαι

Valentinus of the fragments have shut the door so absolutely on the ὕλικόν τᾶγμα , which he must have known would be by far the great majority of the human race? The question, could the Valentinus of the fragments have been the author of that Gnostic cosmological masterpiece that bears his name, comes now before us. The two men seem to live in separate worlds.

Let us suppose that some opponent of Plato had given an account of the 'Timaeus', presenting to us not the flesh and blood and romance of the great dialogue, but a series of names, a terminology of astrology and of natural history and of physiology, and we had only a few fragments of the Apology and Crito and the Republic in Plato's authentic words. We might hesitate, and yet the master hand of the 'Timaeus' wrote the tender and beautiful 'Phaedo'. So the Platonic Valentinus may quite well have composed the Cosmology.

The words of Hippolytus<sup>(1)</sup> in pseudo-Tertullian will give us the most concise glimpse. "The heretic Valentinus weaves a vast web of fables, an outline of which I will proceed to draw. Thus, he presupposes a Pleroma and thirty Aeons, which he distributes in couples. In the first place he puts Abyss and Silence: from them proceeds a germ which is Intellect, and Truth,

(1.) Philosophumena v, 29 sqq.

whence come Word and Life: from whom proceed Man and Church: from whom came twelve Aeons, while, from Word and Life, there came ten Aeons. And behold the thirty Aeons are divided into an ogdoad, a decad and a dodecad. The last Aeon conceived the idea of discovering the first Abyss, and for this reason attempted to rise from the lower regions of the Pleroma. But her strength was not sufficient. Hence, unable to contemplate its stupendous grandeur, she ran the risk of being utterly dissolved into nothingness, had she not been confirmed by the "Boundary" of the world of the Pleroma, pronouncing the Iao. But Sophia, the fallen Aeon, seized in the vortex of her morbid desire, gave birth in the turgid ferment of her passion, to the forms of matter. Out of her trepidation and her restlessness was born darkness: of her fear and her ignorance came forth deceitful malignity and perversion: from her sadness and her tears came the sources of the waters and the seas. Christ was sent by the first Father, inviolable in his mystery, to re-establish the harmony of the Pleroma, which had been destroyed by the foolish ambition of Sophia."

It has already been said that the account which

Irenaeus gives of Valentinus and his school is a com-  
 pilation from many sources, documentary, private notes  
 and hearsay. The section in Irenaeus, which agrees  
 substantially with the excerpt from pseudo-Tertullian  
 is I, 11, 1. Professor Bousset considers that in the  
 section I. 11. 1-3 Irenaeus has preserved what is an  
 obviously older document, possibly from Justin's "Syn-  
 tagma", dealing with Valentinus' own teaching and that  
 of two of his disciples. The sketch which he gives is  
 the best guide for the original form of Valentinianism.  
 Section I 1-10 of the "Adversus Haereses" describes the  
 school of Ptolemaeus. Marcus and the Marcosians, the  
 second school, is described in I 13-21.

The main elements in the picture given by pseudo-  
 Tertullian are, first, the Pleroma, then the united body  
 of the Supra-Sensible Entities, distributed in syzygies  
 or pairs. One of the divine hypostases dared to trans-  
 gress the limits to discover the first Abyss, the Primal  
 Father, and was just saved by the restraining influence  
 of Horos. From her bitter pangs were solidified the  
 universe. Sophia the fallen Aeon was restored by

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(1) Adv. Haer. Praef. - αναγκάσιον ἡγησάμενον, ἐπιτοκῶν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι τῶν ὡς  
 αὐτοῖς λέγουσιν Πουκλεντίνου μαθητῶν, ἑπίσης δ' αὐτῶν καὶ συμβουλῶν  
 καὶ μεταλαβόμενος τὴν γνώμην αὐτῶν

(2.) Ibid. . . τὴν τῶν γνώμην . . . λέγω δὲ τῶν περὶ Πτολεμαίου,  
 ἐπιτόκιμα οὖσαν γὰρ Πουκλεντίνου σχολῆς.

Horos pronouncing the "Iao." The order of the Pleroma thus disturbed by Sophia was restored by Christ sent forth by the inviolate Father.

It may be assumed, with considerable confidence, that we have here the cosmological system as taught by Valentinus. Certain expressions in the undoubtedly authentic fragments presuppose that speculation, notably Stromata ii 8 3: Stromata ~~III~~ 59: Epiph. Panar. xxx k. We have four independent accounts of the system in its most ancient form, that of Irenaeus, of Hippolytus, of Epiphanius, and of Tertullian.

The great mystical story of the Cosmos with its overshadowing Pleroma is not a Gnostic dogmatic system. It would not have stood the test of criticism so long. Clement does not attack it, as he attacks the morality of the Valentinians. It was understood then for what it was. Men of the calibre of Clement and Origen must have listened to Valentinus, and formed the membership of his and the succeeding communities, and they could not possibly have assented to the story of the fall of Sophia, and the creation of the Cosmos out of her pangs, had it been a dogmatic statement. But as a Platonic myth, as a parable, as a poem of the ineffable counsels



of the Almighty and of the dread mysteries of creation and man, it was accepted and cherished.

Who today would give any credence to the stately picture of Milton's 'Paradise Lost'? It is a story built up of sheer imagination. There is no chapter and verse in the world for the deliberations of the Almighty and the speeches of the rebellious angels. It is a drama on the theme of "man's first disobedience and the fruit."

So also must the intellectual and acute-minded men of the ancient world have dealt with Plato's 'Timaeus'. It wasn't laughed out of court because it was, and could not but be 'unreal'. Plato knew it was not the truth; but it was a "guess at the truth." When the powers of demonstration failed, Plato had recourse to a myth.

Professor A.E. Taylor, discussing the myths of Plato at the close of his chapter on the 'Phaedo' says - It is useless to discuss the question how much in these myths of the unseen represents a genuine 'extra-belief' of either Socrates or Plato, and how much is conscious 'symbolism'? Probably neither philosopher could have answered the question himself. But we must bear in mind that Socrates regularly accompanies these stories

with the warning (e.g. 'Phaedo' 114d.) "that no man of sense would put much confidence in the details, and that the one thing of serious moment is that we should live as befits men who are looking for a city that does not yet appear, and that the real object of 'tending the soul' is to make us fit for citizenship in the Eternal." ('Phaedo' 115c<sup>(1)</sup>).

Valentinus was a genius of the family of Plato. We should not have known that from the fragments. All we should have learnt would have been that he was a penetrating and eloquent moralist. We might suspect - but nothing more - as De Faye remarks, that he had the elements of an intrepid idealist ("nous soupçonnerions, mais rien de plus, qu'il avait l'étoffe d'un hardi spéculatif"). One considerable part of his genius would have escaped us.

The Platonic 'ideas' or 'forms' have become his celestial hypostases. What has been on the earth below must have had in Eternity the corresponding idea. There are for example in the ogdoad of the Pleroma, the figures of Man and the Church, and in fact, the Pleroma is filled with entities corresponding to figures and qualities in

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(1) Cf. "Plato, the Man and his Work" (A.E. Taylor) p.207.

terrestrial existence. The word  $\alpha\iota\omega\acute{\nu}$  is borrowed from Plato. Plato used it to express the ever-present form of the divine existence prior to time. Valentinus extends it to denote the manifestation of this existence. The Demiurge is a Platonic conception. There was a Christ and a Sophia in the Pleroma, and a lower Christ and lower Sophia in the outside creation.

The distractions of Achamoth reflect the blind but continuous  $\kappa\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  with which matter was agitated before it was organised by the infusion of the mundane rational soul. Thus the  $\alpha\pi\omicron\sigma\iota\alpha$  (1) of Achamoth was the cause of pre-cosmic matter.

The pre-existence of the Creator and the Pleroma is purely Greek and Platonic. The idea is independent of the idea of God, but, instead, is based on the contrast between spirit and matter, between the infinite and finite. Plato's belief was that mind existed antecedently to matter. This was based on the necessity that the dominant should precede the subject.

Accordingly we have the Valentinian 'Pleroma'; the unseen world of real being, the world of purity and reason and righteousness and joy, the world that was from

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(1) 'Timaeus', 52E.

Eternity to Eternity. On the other hand, there was the world of time and change and becoming, the world that had no real existence, the formless ~~unseen~~ substance without life or motion, ~~the~~ τὸ μὴ οὐδόν. That, to become the world of history, needed a soul, needed mankind, needed rulers and guides. It was an evil world destined to annihilation. There, man must pass his years, imprisoned in flesh and evil, as in a tomb. From that life he must find an egress into the true eternal life above. To Plato the means of redemption was knowledge of the Good, which meant not merely knowledge, but practice (ἄσκησις) and μελέτη θανάτου. With the Gnostic it was γνῶσις, which soon degenerated into the knowledge of star names, and secret formulae, and ritual performance.

It was this Greek "Weltanschauung" that Valentinus took as the framework of his religious system. Could Christianity be poured into it as into a mould? Valentinus made the attempt. The new wine eventually burst the bottle. He attempted too much, though perhaps he could not avoid doing so. God did not create Socrates and Plato in vain. Through them a message from God came to the world. It was mixed with inevitable dross,

but the time came when Christianity took what Plato gave of real value, an element which lives in Christianity to this day.

Psychologically Valentinus is not a degenerate Christian who has succumbed to the more attractive of Hellenistic world solutions of problems left unsolved in the New Testament circles. It is a sounder conviction to cherish, namely that the young Egyptian scholar, steeped in academic philosophy, an ardent seeker after truth, haunted by the problem of evil and salvation, came to Christianity because he believed he would find the satisfaction of the needs of his conscience, and the solution of the problems that confronted him. Christianity did not dispel the Platonic enthusiasm. It developed him into the most daring idealist of the second century. Bousset, Hilgenfeld, Wendland, see in Valentinus merely the author of a pagan Gnostic speculation, where Christian names clothe Oriental forms, and Christ is only a pagan redeemer. It may be that they are wrong, and that the view here supported would become a certainty if we had the Valentinian literature and not a microscopic bundle of disconnected fragments.

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VII.

The Disciples of Valentinus and the  
Valentinian Speculation

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THE DISCIPLES OF VALENTINUS AND THE VALEN-  
TINIAN SPECULATION.

Valentinus had a magnetic personality. He not only created a religious movement, but he inspired two men of almost as great mental calibre as himself, in their own way, Ptolemaeus and Heracleon. If we wish to understand the Valentinian system we must take cognisance of the two distinguished leaders who had a share in the ultimately towering structure. How did they contribute, or modify, or enrich? It is obvious that before an attempt is made to disentangle the complexity of what we encounter in Irenaeus, some attention should be given to these two outstanding successors.

An unkindly fate has visited Heracleon with a lighter hand than Valentinus. We possess a whole series of fragments of Heracleon's commentary on St. John, which Origen quotes in his own commentary.

According to Buonaiuti and Bousset the statement given by Hippolytus in the 6th book of his "Refutation of all Heresies" can be accepted without any hesitation. (1) Hippolytus tells us that concerning the nature of the

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(1) Buonaiuti, "Gnostic Fragments" p.79.

body assumed by Jesus in his φανέρωσις in the world, the disciples and successors of Valentinus were divided into two schools.

"The Italian Valentinians, among whom are Heracleon, and Ptolemaeus, said that the body of Jesus was psychic and that, for this reason, at the moment of his baptism, the spirit descended in the form of a dove - that is to say, the word of the Supreme Mother, Sophia, came down on the psychic (man) - and raised him from among the dead. For which it is said: "He who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your mortal and psychical bodies." For the earth has fallen under a curse. Therefore it is written: 'Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return'. The Oriental school, however, among whom are Axionicus and Bar Daisan, said that the body of our Lord was spiritual. For the Holy Spirit came down to Mary, - this is to say, Sophia - and (with it) the power of the Most High, which is the creative art, so that what had been given by the Spirit might be formed."

Clement of Alexandria (Strom. iv 9) said that Hera-  
cleon was the most eminent of the Valentinian school,<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) ὁ τῆς Ὀυαλεντινίου σχολῆς δοκιμώτατος" (Κελεύροσηνιὲ p. 473)



(1)  
and Origen, that he was a personal friend of Valentinus.  
Irenaeus gives practically no information. Little is  
given by Philaster and pseudo-Tertullian. Heracleon  
and Ptolemaeus were identified with the later Platonic  
and Pythagorean schools. (2) They were probably known  
personally to Irenaeus in Rome and Gaul, and we may set  
down their career at about the middle of the century,  
or some years after.

If the ecclesiastical testimony regarding Heracleon  
is scanty, it is significant and worth bearing in mind.  
~~but~~ There are extant numerous fragments. The greater  
portion by far is found in Origen's commentary on St.  
John's Gospel. Origen quotes (generally with approval)  
forty-eight sentences or comments on the same Gospel.  
These fragments have been collected by A.E. Brookes (3)  
("The Fragments of Heracleon").

Heracleon's Supreme Being is thus described as  
ἄχραντος καὶ καθαρὸς καὶ ἀόρατος "undefiled  
and pure and invisible". (4) Like all exegetes of his age,  
he makes continual use of the allegorical method of

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(1) γνῶριμος (Origen, Comm. in Joann ii 8: Fragments of  
Heracleon (Brookes) Frag. 1.

(2) Hippol. Philos vi 36.

(3) Cf. Texts and Studies (Armitage Robinson) vol. I No. 4.

(4) Origen Comm. in Joann. xii 25: Fragments of Heracleon (Brookes) Frag. 24

interpretation. In fragment 16 (John x 22) he sees an allusion to the sensible organism of Christ (symbolized by the number six, added to the divine elements in Him, symbolised by the number forty), in the number of years (forty-six) which Solomon's temple took to erect. In the ineffable abyss of divine life <sup>(1)</sup> he distinguishes, like Valentinus, a fourfold multiplicity of eternal and perfect hypostases. A remarkable statement of his is that "in the eternal mysteries of the divinity, previous to the existence of the world of phenomena, and previous to the origin of the categories of time and space, there was accomplished a multiplication of abstract beings, to which the work of the Word was extraneous. This is a variation from the scheme in Irenaeus.

In commenting on the first verses in St. John's Gospel (Frag.1) Heracleon excludes - Origen disagrees - from all that was made by the "Word", the divine hypostases who compose the Pleroma. "In explaining the words "All was done by means of the Word" he interprets in the "all", the world and all that it contains, excluding from the "all", according to his hypothesis, all

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(1) τετρας ἡ ἀπρόσπλοικος referring to the original τετρακτύς of the Valentinian system.

that which is distinct from and superior to the world  
 and its contents. He says, in fact, there were not made<sup>(1)</sup>  
 by virtue of the Word, the eternal (Aeon) and all that  
 lives in it, all of which he maintains to have come into  
 existence before the Word.

And this variation from the Valentinianism of  
 Irenaeus, is the part played by the Word in the creation.  
 He says<sup>(2)</sup> it was the "Word" who caused the Demiurge to  
 make the world, and the clause he prefers is not "with  
 whom" or "by whom" but rather "by virtue of whom" - for  
 the Word did not operate as the Agent of another, as it  
 would appear from the words "by means of the Word", but  
 on the contrary, another made them, the Word being the  
 operating Agent.

The Logos in this passage takes the place of the  
 Sophia, in the account of Irenaeus. It is not to be  
 expected that a Gnostic would equate the Logos with  
 Christ. Johannine influence did not succeed so far.  
 Heracleon makes a distinct difference between the Logos  
 and Christ. The Logos is an entity, which exists

(1) φησὶ γὰρ οὐ τὸν αἰῶνα ἢ τὰ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι γεγονέναι διὰ τοῦ  
 λόγου, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦ πρὸ τοῦ λόγου γεγονέναι.

(2) Φησὶ γὰρ τὸν τὴν αἰτίαν παραβλόντα τῆς γενέσεως τοῦ κόσμου  
 τῷ δημιουργῷ τὸν λόγον ὄντα, εἶναι οὐ τὸν ἄφ' οὗ ἢ ὑφ' οὗ  
 ἀλλὰ τὸν δι' οὗ.

separately. The Logos indeed pre-existed in Christ. In the foregoing fragment, the rôle of the Logos in creation is clearly indicated. It is not of the first degree. The Pleroma or  $\alpha\lambda\omega\upsilon$  does not owe to it its existence. It is only the Cosmos that the Logos brings into being. The Logos inspires the Demiurge, who is the true maker of the Cosmos, and only the Cosmos. "All things" in the phrase "All things were made by Him" is limited to the Cosmos and its contents. It is God Who is Maker of the entirety of creation, both cosmical and supra-cosmical. The Logos comes between God and the Demiurge. When one speaks of God's creation, it is  $\epsilon\upsilon\phi' \delta\epsilon\upsilon$ . The Demiurge's work is described by  $\delta\iota' \delta\epsilon\upsilon$ . The Demiurge is the artizan who with his hands constructs the Cosmos according to the plan which the Logos gives him. Nevertheless, the rather subdued and servile ~~role~~ <sup>by the Logos</sup> played, in the Irenaeus version of the Valentinian system, is completely transformed into the commanding and authoritative figure in the teaching of Heracleon.

Heracleon does not, like Marcion, oppose the Demiurge to God, but the Demiurge is not an Aeon. He, though responsible for the making of the Cosmos, and its

ordering, is inferior to the Aeon Christ. Heracleon  
 compares the Demiurge to John the Baptist. <sup>(1)</sup> In his  
 interpretation of "I am not worthy to loose the latchet"  
 he says the Demiurge was not worthy that Christ, for  
 his sake, should come down from His greatness, and  
 should take flesh for his footgear. Origen confesses  
 his inability to understand this, but is not surprised  
 that Heracleon should interpret the shoe as the world.  
 Origen condemns outright the assumption that the Maker  
 of the world should be inferior to Christ.

Heracleon employs another incident in his teaching  
 regarding the Demiurge. Commenting on the passage  
 John xiii 59, he weaves together an ingenious allegory. <sup>(2)</sup>  
 The nobleman (βασιλικός) is the type of the Demiurge.  
 Like him he exercises authority, he has his subjects. <sup>(3)</sup>  
 He is no princelet, he is a βασιλικός, but not a  
 βασιλεύς. He governs under authority. The sick  
 son of the nobleman, represents the subjects of the  
 Demiurge. They are the psychics, not having received  
 from the beginning the divine germ. The son was at

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(1) Fragment 7, John vi, 15.

(2) Fragment 40.

(3) ἐβασιλεύστω τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

Capernaum, by the lakeside, i.e. the place of the "psychics," the intermediate place, between the superior and inferior regions. It is near the lake, i.e. is adjacent to the domain of matter.<sup>(1)</sup> The son is at the point of death. The "psychic" is not immortal by nature. He is in danger of death, being under the law. In his extremity the Demiurge implores the help of the Saviour. The Saviour grants the answer. He gives life in healing the malady, that is, in pardoning him his sins.

The figure of the Diabolos completes the great group of Valentinian theology. He is the lord of the lower regions. Matter is his domain. The "Hylics" are his subjects. Commenting in John iv 21 (Frag.20), "the hour will come when you will not worship the Father on this mountain," Heracleon writes, "the mountains signify the Devil or his Cosmos, but the Devil constitutes an integral part of matter and his cosmos, that is, the mountain of iniquity in complete entirety:<sup>(2)</sup> it is a haunt of savage animals abandoned by man, to which men

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(1) τουτέστι τῷ συνυμμένῳ τῇ ὕλῃ.

(2) ὁ δὲ κόσμος τὸ σὺμπαν τῆς κεικίας ὄρου, ἔργμον οἰκητῆριον θηρίων, ᾧ προσενύθουν πάντες οἱ πρὸ νόμου καὶ οἱ ἔθνικοί.

were subject, those who lived before the law, and the pagans who still live.”

The nature of the Devil is hinted at in Fragment 47. Commenting on our Lord's words concerning the Pharisees, (John viii 40), Heracleon says "For the nature of the Diabolos issues not from truth, but from that which is the opposite to truth - that is, error and ignorance. For this he could not reside in the truth, nor have truth in him, saturated with falsehood, and incapable of pronouncing a word of truth."

The Valentinian division of humanity into three classes, the pneumatics, the psychics, the hylics, is adopted in the scheme of Heracleon. They correspond indeed, and this is an enriching of the Valentinian concept - with the three great figures of the Supra-Sensible World. To the Father belong the pneumatics, who are at one with the Logos, who "gave them their first configuration imposing and revealing his own figure, brilliance, and essence on as many as have received his seed." These 'being of one nature with the Father', have the right

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- (1) αὐτὸς γὰρ τὴν πρῶτην κορφωσιν --- παρέσχε, τὰ ὑπ' ἄλλου σπαρέυτα εἰς μορφὴν καὶ εἰς φωτισμὸν καὶ περιγραφήν ἰδίων ἀγῶνων καὶ ἐκδείξας
- (2) FRAG. 24. τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὄντες τῷ πατρὶ . . . . ὁμοούσιος οὖσα τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ

to call themselves consubstantial with the unborn. The "psychics" belong to the realm of the Demiurge. They are born in ignorance and sin. They have merely the capacity of salvation. The spirituals have the mission of entering into the world, <sup>(1)</sup> inwardly illumined by the Gnosis, the divine knowledge that dwells there, and of evangelising the psychics. They were the εκλογή; the psychics, the κλησίς. In the fragment of the Woman of Samaria, the woman who represents the "pneumatics" returns to the world and announces to the psychics (τῇ κλησί) the presence of Christ. The psychics abandon their first life, and go to the Saviour. The Samaritans represent them in the allegory. "They depart from the town." Heracleon interprets the remark in this sense, that the psychics abandon the old ways which were according to the Cosmos, and by that faith, they go to the Saviour. The psychics are the children of the Diabolos. Steeped in ignorance and sin, they cannot aspire to incorruptibility. According to the Valentinian doctrine the Universe is the fruit of a lapse (ἐκτροπή) and in that fallen substance, those human beings allow the infusion of Spirit to putrify in matter and are

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(1) Fragments 17, 18.



incapable of immortality. Death will return them into Cosmic matter which will finally be utterly dissolved. But the hylics will include the psychics who fall into ignorance and iniquity.

It is impossible to cover the whole extensive ground revealed even by these forty brief fragments, but what has been presented displays the Gnostics with all their metaphysical abstractions, <sup>as</sup> men who had a very profound interest in practical religion. Even the artificial subdivision of mankind into three classes, which aligned itself so artistically with the great cosmical conception, must have seemed to men like Heraclion borne out by experience. The pneumatics and psychics and hylics must have been before their eyes every day in life. The fall of their faithful followers into temptation and hopelessly evil ways must have saddened them in just the same proportion as they saw others growing in grace and likeness to Christ. Whether for the hylics they had any hope, it is difficult to say. Their creed forbade it. But how appalling must have been that sunken, bestial mass, regarding whom even the most sympathetic could hardly have seen even a spark of spiritual life.

We shall see in Ptolemaeus, the second great disciple of Valentinus, exactly the same Christian piety, though it breathes through a system that is built of such pagan materials.

Though we do not possess much of the work of Ptolemaeus, what we have is not fragmentary. First we possess in Irenaeus - in ~~that whole~~ part of the first book, that is devoted to Valentinus and his school, an account of the Valentinian system, which is just an exposition of the system of Ptolemaeus. Irenaeus tells us in his preface that he had read the writings of the disciples of Valentinus and that he had associated with certain among them. He adds that his exposition of the doctrine of Valentinus will be made according to Ptolemaeus and his disciples.

(1)

It is to Epiphanius that we owe "the letter to Flora", <sup>one</sup> of the treasures of antiquity. The letter was written by Ptolemaeus to a Christian lady of culture in Rome, on the subject of the origin and authority of the Mosaic Law. It gives us a glimpse of the difficulty

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(1) Epiphanius Contra Haer. xxxiii 3-7. According to Harnack this letter was written about 160 A.D. Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. Pref.) speaks of the doctrine of Ptolemaeus.

τῆς τε γνώμης αὐτῶν . . . τῶν περὶ Πτολεμαίου ἀπάνθισμα οὖσαν  
τῆς Ἰουλιανῆς σχολῆς.

presented by the Old Testament to the developing conscience of early Christianity. The glaring contrasts between the phenomena of Jewish history and those of the ministry of Christ and the apostles, led some like Marcion to the hypothesis of two Gods, (the God of the Old Testament, warlike, fierce and truculent, and the God of Jesus Christ, the God of Love,) and, at the best, to anxious questionings.

The letter may be briefly summarised. Ptolemaeus tells his "Good Sister Flora" of the different views held on the law of Moses, accepted by many so blindly. Some hold that it proceeds from God. Others from His rival, the malicious Artificer of the Universe. It proceeds neither from God the Father since it is imperfect, nor from His adversary, for that is contrary to the explicit testimony of Christ.

He claims that he will depend solely on the words  
(1)  
of the Master.

First there are certain precepts which have proceeded from man. The Saviour teaches that it should be  
(2)  
divided into three parts: first, that sanctioned by

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(1) τῶν ἐκθρομμένων ἡμῖν τὰς ἀποδείξεις εἰς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν λόγων  
παριστῶντες, οἳ ὡν μόνον ἔστιν ἄπταιστος ἐπὶ τὴν καταλήξειν  
τῶν ὄντων ὁδηγήσεται. (εἰρ. ad 7<sup>ον</sup> νῆμα)  
(2.) i. e. the law of Moses.

God, second that ordained by Moses on his own initiative, third that which should be attributed to the Elders of the people, who invented it.

(1)

We have first, he says, the precepts that are pure. These Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil. Secondly, the 'mixed' precepts, imperfect, in part unjust and evil. These the Saviour abrogates. Thirdly the 'symbolic' precepts, types of what will one day be.

Ptolemaeus places the decalogue in the first category. In the second the law of retaliation, the law of revenge. The third comprises the prescriptions regarding sacrifice, circumcision, the Sabbath, unleavened bread, etc. All these Jesus has transferred from the domain of sense and e.g. substituted circumcision of the heart. Not only is Christ our Guide in these distinctions, St. Paul also agrees.

This is the barest outline, but it summarises all the facts, which Ptolemaeus gives. He concludes his letter by dwelling particularly on the topic of the Demiurge. He distinguishes God the Father Who is perfect (τέλειος) and the Diabolos. Between the two he places the Demiurge, to whom he attributes the divine elements

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(1) νομοθεσία καθαρὰ ἄσύνπλοκος τῷ κακῷ (Ephes. ad Roman)

(1)  
of the Mosaic law. The Demiurge is intermediate. His nature corresponds to his position. He is neither good, in the absolute sense, nor evil; he is simply 'just' (δίκαιος). This is He Who is the divine legislator of the Pentateuch.

The reasoning of the letter seems defective, for, where, at an earlier stage, he had said the Decalogue was perfect, how could such come from a God Who is not wholly good? Ptolemaeus at any rate feels the greater difficulty of the Demiurge and Diabolos proceeding from the one unborn Father. He can only promise to answer her at some future date on the basis which is his own guide, for "we also have received in regular succession the apostolic tradition. Our rule is to judge all the statements by the criterion of the teaching of Jesus."<sup>(2)</sup>

This letter is of course a Gnostic epistle, but it is the epistle of one who diligently studied his Bible, and pondered over it. His standard is a moral standard and on that standard the Old Testament legislation is to be accepted with great caution and reservation.

Ptolemaeus must not be subjected to modern standards. Gnostic though he was, he had a far deeper reverence for

(1) μέσος τούτων καθ' ἑσπῶς ἐνδίκως καὶ τὸ τῆς μεγίστης  
ὄνομα ἀποφεροίτο ἔν (Ἐπιστ. εἰς Ἡέραμ)

(2) ἔν εἰς διαδοχῆς καὶ ἡμεῖς παρειλήφθαμεν μετὰ καὶ τοῦ  
ἰκονοῖσαι πάντας τοὺς λόγους τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν διδασκαλίας  
(Ἐπιστ. εἰς Ἡέραμ)

and appreciation of the Bible than his Christian contemporaries. The apostolic Fathers, as De Faye points out, use the Scriptures uncritically, detaching texts and ignoring the context, supporting their analogies by one word, or <sup>by</sup> one text that is really irrelevant. Even to men like Justin Martyr the Old Testament is simply a repertory of texts, which can be applied to Christ. They had no conception of rudimentary stages of revelation. Christian exegesis lagged a century behind the Gnostics and quite probably it was the element of a critical study of the Bible so characteristic of men of the Valentinian and Marcion<sup>ite</sup> school that gave the Church a Clement and an Origen.

It must be noticeable that there is no Marcionite bitterness towards the God of the Jews which eventuated in Marcion's disciples ascribing the paternity of the Old Testament to the Devil. Ptolemaeus feels the difficulty but his way out is not the way of Marcion. He is far from making the Old Testament a Christian book, but he can recognise its strata of goodness. Some of it is perfect, some imperfect, some purely temporal and destined to pass away. But the remarkable thing is this - exceedingly so to a Valentinian in whose doctrinal

standards Christ was only an Aeon in the Pleroma, "unus inter pares"- Ptolemaeus gives Christ the authoritative place in religion. It is His word that is the last word in the matter. And not the Christ of apostolic doctrine, to which figure one would naturally expect the Gnostic's mind to turn, but Christ of the Synoptic Gospels.

The communication which Ptolemaeus promises to Flora at some future date, had, it is clear, to do with questions which arose in the letter. Initially, of course, it had a bearing on the Demiurge and the Diabolos which he had mentioned, and the respective places assigned to the Supreme Father, the Demiurge and the Devil. He has guessed her question and has thus expressed it: <sup>(1)</sup> how these natures, which belong to the domain of destruction, and of the intermediate place, which are not of the same essence as the unique principle of the All, who is immortal and good, could nevertheless be derived from it. This he promises to teach her. She seems

1) Ερ. αα Φλοκ. — θέλωσαν μαθεῖν πῶς ἀπὸ μικῆ ἀρχῆς τῶν ὅλων μετα' οὐσίας τε καὶ ὁμοιοποιουμένης ἡμῶν καὶ πεποιτιστευμένης ἴσθι ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ ἀφάρτου καὶ ἀγαθῆς συνέστασιν καὶ αἰῶνα αἰφύσει, ἢ τε ἴσθι φθορᾶς καὶ ἢ τῆς μεσότητος ἀνομοσύνας εἶτα καθελίωσι — μαθητῶν γὰρ θεοῦ διδόντος ἕξασ καὶ τῆν ταύτου ἀρχὴν τε καὶ γενεάν τε ἀξιουμένην τῆς ὑποστατικῆς παραδόσεως, ἢ ἐκ διδασκῆς καὶ ἡμῶν παρελήφμεν μετὰ τὰ τοῦ κληροῦσαι πάντα τοῦ λόγου τῆ ἰδῆ σωτήρος ἡμῶν διδασκαλίᾳ.

to be worthy of their teaching (αξιουμένῃ τῆς ἑπιστολικῆς παραδόσεως ἢ ἐκδιδασχῆ καὶ ἡμεῖς παρεπιλήφθαμεν). What was the teaching? Was it the esoteric instruction which he claimed, in the school, to have received from Jesus Himself, by a secret tradition? The quotation above seems to indicate that.

And if that be so, and both Buonaiuti and De Faye agree, the answer of Ptolemaeus is embodied in the document embedded in the first book of the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus.

No-one has ever impugned the good faith of Irenaeus, but the same cannot be said of his critical faculty, and the section therefore demands a careful scrutiny.

The scheme ascribed by Irenaeus to Ptolemaeus has already been set forth. In subjecting the scheme to a critical examination, it may be helpful to have it in tabulated form before our eyes, in its bare details, omitting as many of the subsidiary elements as possible. Irenaeus begins his notice with 'they say' (λέγουσιν).

The Bythus and Sige (Ennoia); Nous (Monogenes) and Aletheia etc. emanating in pairs, in ogdoad, decad and dodecad, forming the Pleroma.

The myth of Sophia and her downfall.



The appearance of Horos to establish the equilibrium in the Pleroma.

Sophia gives birth to the οὐσία ἄμορφος

Horos works to restore Sophia, and detaches the οὐσία ἄμορφος, the enthymesis.  
(1)

Sophia returns to the Pleroma.

The creation of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christ strengthens the Pleroma, and the Spirit instructs the Aeons to render thanks to the Father.

The Aeons give the collective thank-offering - Jesus, called Saviour, also Christ and Logos.

Enthymesis now called Achamoth.

She presses forward to know Christ.

Horos interposes a barrier.

Achamoth experiences a series of passions.

From these the elements arise, out of which the Cosmos will be formed.

Christ takes pity, and sends her 'Paraclete'.

Paraclete gives her μόρφωσις and partially restores her.

The formation of the Cosmos.

The rôle of the Demiurge.

The creation of Man.

(1) Introduced by the phrase - ἐνίοι δὲ αὐτῶν ---  
μυθολόγουσιν Adv. HÆR. I 2, 4.

- Three categories: pneumatics, psychics, hylics.

The doctrine of Redemption.

The formation and constitution of the body of Christ.

The pneumatic souls reunited with their spouses in the Pleroma.

The divine seed scattered in the world achieves its destiny.

Achamoth re-enters the Pleroma.

Celebrates her nuptials with the Saviour.

The psychics pass into the intermediate regions.

The Fire in the bowels of the Earth consumes the material universe.

As has already been said, it is impossible to conceive the possibility of this metaphysical structure, complicated, ill-balanced, inconsistent in parts, full of repetitions and redundancies, having emanated from a sane and ordered mind. Certainly not from a great Platonist like Valentinus. The student of the 'Timaeus' would not have signed his name to what Irenaeus sets forth; and almost certainly not Heracleon or Ptolemaeus whose fragments show them to be men with a singular self-command and an absence of all extravagance.

The first to have made a truly critical analysis

(1)  
of the great notice of the Adversus Haereses was Heinrici.  
He showed its composite character. To compose it, Iren-  
aeus had used sources of different origins. Hilgen-  
feld ignores the signification of the fragments as  
an instrument of criticism. Bousset however consid-  
ers part of the scheme, presented by Irenaeus, as coming  
from later hands.  
(2)

To begin with, the notice on examination reveals  
doublets, repetitions, and incoherences. The histories  
of Sophia, Enthymesis, and Ach<sup>a</sup>moth are repetitions - fun-  
damentally, of the same myth. Sophia by her error becomes  
a cause of perturbation in the Pleroma. She becomes  
the source of matter. To restore the equilibrium and  
preserve it Horos is sent forth. Enthymesis is also a  
cause of perturbation. From her comes the Evil. The  
Father sends an emanation to help her, that is Christ  
and the Holy Spirit. All the essential elements are  
similar. Consider now, the myth of Achamoth. She  
suffers  $\pi\alpha\theta\omicron\varsigma$  in the same way as Sophia, by a longing  
for a knowledge beyond her, and the Father sends from  
the Pleroma an emanation, the Paraclete, who re-establishes

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- (1) Heinrici, "Die Valentinische Gnosis" (1871).  
(2) Not only in his Hauptprobleme, but also in his art-  
icle "Valentinus" in Ency. Britt.

order and pacifies Achamoth.

Obviously the last two, Enthymesis and Achamoth, are variants of the Sophia myth.

It is not difficult to conceive how in the eventual and inevitable elaboration of the system, the original myth became three. De Faye's hypothesis of the addition of the two myths is very probable. It might have been felt that, in the primitive scheme, the passion of Sophia had not been completely eliminated. Hence the detachment of Enthymesis from her, and her creation as a separate entity. Achamoth, further, reflects the 'mystery' period of the System, when Hebrew or outlandish names were introduced. This led to the Hebrew equivalent of Sophia being made an entity, and consequently requiring an adjustment to the scheme. <sup>(1)</sup> But there is stronger evidence in the fact that there is no trace of these doublets of Sophia in the primitive system of Valentinus, as represented in I ii, or in Philosophumena vi 29, or in Epiphanius. Nor is there any trace in the fragments of Valentinus or those of Heracleon or Ptolemaeus. The inference is inevitable that these additional myths have been interpolated into the system at a time much

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(1) ADV. HAER. I. 4, 1. — καὶ οὐ καθάρειν ἢ μύτηρ αὐτῆς ἢ πρῶτη Σοφία καὶ Αἰών ἑτεροζώων ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν εἶχεν ἄλλα ἐναντιότητά. This is a very artificial reason for the creation of Achamoth, and very unconvincing.

later than that even of Ptolemaeus and Heracleon.

There are other obvious doublets in the notice of Irenaeus. Horos in the primitive system is duplicated in the figure of Christos, and also in that of Paraclete. Their function is the same. They restore order and re-establish equilibrium. They mark the "insurmountable limits."

Then there are repetitions, the necessity of which is not apparent. For example, in I 2, 4<sup>(1)</sup> the Valentines are represented as teaching that matter takes its origin from the passions of Sophia. The explanation of the origin of the Cosmos and matter is given again in I 4, 1, in substantially the same words. The same is once again mentioned in I 5, 4. This is clearly an evidence that several strands of teaching have been woven together. There is another inexplicable repetition. Such, for the reason just given, is the detailed explanation of the tripartite division of humanity and the origin of each of the three classes of men. The first occurs in I 5, 6 and in I 7, 5, the author resumes the same explanations, as if he had not done so already.

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(1) Αδρ. Ιουαν. Ι 2, 4 --- πρώτῃν ἀρχὴν ἐσχηκέμεν τὴν οὐσίαν εἰς τὴν ἁγροίαν καὶ τὴν ἀύπτης καὶ τοῦ φόβου καὶ τὴν ἐκπαύσεως.

The Christological doctrine of the Valentinians in the notice is obscure and singularly incoherent, just as one would expect from an editor who was piecing together excerpts from several documents, or notes, or recollected conversations, as we know Irenaeus did.

The person of the Saviour is composite. The notice explains the doctrine in I 6, 1. <sup>(1)</sup> Then there is reiterated to us the same explanation in I 7 2, though it is to be noted that the author introduces it with the words " εἰς δὲ οὗ λέγοντες ", possibly another source. Then, when a 'double' occurs, the effect is produced of incoherence. Indeed the attempt to collate all the passages about the Saviour, His origin, and His mission, would bring to light a figure so artificial that one may feel quite sure He could not have been present in the mind of the author of the notice. He simply collected the passages, <sup>(2)</sup> strung them together and left them there.

This account of Valentinus as it left the pen of

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- (1) Adv. Haer. I.6,1 ὡς γὰρ ἕμελλε σῶζειν τὰς ἀπαρχὰς τῶν εἰληφένων φάσκουσι ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς Ἀχαμῶθ τὸ πνευματικόν, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Δυμιουργοῦ ἐνδεδύσθαι τὸν μυκικὸν Χριστὸν, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς οἰκονομίας περὶ τὴν θείαν σῶμα μυκικὸν ἔχον οὐσίαν, κατ' εὐκτασμένον δὲ ἑαυτῶν τέκνῳ.
- (2) The following are the formulae which introduce the paragraphs:- λέγουσι, ἔνια μυθολόγουσιν, φησιν, ἢ ὑπ' αὐτῶν λεγόμενα, πραγματείας, καλοῦσι, δογματίζουσι and συναίωδι λέγουσι.

Irenaeus, is, as it stands, quite unreliable. But let us not impugn the good faith of the author. His 'Adversus Haereses' is not a theological treatise. It was written, as he says, in his preface, for a practical purpose, to warn his fellow Christians of the peril, to give them materials to be used in their own encounter with the heretics.

Amid this confusion can the truth about Valentinus be found? Assuredly the truth is there. It may be entangled, overlaid, even fused, and it is the task of scholarship to bring it to light. Otherwise we shall be in the darkness of mere conjecture and analogy. But fortunately we possess the priceless fragments. Of the man we long most to understand the material is desperately scanty, but of Heracleon and Ptolemaeus we have a clear and definite conception. They are our indispensable guides in the difficult task.

Alongside of the very involved, incongruous and disjointed version which Irenaeus gives of the Valentinian heresy, we are fortunately able to place the account of Hippolytus, who was a contemporary of Irenaeus about 180 A.D.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Hippolytus in Philosophumena, Bk.vi.

He placed on the summit of the system of Valentinus what he called the Pleroma. The latter is formed of pairs or syzygies of entities called Aeons. They are hypostasized Abstractions. They are set forth in three series of eight, of twelve and of ten (ogdoad, dodecad, decad). These all are emanated from the primal pair. The thirtieth Aeon, called Sophia, is seized with the desire to know the Supreme Principle, the Father. This desire almost destroyed Sophia, but Horos or Limit intervened and re-established the equilibrium which Sophia had broken. Sophia experienced four successive passions, ignorance, terror, pain, despair. These detached themselves and became hypostases, and were transformed into the four elements. Demiurge, the Creator, makes the Cosmos and the Man. Humanity is divided into three categories, the pneumatics, the psychics, the hylics. The Christ descends from the higher regions, becomes Jesus, and effects the Salvation of those men who are capable of being saved.

It will not be unwise to presume that the balder and simpler notice is the nearer to the truth. One may consequently hold that all those elements in Irenaeus which do not fall in with Hippolytus are extraneous



matter, foreign to the original Valentinus.

It is significant that what will be rejected will be exactly those doublets of myths and personages, and those unnecessary repetitions. Hippolytus has none of them.

The myth of Sophia remains. Can we credit that to Valentinus? The fragments of Valentinus reveal a man who was a theologian, a philosopher and a poet, and in addition a man of vivid imagination. He was a Platonist, but not as a dialectician, rather as a sharer in the master's romantic flights. The myth of the 'Inn' enables us to visualise the Creator of the myth of Sophia. We may be sure that the myth of Sophia is original, and that the commonplace myths of the Enthymesis and Achamoth would have been for Valentinus *infra dignitatem*. The central persona dramatis is Sophia. In poetical language Valentinus pictures the effort of Intelligence to prevent all vain efforts to know the Father. All the Aeons restrained their desires except the thirtieth Aeon, Sophia. If, in the writer's view, the Pleroma is a conception inspired by Pauline and Johannine texts, may Sophia not be a myth based on the story of the Fall in Genesis? De Faye thinks that

Valentinus hellenised the old Hebrew story. "and out of a legend naive and quite poetic, he created a philosophical symbol." But Valentinus gave it a distinctly Gnostic turn. Her quest was not to know good and evil, a moral curiosity, but a wholly intellectual curiosity. Sophia desires to contemplate, to be acquainted with the Father, to discover the secret of His nature.

Perhaps belonging to the same romantic genius is the conception of the Pleroma. It remained sacrosanct for a century when blundering followers had worked their will on his system. It is almost certainly his. De Faye describes it as "the first exteriorisation of the Supreme God<sup>(1)</sup>." This divinity passes down, degree by degree, till it impinges on the world. Basilides, Philo, Plutarch, the whole Alexandrian world, postulated and believed in 'intermediate beings' between the Supreme Being and the created Universe.

The idea was to explain the connection of God with the world. That God should Himself go forth, or send forth part of Himself was inconceivable. But this exteriorisation does not compromise God. He is exteriorised by emanations, intelligence ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ), soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ ).

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(1) De Faye, Les Gnostiques, p.120: "Le pleroma est l'exteriorisation première de Dieu dans le monde invisible."

This is not God going forth, but His energy, His force, His virtue going forth. He sends forth not substance but radiation. This conception was thus being variously worked out. <sup>(1)</sup> According to A.E. Brooke, the Valentinians generally deduced from the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel the origin of the Pleroma and its inhabitants. The Pauline 'Pleroma' was associated, and, with a free imagination, Valentinus constructed his amalgam of Christian <sup>(2)</sup> doctrine and Hellenistic speculation on His nature.

The figure of "Horos" or the "Limit" is conspicuously Valentinus' own creation. Professor Bousset, whose explanation of Sophia as being a reflection of the Oriental myth of the Primal Man sunk in the material world will carry great weight, seems to be at a loss to explain Horos. The hypothesis of M. De Faye is that the conception is essentially Greek. The general idea of the Valentinian Horos is that he symbolises the insuperable limit for created beings and subordinates. Sophia in her frenzy almost loses all, and is on the verge of being absorbed "in the infinite substance." At that moment Horos inter-

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(1) Cf. Fragments of Heracleon (A.E. Brooke) p. 50, with a reference to Excerpt. Theodoto, 6.

(2) Adv. Haer I 2, 2: τὸ δὲ πῦρον --- εἶναι γέγονεν τοῦ πατρὸς, ὅθεν εἰς τὸ μέγεθος αὐτοῦ καταλαμβάνει.

venes. He calms her, delivers her from her passion, and re-establishes the peace of the Pleroma. The very idea that the Supreme Order is attained by the maintenance of beings within the limit of their nature is profoundly Greek.

The companion name of Horos,—Stauros, Bousset traces to a Platonic conception. Plato had stated that the world soul revealed itself in the form of the letter Ch (X). That may be so, but De Faye is probably right in maintaining that Stauros is one of the additions made by the followers of Valentinus in the third generation. (1) Indeed Bousset holds himself open to this explanation. Naturally, then, the figure of Horos Stauros was often, in later days, assimilated to that of the Christian Redeemer.

Order having been restored to the distracted Aeon Sophia, and her return to the Pleroma effected, the drama proceeds to the creation of the Cosmos. Sophia is restored but the fruit of her distress remains. It is evil. It cannot remain in the invisible world. It is expelled and departs to make its appearance in the visible Cosmos.

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(1) Bousset, Enc. Britt., Valentinus v 27/554.

This is a strange and original thought. All the documents ascribe it to Valentinus. Such a conception as that the material world issued from the passion of Sophia is not derogatory to a great thinker. Matter to his generation was an evil thing. Why should its origin not be in a spirit that yielded to evil? It saved him from dualism.

(1)

"Ex passionibus materias edidisse" says Hippolytus. Irenaeus expresses it, "Hence they say that the substance of matter had its first source from ignorance, suffering, fear and consternation."<sup>(2)</sup> There is no doubt that the creation of the Cosmos from the fall of Sophia is the doctrine of the Master Himself. His doctrine is independent of Judaism. The world of the Book of Genesis was created before sin entered.

To Valentinus, matter, an intrinsically evil thing, came from the sin of Sophia. But apart from the moral question, it is not improbable that we have a characteristically Valentinian poetic myth of the creation.

(1) Pseudo.Tert., ch iv.

(2) Adv. HAER. I 2, 4. - Ἐντεῦθεν λέγουσι πρῶτον ἀρχὴν εὐχρητέου τῆν οὐσίαν εἶναι τῆς ἀγνοίας καὶ τῆς λύπης καὶ τοῦ φόβου καὶ τῆς ἐκπληξείας.

This report is repeated again a propos of Achamoth, I 4, 2.

In the notice I. 4. 2. Irenaeus, a propos of Achamoth, says, "for, on the one hand, from this her conversion, the whole soul of the world and of the Demiurge took its origin: on the other, from her tears was produced all liquid substance: from her laughter all that is luminous: from her grief and perplexity, the corporeal elements of the world. Harvey asserts that here Valentinus borrowed a poetical myth from Pythagoras, as instanced by Plutarch <sup>(1)</sup> where he speaks of the seas as "the tears of Kronos".

Mingled with the poetical myth there is the Platonic touch in the supra-sensible Fall of the Aeon Sophia represented by the fall materializing in the lower world. With Valentinus however it never got beyond the myth.

The figure of the Demiurge goes back to Valentinus himself. Both Ptolemaeus and Heracleon have it; but it is not the Marcionite Demiurge. He is not the God of the Old Testament. But there is no dualism in the Demiurge of Valentinus. He is not the opponent of the

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(1) W. W. HARVEY, "Sancti IRENAEI" Introd. c. xxx.

PLUTARCH de Is. et Os. c. 32. Δόξει δὲ καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν λεγόμενον, ὡς ἡ θαλάττη Κρόνου δακρυὸν ἔστιν κ. τ. λ.

CLEM. ALEX. Strom. v. 8 - τοιαῦτα καὶ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι γνίσκοντο. Περσεφόνης μὲν κυκὰς, τοὺς πλανήτας, Κρόνου δὲ δάκρυον τὴν θάλασσαν ἀλλυγοῦντες.

the Father in the Pleroma. He is a characterless creation. He is ignorant of all that is done or prepared beyond him. Briefly, Irenaeus tells us that He formed the Cosmos and created the man. He gave men their bodies and their souls. Unknown to him, the divine seed is sown in man. Certain men receive the divine germ which makes them "spiritual" men. Finally there issue from the hands of the Demiurge the three classes of men.

Now with that conception the fragments agree. Heraclion says "he (the ruler) recognised himself inferior to the Messenger of the Father (Christ), avowed himself impotent to heal his son (the 'psychic'), implored the aid of the Saviour, and when the 'psychic' was cured, watched over him. <sup>(1)</sup> Again, Heraclion compares him to the centurion who says to the Saviour "I have soldiers and servants under my authority." He will administer the Cosmos to the appointed time and notably will care for the Church.

Ptolemaeus in the "Letter to Flora" speaks of the

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(1) Τελείσειν δὲ αὐτὸν τὴν κατὰ τὸν κόσμον οἰκονομίαν  
 μέχρι τοῦ θείου καιροῦ, μάλιστα δὲ διὰ τὴν τῆς  
 ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἐπιμελείαν H. E. Brooke, Frag. Heracl.

Demiurge as between the perfect God and the Diabolos. He is the maker of the whole world and all things in it, and precisely attributes to him the divine elements of the Mosaic law.

It may be concluded that the Demiurge in Valentinianism belongs to Valentinus. He has not been vulgarised by the two disciples, but rather dignified. The extravagantly impossible features in Irenaeus are the work of the third generation. The figure of the Demiurge, however, is not original. Valentinus borrowed it from the 'Timaeus' of Plato.

With regard to the soteriology of the Valentinians, to humanity, the Saviour, and the means of salvation, there is much obscurity, but it is obvious that a great deal of the current Valentinianism was foreign to the master and his disciples. The fragments must be our interpreter. Reverting to the document from Hippolytus, all that is said is that humanity is divided into three categories, the pneumatics, psychics and hylics. That this is from Valentinus is abundantly clear from Heraclion.

Corresponding to the Logos, Demiurge and Diabolos, his classes are pneumatics, psychics, choics (or sarcics).



He only broadens out the primitive conception of their relative capacities for salvation.

The Soter is a much more difficult problem. Hippolytus says "The Christ descends from the higher regions, becomes Jesus, and effects the salvation of those capable of being saved." What are we to say of the four elements in the nature of the Saviour, of the function and special activity of the Saviour in the transcendent world, the re-establishment of the equilibrium in the Pleroma, the Ano-Soter descending on the Messiah at His baptism, the hailing of the psychical Messiah on the Cross, the Ano-Soter's instruction of the pneumatics in the Gnosis, the marriage of the Soter to Achamoth?

There is no trace of that embellishment in Heraclion or Ptolemaeus. The Saviour of Heraclion is Scriptural, but docetic.<sup>(1.)</sup> The Valentinian fragment, from the third Stromata already referred to, points in the same direction.

It may be said, in summing up, that, if we except as purely Valentinian (including the enrichments of

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(1.) The expressions used with regard to the Passion are surprisingly literal for a Gnostic (A.E. Brooke) p.46.

Heracleon and Ptolemaeus) the following features - the myths of the Pleroma, of Sophia, of Horos, of the formation of the Cosmos, of the threefold classification, and a simple 'Gnosis', salvation through a docetic Christ, then all the rest is of a much later period. It is not in these <sup>former</sup> sections that doublets and repetitions, and purile additions occur. Creations of the later age are the myths of Enthymesis, Achamoth, the Cosmocrator, epithets of Horos: Stauros, Lutrotes, Orthetes, Metagogeus, appellations of Sophia; Meter, Achamoth, Ogdoada; Demiurge as Metropater, Apator, the Supreme God designated as Pater arrhetos, Bythos; Hebrew and Biblical forms, Iao, Cain, Abel, Seth.

The account of Valentinianism in Irenaeus is invaluable but it is a document bearing the alluvium of three generations of Gnostics, sixty years of history. It is Valentinianism at the moment of popularity, but of intellectual and spiritual decadence.

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VIII.

Marcion

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MARCION.

The inclusion of Marcion among the great Gnostics leaders is a duty incumbent on all who accept Irenaeus as authoritative. He deals with Marcion in his most rigorous manner, and though he discusses him at no such length as he does others, yet his is a criticism that is well informed, and comparatively extensive, taking into account the obvious concentration of his matter. It need be no matter of surprise if he attributes to Marcion tenets that were held by the Marcionite communities of a later day. He did so with regard to Valentinus. De Faye in his strictures of Bousset, Hilgenfeld, and the other Oriental-source supporters, for their neglect, as he alleges, of the original and fragmentary writings of the heretics, has possibly himself erred in depreciating the testimony of their ecclesiastical opponents. Even in those days, there must have been a critical faculty; and unmeasured condemnation of the heretics would have recoiled on Irenaeus. We may except the criticism of Tertullian, who was less of an exegete than a forensic genius, bent on the success of his plea, but Irenaeus would surely endeavour

to be truthful, according to his lights. The notices which Irenaeus gives of Marcion, in his great work, are indeed many. He devotes to him a section in the first book, chapter xxvii. There are about thirty references to him, his school, and his doctrine.

The opinion of scholars is divided on the question, as to whether Marcion was a Gnostic. The bulk of German scholarship has considered him as such, with the exception of Harnack. De Faye is in agreement with Harnack. So also Burkitt and Niven. But while it will be found that Bousset in his great work is uncompromising in his inclusion of Marcion among the Gnostics, De Faye thinks that he is partly Christian and partly Gnostic. Unlike Valentinus, who began his career as a follower of Platonic philosophy, and, on that, constructed a cosmical hypothesis with Christian features, Marcion began as a Christian and by the blind logic of his arbitrary exegesis, was led into views which the Gnostics openly professed. They were both largely the creatures of environment.

Not much is known of Marcion, but what is known

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(1) "Church and Gnosis," (Burkitt), p.25 et passim.  
 "CONFLICTS OF THE EARLY CHURCH" (NIVEN ), p. 172.

savours of the romantic. He belonged to Pontus on the Euxine, and was a wealthy shipowner. With probably no literary or scholastic training, he was a man of independent views. Clear-eyed and critical, he revolted from the puerile allegorising of the Bible, so familiar in Christian teaching. He took the Old Testament at its face-value, and not as a compendium of texts, and a storehouse of narratives, which had to be manipulated by every ingenious device, so as to support the current theology.

Or it may have been that, according to Tertullian, it was the study of St. Paul's Epistle to <sup>the</sup> Galatians (2) that led him to realise the opposition between the Law and the Gospel, between Judaism and Christianity; that by the opposition which existed between the Law and the Gospel, Marcion concluded the difference between the authors of the one and of the other, the difference between the God of the Old Testament, and the Father whom Jesus Christ invoked.

From these convictions all his theses issued. The God of the Old Testament, not being the God revealed

(1) Cf. Tertullian, Adv. Marc. II 19, 21, 22 etc: also Origen Matt. I xv 3. Marcion objected to the transformation of the Gospel into Hellenic Philosophy (Harn. His. Dog.

(2) Tertull. Adv. Marc. I, 2, 19: "Separatio legis et evangelii proprium ejus principale opus est Marcionis." I 267.)

by Jesus Christ, must be inferior to Him. The Old Testament was full of evidences of that inferiority. If this should be a novel doctrine to Christians, the reason was that they had not been emancipated from Judaism, a not surprising thing, seeing that the New Testament was full of what he termed 'Jewish interpolations'. The man trained in the schools, with academic mind, would have paused long, before going further, but this business man, of ample means, free from all complicating trammels, in his straightforward commercial fashion, proceeded to 'cut out all the losses', to expurge from the Christian writings all these Jewish elements, and restore a true text.

On this matter, however, it is interesting to note that De Faye says: <sup>(1)</sup> "Marcion had no feeling towards the Jehovah of the Old Testament, but he had for the Creator. Without doubt the passage from the one to the other was capable of being suggested by the Bible itself. Is not the God of Israel, also the Creator of the heaven and the earth? However, according to all we know, Marcion had a way of naming the Creator, of criticising Him, and Creation, which does not seem to have come to

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(1) Gnostiques Etc. (De Faye) p.159. "Le trait que nous relevons ne s'explique guère que par des influences étrangères."  
 " Marcion avait une façon de nommer le créateur, de le critiquer lui et la création, qui ne semble pas lui être venue de la simple étude biblique "

him from simply Bible study. The trait which we refer to is not easily explained unless by foreign influences."

The foreign influence was the idea of a dualism within the conception of God. Plato, whose anima naturaliter Christiana, was accepted by all, Christians and pagans alike, had admitted this in his 'Timaeus'. He had conceived a supreme God and subordinate "θεοί". This was ~~perhaps~~ not in Christian teaching, but it was in the air'. The Christian teaching of God and the Devil came very near <sup>(1.)</sup> it. Marcion was not likely to have had any scruples about asserting that beside the Supreme God there was another subservient to Him. Both Basilides and Valentinus would have commended his words. And it is therefore here that we can see the Rubicon he crossed into Gnostic territory. The ecclesiastical tradition of his connection with Cerdo in Rome is then <sup>(2.)</sup> quite explicable.

We know, for certain, that Marcion came from Pontus, in the course of his travels, to Rome, after the death of Hyginus, bishop of Rome (c.139 A.D.). He made a

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(1) so far as *equality* is concerned.

(2) Cerdo... was ὁ τούτου διδάσκαλος (Hippol. x.19).



handsome donation of money to the Church there. It is <sup>more than</sup> probable that he had formulated his system of religion before, for he tried in Rome to gain acceptance of his views among the clergy, and the Church. It is said he had done the same thing in Asia Minor. His criticism of the Church, the Bible, and the Faith aroused general opposition. He withdrew from the great Church. Evidently he had, ~~up~~ till then, remained in the Church, with all his heretical views, unprosecuted. But the refusal of the Roman Christian community to receive his doctrines led to the breaking off of all Church connections. He proceeded in 144 A.D. to establish a Church of his own. This new Marcionite Church progressed in the city, with offshoots in various parts of the Empire. Marcion made Rome his headquarters, and became the head and controller of the whole society. In Rome he gravitated to the Syrian Gnostic Cerdo, of whom very little is known, and yet the association of Cerdo with Marcion was of cardinal importance. It was at least a meeting of two Orientals, one from Pontus, the other from Syria. Furthermore, Marcion may have heard of Cerdo while he lived on the shores of the ~~Euxine~~. Long before the appearance of

Christianity, Samaria was the centre of a mixing of national religions, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Jewish. Jewish particularism had broken up, and the authority of the Old Testament was undermined, doubts arising as to the identity of the Supreme God with the national God. Men of the type of Simon Magus, (against regarding whom as a fiction Harnack warns us,) appeared as Messiahs, or bearers of the Godhead, proclaiming a doctrine in which the Jewish faith was strangely and grotesquely mixed with Babylonian myths, together with Greek additions. These men professed a universal religion of the Supreme God. Simon, according to Justin, Apol. I 26, came to Rome, in the time of Claudius, and, in the Oriental stream that followed, Cerdo appeared.

Cerdo contrasted the good God and the God of the Old Testament as two primary beings, identifying the latter with the creator of the world. <sup>(1)</sup> "Consequently he completely rejected the Old Testament and everything Cosmic, and taught that the Good God was first revealed in Christ. He preached a strict docetism. Christ had no body, was not born, and suffered in an unreal body. All else that the Fathers report of Cerdo's

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(1) Cf. Harnack, Hist. Dog., I, 248.

teaching has probably been transferred to him from Marcion, and is therefore very doubtful." It is but fair to say, on the other hand, that De Faye classes Cerdo with the group, <sup>(1)</sup> the Gnostics of legend, concerning whom nothing save the name, and the place of origin, is known.

But without pinning Cerdo down to any specific doctrine we may be reasonably assured that he belonged to a well known Oriental group of teachers, vigorous ascetics, experts in magic and healing, in necromancy, in strange manners of worship, in efficacious sacraments.

Cerdo brought ~~Marcion~~ into some such milieu. Men of the type of Valentinus, Basilides, Heracleon, Ptolemaeus were not Orientals, but Greeks of Alexandria, trained in the wisdom of the schools, especially the schools that followed Plato.

If Marcion is to be compared with a Valentinus, then certainly he is no Gnostic. But then, there was more than one Gnostic type. We may accept Harnack's sentence as true, "In Rome he became acquainted with the Syrian Gnostic Cerdo, whose speculations influenced the

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(1) De Faye, Gnostiques etc. p.429 ff.

development of the Marcionite theology."

But with Marcion the cultural and speculative side was subordinated to the moral and spiritual. Marcion was a student of the Bible, which he read as one interested in morals. His attitude to the Christian religion was not external and intellectual, but personal and moral. Faith entered into his theology more than 'gnosis'. Paul's experience of a God and a Christ comprehended by faith, was his experience. He had no gnosis to teach. Salvation did not come by gnosis, but by faith. In that respect he was no Gnostic. That however is to judge him too narrowly, for gnosis meant much more than mere 'knowing'.

Marcion was a founder of churches, not of schools. Although expelled from the Church, he retained his claim to be a Christian and to preach a pure doctrine. Justin tells us about 150 A.D., that Marcion's preaching had spread throughout the human race, and by the year 155 the Marcionites were already numerous in Rome, according to Irenaeus. The latter informs us that he conceived the idea of winning the whole of Christen-

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(1) Adversus Haereses, I 24 l. *Et Cerdon --- docuit eum qui --- annuntiat*  
 (2) *κατὰ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων* — Justin Apol. I 26. *Et Cerdon --- docuit eum qui --- annuntiat*  
*l. sit Deus, non esse Patrem Domini nostri //*

dom and to the end of his life made efforts to unite with the Church. The conversation of Apelles his disciple and Rhodon shows that the effort had continued after his death. In Rome the Syrian Cerdo, Harnack reiterates, <sup>(1)</sup> had a great influence upon him, so that we can even yet perceive and clearly distinguish the Gnostic element in the form of the Marcionite doctrine transmitted to us.

The investigation into the character of the teaching of Marcion must begin by the recognition of the fact, attested by Tertullian, Epiphanius, and one of his own letters, that he belonged to the main body of the Church.

Marcion's leading characteristics were; first his interest in the fact of salvation; secondly, he was convinced that men are saved by <sup>(2.)</sup> faith, and not by Gnosis; thirdly, in his exegesis he eschewed all Oriental methods, and those of Greek philosophy. In this connection, it is to be noted that Marcion rejected all allegories, not in a universal sense, but in his avoid-

(1) Cf. History of Dogma, I 267 n. 1.

(2) Sufficit unicum opus deo nostro, quod hominem liberavit summa et praecipua bonitate sua (Tertull. ad. Marc. I. 17)

ance of all adaptations of the figures and nomenclature of Greek philosophy, hypostases, etc; fourthly, he recognised no distinctions among his hearers: he had no religion for the adepts, in contradistinction to a religion for the vulgar crowd. He had nothing to do with mystery cults, and rites of initiation. In large tracts of his work, he was a true Christian modernist, a higher critic, according to his lights. His desire, in spite of all delays, and hindrances, and misunderstandings, to return to fellowship with the great Church, dissuaded him from following the path of the sectarian. It was only when all his efforts to purify the Church failed, only when he saw that the door of reconciliation was closed, that he founded churches of his own. There are numerous references to the fact that his church was marked by brotherly equality, absence of all ceremonies and evangelical discipline. It is to be regretted that the great church responded with such malignant hatred.

Marcion was a Paulinist, and in that connection it must be remembered that the mentality of St. Paul was Hellenistic and not Jewish. Paul had to mediate

a theology cradled in the community of Jesus, a son of the Jewish nation, but "to the Greeks" he was a Greek.

Paul had a living, fruitful mind. He knew the men of his age, he was familiar with the new categories of thought. He could be a philosopher and a dialectician, yet he was free from all mystification. He had no subtleties and indulged in no hypostatization. He got to the root of things, and even in his highest flights he never forgot that he was speaking to ordinary men who loved to have a religion that was real and practical. He was true to the Greek "μυθεῖν ἔχων".

Marcion was drawn to Paul. He was interested in the revelation of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ, the clean cut distinction between the Law and the Gospel,<sup>(1)</sup> Divine wrath and Divine love, works and faith, flesh and spirit, sin and righteousness. He had none of Paul's sanity, and carried Paul's antitheses to the extreme. He worked through the Old Testament and concluded that the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of the world, was different from the God Whom Paul saw in Christ, and whom he saw in the Gospel. Accordingly

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(1.) *Separatio legis et Evangelii proprium et principale Opus Marcionis* (Tertull. ad. Marc. I 2, 19).

he rejected the Old Testament as the contradiction of all that was truly Christian. This "root-and-branch" man, this man with the fixed idea, cuts his way relentlessly through what seems to him a bewildering and corrupting jungle, and evolves his own creed which was that God was revealed in Christ, and that St. Paul was His prophet, and that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the Gospels.

Marcion had the disadvantage of the lack of the scholar's temperament. He had the ordinary faculty of recognising inconsistencies, but he had no appreciation of philosophy, no mental balance, no sense of proportion, no faculty of accommodation when that was natural and legitimate. He happened to be right, in the main, in his rejection of the allegorical method, but the allegorical method is often the legitimate and only method. Paul himself interpreted sometimes allegorically, and some of Christ's own teaching pointed in the same direction. But Marcion had an impatient mind that knew nothing of festina lente.

Having placed the Old Testament on the Index Expurgatorius, he proceeded in his ruthless surgery



with the New Testament. It may however be set down in his favour that he was the earliest critical student of the New Testament. He refused to admit the genuineness of the Pastorals, and held that the Epistle to the Ephesians was really addressed to the Laodiceans.

The Gospels did not escape the knife. All that was Jewish, that is to say, involved in the realm of his ostracised God of the Old Testament, was excluded. Indeed, it was only St. Luke that he would admit to his Canon, as it was least attached to Judaism. But Luke, he purged of the old leaven. Paul's letters were also deprived of all Judaistic colour, and of all the interpolations of Judaistic Christians.

Irenaeus is ~~probably~~ quite within the truth, when  
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 he writes "and moreover, mutilating the Gospel according to St. Luke, and taking away all that is written of our Lord's birth, and much also from the doctrine of our Lord's discourses, wherein it is most plainly written how our Lord confessed the Maker of this world to be His Father: he persuaded his disciples that he himself was more trustworthy than the Apostles who

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(1) Adversus Haereses, I, 27, 2.

delivered the Gospel: while he was putting into their hands not the Gospel but a small portion of it. And in like wise, the Epistles of the Apostle Paul too were mutilated by him, by taking out whatever is plainly spoken by the Apostle of the God Who made the world, how that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and whatsoever out of the prophetic writings, the Apostle hath quoted in his teaching, as predicative of the coming of the Lord."

The truth of all this is abundantly proved by the many references from Hippolytus, Tertullian, Athanasius, etc. Indeed, in regard to the Gospel of St. Luke which Marcion would alone admit of the Gospels, and from which he made excisions, Tertullian follows Marcion into his own ground, exposing his perfectly arbitrary treatment.

Marcion believed he was expressing the views of St. Paul, in his hypothesis of two Gods, the *Σίμυος* God of the Law, the God of the Jews, the world Creator, and the Good God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Harnack  
(1)  
remarks that in the second century "only one Christian" -

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(1) Brit. Encycl. art. 'Marcion', p.692.

Marcion - took the trouble to "understand Paul"; but, it must be added, that he "misunderstood him." He rendered inestimable service in bringing back the Pauline basis of Christianity, which is faith. The whole Alexandrine world had, pagan and Christian alike, made Gnosis the means of redemption. Even the Platonists had forgotten that their master's doctrine of knowledge, meant the dedication of the life to the Good, as well as to the search for the Good.

Furthermore, the Christian world had not yet faced the question of the lower strata of morality in the Old Testament, and the anthropological conceptions of God there, often crude, familiar and unedifying. The Church had no answer to Marcion's real problem. It was when Marcion's anathema of the God of that imperfect morality involved the Creator of the world in these grave allegations, that the Christian Church parted company. The implication was plain. If the Almighty Creator and the God of Redemption were no longer one and the same, there was then no basis for the Gospel and the position of Christ was rendered impossible. There were only two exits ~~for~~ Marcion from the impasse.

One was bolted and barred - the Church. The other was the way of Gnosticism.

It is only on a Gnostic framework that the doctrine of Marcion could hold together. He represents a human paradox. He had no real Gnostic leanings but the views he came to adopt could be accommodated nowhere else than in a Gnostic community.

And perhaps at this point, he turned to Cerdo. Gnosticism was a refuge, because it could harbour the conception of ~~two~~ Gods, one antagonistic to the other, one good, the other evil, or one subordinate to the other, the Persian and the Greek conception respectively. But the God of the Jews, originally "Δίκαιος", acquired epithets of an increasingly hostile and degrading character. He became the Demiurge; the "Good" God, the God of the Gospel, became an abstraction. Jesus Whose life was such a reality, human and divine, to Paul, also became an inscrutable celestial Being, Who came to earth clothed in a visionary body, not to save men from sin, but from the cruel Demiurge who kept  
(1)  
mankind crushed under a curse. Such, even if no further

(1) θεὸς κατηραμένος τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

investigation should follow, is Gnosticism. Bousset frankly pronounces him a Gnostic. Harnack has to admit that "his Christian system - if we may use the expression - resembles the so-called Gnostic systems."

(1.) Marcion had no specific cosmological system. The Alexandrine conception of a God Who could have no contact with matter, Who was an absolute in knowledge, righteousness, holiness and purity, one Who was beyond time, inapproachable, unknowable, never troubled the brain of Marcion. He felt no need of intermediate beings. There is no mention of angels, and powers, and principalities, no doctrine of a fallen Aeon. Marcion's book of philosophy was his Bible. There were only three Supreme Personages, there;—God, the God of the Jews, and Christ; but his God, the God of Christ, took on Gnostic or Alexandrine characteristics, Christ the semblance of a Gnostic redeemer, and the God of the Jews was practically the Gnostic Demiurge.

At the head of his system - though it can hardly be called a system - is the "higher" God. This Supreme Deity does not originate creation, nor has He anything to do with its inception. At a certain juncture He

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(1.) The doctrine of Marcion and his church can be gathered with tolerable accuracy from Tertullian (adv. Marc. I-V), Hippolytus and Epiphanius. His writings like those of the other Gnostics perished in the flames reserved for heretical writings. For what remains - and it is considerable - we are indebted to his antagonists.

simply appears. Creation begins by the emergence of the just and wrathful God. Whether matter (ἕλγ) was created, or was pre-existent, Marcion nowhere says. He was not interested in cosmology. His interest was in men and women and their relation to God. Consequently creation begins with the human race.

Adopting the Pauline three-fold human nature, Marcion declared that man, soul, spirit and body was created by the just and wrathful God. He was created from matter, and subjected to a strict law, the law of Moses. This God was revealed by Moses. He is the Creator of the visible Cosmos, "a cruel and warlike Judge", compared to Marcion's own Christian God Who was "mild, pacific, uniquely Good." This law, impossible to keep, became a curse - thus following the Pauline current - both in this life and in that which was to come.

It is at this moment that Marcion's Good God and

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- (1) *Hippol. Philoſoph. x. 19* — οἱ δὲ πάντα (κ.τ. πάντες) τὸν μὲν ἄγαθὸν οὐδὲν ἕλγως (κ.τ. ὄλως) πεποιυκέναι, τὸν δὲ δίκαιον, ὃ μὲν τὸν πογγρόν, ὃ δὲ μόνον δίκαιον, ὀνομάζουσι, πεποιυκέναι δὲ τὰ πάντα φάσκουσιν εἰς τῆς ὀποκειμένης ἕλγως --- οὐ κλάω, ἀλλ' ἔλοῦγας.
- (2) *Vide supra.*
- (3) *Alioquin certi Marcionem deos constituisse, alterum Iudaeum ferum, bellicum, alterum placidum et tamen modo bonum atque optimum (Tert. ad. Marc. I. 6)*

Christ enter the scene.

This higher God, unknown ( $\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  - Irenaeus), and concealed even from the God of Israel, or the Demiurge (a striking resemblance to Valentinianism) had compassion on the wretched race of men. He sent His Son down to earth to redeem men from the anger of the Demiurge. Christ visited the earth in docetic guise, like a man thirty years old. He appeared in the fifteenth year of Tiberius and preached in the Synagogue of Capernaum. He was not recognised for what He was, but was believed, to be the Messiah by His disciples, who was to come and deliver their land from the enemy and restore the Kingdom of David.

Then comes a strange feature. The Demiurge knew not who Christ was, and in hostile fashion caused Him to be crucified, though He had fulfilled his law. By that act, he condemned himself, for the risen Christ appeared before him in His glory and charged him with having acted contrary to his own law.

The Demiurge had now to deliver up to the Good God the souls of those who were to be redeemed, purchased, as it were, from him by the death of Christ. Christ then departed to the underworld to deliver the

spirits of the departed. To gain the living souls, Christ raised up Paul as His Apostle, for he alone knew the Gospel and could distinguish between the just and the good God.

This brief sketch has in it some interesting features. Its Pauline exordium is apparent. Paul's antipathy to the Law receives full recognition. There is, further, a considerable and gratuitous liberty taken with the Gospel and Apostolic accounts of Christ. Marcion's theory of the atonement is, strangely enough, not Pauline, but quite original and, if we may say so, characteristic of the Hellenistic man of affairs. Finally one cannot but observe the Gnostic touches and approximations; the Demiurge's ignorance of the existence of the higher God, the docetic picture of the advent of Christ. Indeed the higher God is reminiscent of the God, *Ἰσραήλ*, *αἰδώς* καὶ *ἀγγέλων*, of the Valentinians.

It will be recognised that the leading figure in the teaching of Marcion is the Demiurge. This figure is the starting-point. In the Gnostic systems the Demiurge is a secondary Being; if anything, as much an abstraction as the Primal Father or the Soter



or Sophia. The Demiurge of Marcion is no hypostasis. He is rooted in history. De Faye rightly draws attention to the real appeal which the Demiurge made to cultured Christians. It was bound to strike their imaginations. The Basilidian or Valentinian Demiurge was almost a supernumerary in the cosmic drama. He was only a philosophical apology for God. He was a mere visionary automaton, put there to relieve the Supreme Being from the indignity of condescending to the material. He carried all the odium of the problem of evil, although men of critical discernment must have realised that the responsibility went back to the Supreme Being - "qui facit per alium, facit per se" - and so it was unconvincing.

But the Demiurge of Marcion is confronted with His work. His record is in the sacred book. He thinks and speaks and acts there. He has to justify Himself before the bar of history. Every man must realise that Marcion has raised a real problem, whose answer is not fully given yet. Men would trust Marcion for his fearlessness, his frankness, his passion for truth. Marcion's answer was not final, but had the Fathers anything better to say? Was the truth cham-

pioned by elaborate allegorising? Marcion rejected this. And failing a better solution he abandoned the God of the Old Testament altogether. He was no friend, but the enemy of Man. This latter was the inevitable result of opposing the 'just' God to the 'good' God. Marcion had never got so far as to identify the 'just' God with the principle of evil, but it was not surprising to find the disciples of Marcion imputing that to Him, and his opponents directly charging him with that blasphemy. Ptolemaeus in the beginning of his letter of Flora does not stigmatise the people who made the Devil the author of the Law, and doubtless these people were the extreme Marcionites. But Marcion never identified the Creator with the Devil. He expressly testifies to the very  
 (1)  
 opposite.

Marcion's 'good' God was not the creation of another God to fill the place of the God Who bungled the Universe, and to interpose a potency which would overcome the wrong done, and the disaster which was its sequel. Marcion's good God was the God of a different revelation, the revelation of Christ, the picture in the Gospels, the God Whom Paul believed.

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§1) Tertullian, Adversus Marc. V.12. *Si transfiguratus Satanās in angelum lucis, non potest hoc dicitur in Creatorem.*  
 (2) *ibid.*, Ad.Marc. xviii, xix.  
*Immo inquit Marcionitii, deus noster etis non ab initio, etis non per conditionem, sed per semetipsum revelatus in Christo bene (2d Marc. xviii & xix)*

The Supreme God naturally has always existed. Still He had not been revealed till the coming of Christ. "Our God", says the Marcionites, "has not been revealed from the beginning nor by Creation; He has been revealed by Himself in Jesus Christ."<sup>(1)</sup> This presented to Tertullian a singularly effective opportunity of attack.

With his usual sarcasm, Tertullian says: the Supreme God then did not create the visible world. He was not Himself made manifest in it. Then this is why He was not revealed sooner.

Marcion emphasised that men were in every respect strange to God, when He was revealed. "Out of pure goodness and mercy, He espoused the cause of those beings who were foreign to Him as He could not bear to have them any longer tormented by their just and yet malevolent Lord."<sup>(2)</sup> The God of love was the God Christ preached. He called the weary and heavy-laden to Himself "that He might save them from the fetters of their Lord and from the world. Christ's execut-

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(1) Tertullian, Adv.Mar. xviii, xix.

(2) Such is the information given by the Armenian Esnik, whose testimony, says Harnack, is to be used with caution.

ioners were those who believed in the creator of the world.

It was inevitable that Marcion's thought of the God of love should develop into the God of the Spirit, and the God of the Old Testament into the God of the flesh. Just as the turning point of Marcionism into Gnosticism is evidenced by the addition of *πνεύματος* to *ἄδικος* in his characterisation of the creator of the world, so his doctrine of the good God takes a definite Gnostic direction when He is contrasted with the Creator, as the God of the spirit in contradistinction to the God of the flesh. Love becomes incapability to wrath and thence *ἀπαθεία*, and so in the end Marcion's 'good God' becomes the apathetic infinitely exalted Being of Gnosticism, free from all affections.

Marcion's conception of Christ began exegetically. He was the first real and thorough critic of the relation of the Old to the New Testament. Chief among the topics common to both was the figure of Christ as Messiah. His obsession, to begin with, was that Jesus of the Gospels had nothing to do with the God of the Old Testament, or with the Old Testament. He took up the Messianic predictions one by one, and demon-

strated that they did not apply to Jesus Christ. A few of his demonstrations will suffice. In Isaiah vi, 14, one reads "He shall be called Emmanuel". But, says Marcion, Jesus was never so-called. Again, Isaiah viii, 4, could be less applied to the Saviour. In Psalm xlv, 3 "Gird on thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty." The Christians considered it a Messianic prophecy. By no means, says Marcion, since the Saviour never waged war.

Marcion's exegesis is literal. He did not trouble himself to point out that they applied to a Messiah, but that Messiah was not Christ. Marcion's thesis was that they announced a Jewish Messiah who had not come. It was the purpose of the Creator that he should come. (1) The prophets were empowered to predict His Coming. None of their prophecies were verified. The Messiah will never come.

Christ had nothing in common with the Old Testament Messiah. His essential work had consisted in annulling that of the Creator, in ruining His institutions, substituting for His precepts, other precepts, and draw-

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(1) De Faye (Les Gnostiques) p.164: "Prédications qui ne se sont pas plus réalisées que ne se sont accomplies celles qui annoncent la gloire de Jérusalem et la domination d'Israel. Ce MESSIE n'aura point de jour."

ing men from Him.

These foregoing considerations preclude His birth. Marcion's biased exegesis is driving him into the arms of the Gnostics. If the Saviour had a real body of flesh, Marcion would have to admit that He took the elements from the Cosmos, which was the work of the Creator. Consequently Marcion rejected the narrative of the miraculous birth, and expurgated the Gospels of all these narratives.

According to Marcion, Christ appeared fully grown,  
 (1)  
 thirty years old. His advent was only in appearance. Had not Jesus let it be clearly understood that He was not born after the flesh, since the Scripture said "my mother and my brethren are those who having heard the Word of God, practise it." The docetism of Marcion's Christology is beyond doubt.

In Tertullian (Adversus Marc. iv 6) Marcion is stated to have professed there were two Christs: the one revealed in the time of Tiberius by a God Whom no-

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(1) Tertullian, Contra Marc. iv 7: "Anno quinto decimo principatus Tiberiani proponit eum descendisse in civitatem Galileae Capharnaum, utique de caelo creatoris, in quod de suo ante descenderat."

one could know, with a mission to save all people: the other was destined by the Creator God to restore Israel, and must appear one day. The Christ of the Law could only have been an otiose tenet, as he had averred elsewhere that the Messiah will never come.

Marcion, as has been said, admits only Luke of the three evangelists, as least attached to Judaism. It is fortunate for us, that Tertullian chose this Gospel as the terrain of his attack on Marcion, Marcion's own ground, so to speak. Thanks to Tertullian, we know the texts on which Marcion grounded his assertion that Christ was in opposition to the Creator.

In the narrative of the leper (Luke v 12-14), it is said that Jesus 'touched him'. Why?, said Marcion. It was to display His contempt for the Levitical Law. Why did Jesus call <sup>to</sup> Himself a tax collector (v 27-32)? Because He was a stranger to the Law, hostile to Judaism. Other two passages referred to by Tertullian (I 2, IV 11, IV 17) figure also in the narrative of Marcion's arrival in Rome, and attested by all our sources. They are Luke v, 36 and vi 43. Marcion had discussed the interpretation of these passages

with the elders of Rome. The first was that of "the new piece in an old garment, etc.", and the other "the good tree and the bad fruit." The first of these appeared to him to establish the absolute novelty of the Gospel, and the second the superiority of God, the Father of Jesus Christ, to the God of the Old Testament.

Christ, according to Marcion, was an innovator. Christ forbade vengeance, and ordained that we are to love our enemies, to which Tertullian grudgingly gives a partial admission.<sup>(1)</sup> Christ also said "give to whosoever asketh of thee."

In the narrative of the Centurion (Luke vii, 9,10) Marcion says Christ exalted a Gentile. Again Jesus calms the tempest on the lake, that is to say, He subdues the elements of the cosmos, the work of the Creator. Peter confesses the Messiah, but why did Jesus impose silence on him? Because he had a still more false idea of the Messiah, and it could not fail to propagate itself.

Such are a few of the passages on which Marcion based his assertion that Christ had nothing to do with

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(1) Novam plane patientiam docet Christus.



the Creator, or with the Jewish race. He revealed the unknown God. He substantiated in His own person His claim to be Christ. He was the Innovator, the Maker of all things new. By His precepts and works He abolished the ancient régime.

Marcion's Christ is an intriguing figure. Obviously it is unreal and fictitious. The genesis of his conception is probably not difficult. He had begun as one dissatisfied with the inconsistencies of the current teaching on the Bible and God and Christ. It is probable that he came to the church leaders, especially in Rome, as an earnest and courageous enquirer. Conceptions, elucidations, hypotheses were fluid in his mind. No doubt he perturbed the elders in Rome. What could they say? They had never envisaged the problems Marcion raised. There was in fact no answer to Marcion above the horizon. His honest scepticism awakened no sympathy. The insinuation of bad faith which Epiphanius made is uncalled for. Tertullian and Irenaeus made no effort to understand him. The light seemed to come from the Gnostic. The tentative speculations and suggestions in his mind crystallised in the docetic mould. The unknown God and the docetic Christ seemed

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to coordinate his ideas. Bethune Baker writes, "He and his followers were commonly reckoned Gnostics by their opponents and the instinct of such men as Irenaeus and Tertullian was probably not much in error."

This Gnostic complexion is still more evidenced in the Marcionite doctrine of Redemption. There he is now no longer Pauline. He is outside of his sphere of attraction. He has entered the Gnostic ambit. But nevertheless, though his God and Christ have become Gnostic, the scheme of salvation is not carried over into the supra-sensible world. That tract of Gnosticism he neither denies nor affirms. The unknown God, and the heavenly Christ were revealed and appeared suddenly in Capernaum in the reign of Tiberius. Of their provenance he says nothing. It is redemption on the earth that obsesses him. Christ came to the world for the deliverance of Man. (2) But from what? From the dominance of the Creator. This certainly is far removed from the Pauline deliverance from sin. The Creator is the enemy of Man. Christ came to earth

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(1) Bethune Baker, "Early History of Christian Doctrine" 82.

(2) Tertullian, Adv. Marc I 17: "Sufficit unicum opus deo nostro, quod hominem liberavit summa et praecipua bonitate sua."

to undo and destroy the evil work of the Creator, and to bring men into the régime of the Good God. Those who believe in Him, will only require to imitate Him. Their Christianity will consist in their creating opposition to the Creator and His institutions. There is no suggestion of a moral reformation, none of Christ indwelling, none of being crucified with Christ. Marcion's redemption is wholly external. Christ was destroying the works of God, and in forming a Church of believers He was forming a body of Christians who were cooperating in His work. The orthodox Christian Church, believing in a Jewish God and Messiah, and with Scriptures full of Jewish interpolation, was out-with Christ's redemption. And yet the paradox is strange that Marcion clung through life to the hope of effecting a union with catholic Christendom.

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Bousset is no doubt quite right in classifying Marcion as a dualist. His principle of a "just and avenging God" was very likely to eventuate in God being identified with the principle of evil. This was certainly the teaching of the later Marcionites, and the

general testimony of the Fathers that the Marcionites blasphemed God, by declaring Him evil and practically equating Him with the Devil, is very probably true. <sup>(1)</sup>

Marcion is unique among the Gnostic communities in the fact that he founded churches, and not schools. He had his confessors, his liturgy, his revised Bible. The Marcionite churches stood side by side with the Catholic churches, and were found not merely in Rome but in Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, and even Persia, in the fourth century. When the greater part of the other sects had perished, the churches of Marcion flourished. Little wonder that the Fathers execrated Marcion. They attacked most bitterly his doctrine of God and of the Demiurge. Marcionism was the church's most formidable antagonist. Valentinianism soon ran to seed; the Ophite, Carpocratian, Naassene cults attracted only the gaping vulgar. Marcion appealed to the great body of men who thought about religion and life. They got novelty

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(1) Cf. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III, 12, 12:

in the Marcion<sup>ite-</sup> Church, an appeal that was not self-satisfied, was not lost in philosophical jargon, was not frozen into decorous commonplaces of doctrine. Need one wonder that this critical, sincere, thoroughgoing, searching of the Scriptures should draw young men and women awakening to life's meaning, away from a church that remained decorously arid until Origen arose? Marcion opened the religious mind to see, to weigh, to judge: Tertullian closed the mind into a self-defensive partisanship.

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IX.

The Minor Sects of Irenaeus

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THE MINOR SECTS OF IRENAEUS.

It is not possible, nor indeed perhaps desirable to devote so much space to the Minor Gnostic Sects of Irenaeus, as to the classical Systems. And yet they contain many elements that are very ancient and are undoubtedly found in Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion. They, unlike the latter great societies, are rather in the background of the picture, but they have by no means suffered from any neglect or lack of industry in collecting documents and threading together desultory scraps of information. They have also, it may incidentally be said, inspired Irenaeus to write some of his most eloquent and graphic passages. It is doubtful if Apuleius could have surpassed Irenaeus in the telling of the romance of the Anonymous Sect. (1.)

The list given by Irenaeus seems too formidable to be dealt with exiguously, but there are reasons why, in the case of several, discussion would be comparatively unnecessary. Such are those designated by the names of Colorbasus, Menander, Saturninus, Tatian, Corinthus, the Ebionites, Bardesanes, Simon Magus. Except for the names and the place of residence, nothing

(1) Adv. Haer. I. 30.

worthy of reliable history is known.

(1) Among the minor sects, the Ophites call for inquiry. That sect ~~is~~ is mentioned and described by Irenaeus. The closely allied sects, the Sethians, Peratae, Naassenes, Severians, Irenaeus does not mention, excepting the Severians.

(2) Another group is represented by the anonymous Gnostics of I, 30, the Barbelo-Gnostics, the Archontics. They all possess the dominating figure of a "feminine principle."

(3) A third group includes the Carpocratians, Nicolaitanes, and Gnostics of Epiphanius.

Such are the Gnostics which come within the purview of Irenaeus. There is a further group, and extraordinarily interesting and important though it be, it, (i.e. the Gnostics of the Pistis Sophia, of the Bruce Papyrus, and the Gnostics of Plotinus,) falls beyond the date of Irenaeus, and therefore will only be referred to incidentally.

The critical investigation of the Irenaeian sects, which come within one's province to discuss, is severely handicapped by the fact that our authorities are



~~the~~ ecclesiastical and unfriendly. They are, in addition to Irenaeus; Origen, Hippolytus, the Philosophumena and pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, Theodoret, Philaster. The sects themselves have no known paternity. We are completely at the mercy of their ecclesiastical <sup>(1.)</sup> opponents.

As one surveys these apparently heterogeneous groups of sects, one wonders whether there is any common feature which would bind them all together, or even some of them. Is there any Ariadne's thread by which to traverse the labyrinth? It is just here that Professor Bousset perhaps goes too far, in associating them altogether as purely pagan systems. But (1) there are some systems that stand apart by reason of the serpent figure, and (2) some <sup>that</sup> appear to derive from a decadent and apostate Marcionism.

With regard to paganism being the ultimate source of these Gnosés, Bousset is absolutely right: it is with regard to the proximate sources that his opinion

1.) Tous ces documents sont d'origine ecclésiastique. aucun n'est original, et n'est issu de la secte elle-même. Nous sommes ainsi entièrement à la merci d'informateurs qui sont des adversaires passionnés

De Fayé. 'Gnosticisme et Gnosticisme' p. 355.

may be questioned. We shall discuss first, a class of Gnostic systems, which have a certain resemblance. That resemblance is due to a figure which they share in common, the figure of the Serpent. We may speak of them as Ophites. They embrace the Ophites of Irenaeus, of Celsus-Origen, the Sethites, the Naassenes, the Peratae, the Justinians.

Irenaeus in Book I xxx 1-14 writes a long account of a Gnostic system, the name of which he does not give. He begins the notice with the words: "alii autem rursus portentuosam loquuntur." A careful study of this extraordinary system - which, in spite of its obscurities, Irenaeus describes with verve and animation - reveals a legend embedded within it, so skilfully dovetailed, that the ordinary reader considers it picturesque detail. What Irenaeus did was to graft, on the story of the anonymous sect, the story of another sect, the sect of the Ophites. <sup>(1)</sup> This system which he intercalates presents the most precise analogies to the speculations which Hippolytus assigns to the Ophites. The Serpent plays a rôle in both. He is represented as the son of

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(1) Adv. Haer. I 30, 5, 7, 8.

(1)  
Ialdabaoth. He is born of the concupiscence which Ialdabaoth had for 'matter'. He is represented as the source of "all oblivion and wickedness and jealousy and envy and death". He was 'Nous' itself twisted into the form of a Serpent. This serpentlike and crooked 'mind' "did yet more overthrow their father by his crooked ways, being with their Father in Heaven and in Paradise."

Then, with a strange inconsistency, a little further on, it is said that the mother of Ialdabaoth made use of the Serpent to incite the first couple to transgress the commandment of the Creator. Adam and Eve yielded to the incitement, and immediately "they, eating of the tree, knew the virtue which is above all, and departed from those who had made them"<sup>(2)</sup> - the Serpent thus appearing as the benefactor of men. Then Ialdabaoth "cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise, because they had

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- (1) Bousset, "Hauptprobleme" Exc. I, says: "Diese vielmehr letztlich ihre Wurzel in der babylonischen Verehrung der sieben planetarischen Gottheiten haben." Origen (C.Cels.vi 31) preserved the description of the figure. He says: "Ialdabaoth is the 'Lionheaded' (Λιοντοκεφαλή) of the Ophites" - Οὐσὶ δὲ τῷ Λεοντοκεφαλῆ δὲ λέγοντι συμβεῖν ἕστραον τὰ φεινοτά. Also that Ialdabaoth is Saturn. In the Gnostic Systems he is ruler of the Hebdomad. Hence easily the identification of Ialdabaoth with the God of the Old Testament"
- (2) Adv.Haer.I 30,7: "Manducantes autem eos cognovisse eam quae est super omnia virtutem dicunt, et abscessisse ab his qui fecerant eos."

transgressed his command --- "Yea and the serpent too, working against the father, was cast down by him into a lower world; but that bringing into his own power the angels which are here, he too begat six sons, himself being the seventh, in imitation of the Hebdomad which is about the father. And these they say are seven<sup>(1)</sup> — worldly demons, always opposing and thwarting the race of man, because, on their account, their father was cast down." Here, then, the Serpent returns as the enemy of mankind. He it is who drives out Cain and makes him murder Abel.

Such is the picture of the sect of the Ophites which Irenaeus gives us. As it stands it is insoluble. The serpent is first the enemy of the human race, then the benefactor of men, and finally reverts to become the enemy of mankind.

The sect of the Ophites is unrepresented by any original document, **except** by a hymn of several lines which has been preserved at the end of the notice of the Neassenes in the Philosophumena of Hippolytus.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Adv. Haer. I 30 7: "Et eos septem daemones mundiales esse dicunt, adversantes et resistentes semper generi humano, quoniam propter eos pater illorum projectus est deorsum."

(2) Cf. Hilgenfeld, 'Ketzergeschichte', p. 260.

cf Excursus V. pp xx-xxiii

It presents an intriguing problem. The anti-heretical authorities all knew about the Ophites, but Origen is best informed of them all. He had indeed reason to acquire accurate information about the sect, for Celsus in his 'True Discourse' used the Ophites as a weapon of attack on Christianity. Celsus represents the Ophites as Christians. His attack, with the Ophites as his target, and ultimately the Christians, reveals something of the sect. Celsus calls it a mystery (μυστήριον) which he compares to a Mithraic conventicle. He had discovered one of the diagrams, which was a device with symbolic figures, which were "receipts for salvation." The initiate was given a seal, he was entrusted with a mysterious number, which after death would purchase a free passage into the higher world. There were also 'formulae' for the same purpose. Celsus also asserted that the sect repudiated the God of the Old Testament, Who is called 'Accursed' or sometimes (1) 'The Curser'. Further the Serpent had given to man the knowledge of Good and Evil, in vengeance for which the Creator cursed the Serpent. Celsus thought that he had then discovered why the sect was called Ophites (ὄφεις)

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(1) ὁ θεὸς κατὰ γράμματα τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Such he implicitly demonstrates are "your Christians", to become one of whom presents no attractions to the man of the day.

Origen's task, in rebutting Celsus, is to deny that the Ophites were a Christian sect. He could not run the risk of merely appearing as a dexterous advocate. He made the Ophites his study. His accurate knowledge reassures one. Origen does not take refuge in a bare denial. He only says that Celsus has not named the sect; consequently he cannot subject it to investigation. But he avers that his knowledge of the Ophites indicates that they are not Christians.

(1)  
De Faye questions Origen's fairness, for the sect name, the Serpent, was not a pagan symbol; it was the Serpent of the Old Testament. But is De Faye certain that all the Ophites had the Biblical symbol? Were there none who borrowed their title from the paganism of Egypt and the Orient? Be that as it may, Celsus  
(2)  
is told that the sect is not Christian, and Origen pro-

(1) 'Gnostiques', p.358: "Notez qu'il ne s'agit pas du serpent en général, mais du serpent de la Genèse."

(2) Bousset, Hauptprobleme, 323: "So ist . . . kaum eine Spur Christlichen Einschlages zu entdecken." The Gnostics never allowed anyone into their assemblies

ἔαν μὴ ἀρξῆς θύτης κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (ΕΙ. 28.)

ceeds to deal with the '(1.) 'diagram' of which Celsus made such use. He also had discovered the famous diagram corresponding to the description of Celsus. In that diagram figured the names of archons, Michael, Souriel, Raphael, etc. It must have been a different diagram, otherwise Celsus had lost a fine debating point. It is strange that Origen let it pass, for some of the names are Old Testament names.

It seems probable that the one attached 'Christian' and the other 'pagan' to the same sect, or group of sects. It was a mere point of view. Assuming that Celsus is truthfully transcribing the tenets of the sect, then the repudiation of the God of the Old Testament, the reference to the Creator as 'accursed' or 'curser', and the use of the serpent symbol give a clear indication that we have a sect infected by the influence of a degenerate Marcionism.

Origen would have called that sect pagan. Celsus, with his free thinking, agnostic culture, would not concern himself with minute criticism, but would call it a Christian sect.

We may therefore assume that there had been a sub-Christian sect whose worship was directed to the

(1.) See Excursus II.

serpent, and that the serpent of Genesis. Only a Marcionite would have so honoured the serpent, for they honoured only the enemies of the Jewish God. The same tincture of Marcionism can be detected in the Cainites and Sethians.<sup>(1)</sup> Bousset has of course no doubt that a purely pagan serpent mystery has been taken over into a Christian scheme, and that hypothesis seems to fit in with the junction of that mystery group with a degenerate Marcionite section. It is interesting to note that De Faye remarks as follows: 'We are now less sure of the origin, exclusively Biblical, of Ophitism. In becoming Christian it became Biblical.'<sup>(2)</sup> We shall presently see how this developed.

We shall pass now to the testimony of Hippolytus who wrote almost contemporaneously with Celsus. From Pseudo-Tertullian and Epiphanius we learn that the Ophites had a cult of the Serpent, inferior to Christ, and the Serpent played a part in the Eucharist. They quoted passages from both the Old and New Testaments

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(1) οὗτοι φασὶ τὸν κέιν εἶς τῆς ἰσχυροτέρας δυνάμεως ὑπάρχειν καὶ τῆς ἕνωθαι αὐθεντικῶς

(2) 'Gnostiques', p.370 n.1: "Nous sommes maintenant moins sûrs de la provenance exclusivement biblique de l'Ophitisme. En devenant Chretien il est devenu biblique."



to justify their Serpent worship. The Serpent clearly is a "Being" friendly to man. The sect is sub-Christian and answers to the description of Celsus. But Pseudo-Tertullian adds a notice of a doctrine or of a system which is puzzling. The Serpent of Genesis, far from being the benefactor, is represented as an inferior Being created to deceive man. The story is peculiar. Eve takes him to be the Son of the Supreme God. This is strangely inconsistent with the preceding narrative.

Epiphanius writes a narrative with the same strange ending. Having described the Serpent Worship, and the place of the Serpent in the Sacrament, and the Biblical authority for the worship, he uses the phrase that he had heard these teachings from a member of the sect. Usually his phrase is *φασκουσι* or *φασσι*. But he makes a change almost inadvertently. He uses the singular *φασσίν*, and this is in the passage regarding the Tempter of Genesis. 'The God of the Old Testament, Ialdabaoth, furious at seeing that the man has received a spark of the light from on high, causes to be born a power in the form of the serpent.' Then he sends it

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(1) *ὡς ἀπὸ πνεύματος ἑκείνου (σ.β.)*

(2) *πνευματικὴ δύναμις ἡ φασμοειδῆ ἰδέαν ἔχουσα*

to deceive Eve. She believe him and eats of the tree of knowledge. It is thus that Ialdabaoth revenges himself.' This is the same inconsistency as in the account of Hippolytus.

This rather lengthy journey has been traversed, as leading up to the very strange and incongruous story which Irenaeus has fused into the narrative in I, 30, 1-14, ~~and~~ which narrative has been already summarised. The story in Irenaeus harmonises **with** that of Hippolytus, who was a hearer of Irenaeus in Rome. Were they <sup>ωτι</sup> aware of the inconsistency of alteration in the rôle of the serpent? It is hard to credit it in the case of cultured men. It seems inexplicable.

Which is the original rôle of the serpent? Let us glance at the various serpent systems.

Hippolytus in the Philosophumena describes these four sects, and the interesting point is that the serpent figures in all of them, more or less. The Naasenes he describes at some length. As their name indicates, they are a serpent cult. <sup>(1)</sup> They affect to derive their name from the word Naos, a temple, and

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(1)  $\lambda\alpha\pi\lambda$  = a serpent.

though the derivation is faulty, students of Greece will remember that the temple was sometimes the dwelling of a serpent. The humid element is assimilated to him. <sup>(1)</sup> No human being, mortal or immortal, could subsist without him: he is the Good.

The Peratae developed the serpent idea. The serpents in the desert represent the gods of perdition. The brazen serpent in the wilderness is the perfect serpent, the Saviour. They saw in the serpent which tempted Eve, the Logos. The Sethians distinguished between the evil serpent and the perfect serpent. The first rises from the humid element, from the cosmic water. The second is the Redeemer. To save men the Saviour clothes the form of the serpent, and thus deceives the material cosmos, which holds captive the divine element which has fallen there.

M. de Faye has made a very minute examination of those systems and has rightly concluded that the serpent is an adventitious addition. None of the systems require the serpent. They are complete without it.

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(1) ὁ ἕως ἄνω ἡμέρας οὐρανός

What then is the meaning of Ophitism which bulks so largely in the anti-heretical Fathers?

It is this: there was a sect of serpent worshippers. They had no developed doctrine. They were only a cult. Their interest was only sacramental. Epiphanius describes their principal rite, which was the Eucharist. During the service, an acolyte brought in a casket containing a snake. When opened, the creature escaped and, circling round the Eucharistic elements, twined itself among them. It was to this level that the followers of Marcion, which they were - two generations removed - had sunk. Their tradition - from Marcion - was that the God of the Old Testament, the Creator, was a lesser God and hostile. The serpent who according to the Jewish Scriptures had been cursed by the Creator, was therefore their friend. He it was who induced the first pair to eat of the tree of knowledge, and so gave them the Gnosis. All whom God had condemned in the Bible, they glorified, even a Judas.

The Sethians, Peratae, Naassenes, Justin and others adopted the serpent cult. It was the time of Syncretism in excelsis. The different schools borrowed

mutually books and doctrines. The same happened to the third generation of the Valentinians, as we have seen.

We learn from Origen that these sects were small and decaying. They had no real importance, but the serpent cult struck the imagination of the ecclesiastical writers, who felt they had in this blasphemous sect a convincing example to the faithful in the Church to whom they wrote. Epiphanius did not scruple to say that the Ophites were worshippers of Satan, in the form of the serpent.

(1)

The Cainites, mentioned by Irenaeus, represent, like the Ophites, the spent forces of Marcionism. Convinced that the Old Testament was the work of a subordinate and evil god, certain Gnostics inculcated the adoration of personages stigmatised in the Old Testament, - Cain, the Sodomites, Esau, Korah, Dothan and Abiram. They are the elect. They have the Gnosis which is to redeem mankind. They had been devoted

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(1) Adv.Haer. I,31,1: "alii autem rursus Cain a superiore principalitate dicunt et Esau et Core et Sodomitas." Theodoret, H.Fab., 1,15: "

*Theodoret Fab I.15 -- καὶ τὸν καὶν φασιν εἶναι  
τῶν ἀνωθεν ἀυθεντίας ἀελυτρώτους...*

to infamy by the Demiurge (Creator), Who came into conflict with the Superior Principle in the guise of Sophia, which had come to the help of His own, to prevent the divine element in them from perishing. Judas was one of their hero saints playing a greater part than Cain from whom the sect derived its name. They had two manuals, one, the Ascension of Pane, and another a Gospel of Judas. They had in addition a writing 'concerning the womb'<sup>(1)</sup>. This designated the work of the Demiurge, the Cosmos. The Sethians likened the heavens and the visible earth to a 'womb'; it was a well known image in Gnostic circles, and doubtless the work of which it was the title was intended to discredit the created world.

The Anonymous Sect, which is described by Irenaeus in I. 30,1-14 has, as already stated, an Ophic Saga fused into it. It forms no real part of the narrative. Yet it has often been regarded as a complete Ophic story and Ophism has been credited with a legend and a teaching which it did not possess.

This so-called Ophic Chapter is not characterised by the sublime speculation and poetry of Valentinus,

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(1) κατὰ τὴν ὕστερον.

but it is the most splendid, stirring and enthralling section in the whole of the great work of Irenaeus. Even the Latin version moves with thrill and verve and speed; there is no trace of laborious copying.

The essential characteristic of this Anonymous Sect is its originality. <sup>(1)</sup> It possesses a divine female figure representing 'the Good', confronted with a rival figure, with whom she wages remorseless battle on the field of humanity.

A resumé <sup>(2)</sup> of the description Irenaeus gives has already been made, and there is no ~~special~~ need to repeat it.

It is a very composite document, uncritically put together. For parts of it Irenaeus is using documents of the sect, for other parts he reproduces information gathered from various sources. Primarily its main figures and conceptions, the Mother Prunicus, the Light Principle, the Waters, the Hebdomad, derive from Per-

(1) Adv. Haer, I xxx 1-14: The name is not given. We read: "alii autem portentosa loquuntur." In the summary by Theodoret, Haer Fab. I 14, the Sethians and Ophites are named. *οἱ δὲ Σεθιανὰ οὐκ οὐρανοῦ ἔσθ' ἔτι καὶ ὀφειτάς ὀνομάζουσιν*. But the Sethians are not the Ophites, and in this notice there is no trace of the doctrine of the Sethians.

(2.) Ch. III.

sian and Syrian sources. There are also Valentinian elements chiefly in the figure of Sophia; Marcionite elements in the opposition of the chief deity who is good, and the subordinate God who is Creator and God of Israel (Ialdabaoth). All these dramatis personae move in an arena which is created out of the Old and New Testaments, and this circumstance is as unique among the Gnostic systems as that there should be a conflict between the 'Good' represented by a principle (Prunicos or Sophia) and the Creator.

These considerations lead one to presume that the date of the emergence of this anonymous sect is posterior to that of the great Gnostics.

They use barbaric and Hebraic names for the Hebdomad (Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adoneus, Eloeus, Orens, Astapheus). Those which Valentinus gave to his Aeons are all Greek. It is in the later development of Valentinianism that Achamoth appears. When we come down to the Coptic Gnostic documents we find these barbaric names in abundance.

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Our great Gnostic authority, Bousset, however,

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(1) See also Hilgenfeld 'Ketzer-geschichte, p.241.

*hier so ist es begrifflich, dass er die Gnostiker oder die Gnostische  
Haerese aus welcher seine Quellenschrift dem Valentinus  
hervorgegangen sein kann, wirklich behandelt zu haben glaubt  
denen beschreibt auch wirklich Gnostiker, welche der Frage nahe standen*



considers this sect to be anterior to the great Gnostics. It would have provided a fertile stock for the principal Gnostic systems. Here, as elsewhere, the Bousset thesis, irresistibly convincing in its main outlines, requires adjustment in the minor manifestations of the Gnostic spirit.

The "anonymous Gnosis," with the related Gnostic systems to be discussed later, has as its most striking and original figure, Prunicos. This feminine principle vouchsafes the most distinctive trait of this type of Gnosticism. But there is a certain confusion in the account. There are strictly speaking two feminine principles, the Holy Spirit and Prunicos. But the first, the Holy Spirit, is inoperative, a mere lay figure, like the 'Light', only part of the stage scenery. The feminine principle that plays a part is Prunicos. But unfortunately another confusion arises, when Prunicos makes way for Sophia.

It seems possible to extricate this confusion. In the notice of the Ophites which Epiphanius has preserved from Hippolytus, there is a description of an Ophite system which is identical with that of Iren-

aeus, I,-30. The description, e.g. of the feminine principle, Prunicos, descending into the waters is ~~actually~~ verbally identical with the description of Irenaeus. Her recovery and creation of the heavens is told in the same words. So also is the history of Ialdabaoth, who is the son of Prunicos. The similarity in the narratives is astonishing. (1)

The narrative ends where Ialdabaoth hurls the serpent from heaven. All that he says further is that Ialdabaoth is the God of the Jews.

The rest of the war, down to the Cross and Resurrection and the recovery of the entire dew of light, is omitted. But was it an omission? Is the rest not the sole work of Irenaeus? Both he and Hippolytus had the same document. Hippolytus gives it and no more, and thinks, because the serpent is mentioned, that it is an Ophite document. Irenaeus is in doubt and can only say 'alii loquuntur', tells it as that of

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(1) One example may suffice: *Καὶ τότε ὁ Ἰαλδαβαὼθ πόνω δερόμενος  
 .... ἐπίβλεψε κατὰ ἐν πικρίᾳ πρὸς τὴν ὑποστάθμην τῆς ἕλης καὶ  
 ἐξενήγκε δύναμιν οὐρανίου ἰδεῶν ἑκάσταν.*  
 Propter quae contristatum Ialdabaoth et desperantem  
 conspexisse in subjacientem faciem materiae, et con-  
 solidasse concupiscentiam suam in eam, unde natum  
 filium dicunt, hunc autem serpentiformem (Adv. HæR. I. xxx. 5.)

an anonymous sect, and extends it and embellishes it from the random information and conversations which he has collected.

'Prunicos' does not play the rôle of the Valentinian Sophia. Sophia is an Aeon, who falls and is restored to the Pleroma, Prunicos is a female 'principle'. There is little doubt that Bousset is right that Prunicos is a survival of the Syrian 'Meter', but in the second century A.D., Prunicos was a synonym, with the later Gnostic sects, of the 'Logos.' She was the "intermediate principle." She carried the 'humectatio luminis' from the 'quoddam primum lumen' down to the world (the Chaos, the Water, the Darkness). She created the Universe and after the tragic experiences with Ialdabaoth and all whom she emitted, returned to the upper Aeon, the Light World. Such is her rôle.

Another remarkable feature in the Anonymous Sect, is the Triad of principles, the 'Primus Homo, the 'Filius' or 'Secundus Homo' and the 'Spiritus Sanctus'. De Faye, it may be remarked, does not put any value on the metaphysic which figures at the head of the notice of Irenaeus. Later on he explains why. The

Triad is found only here and in the system of the Naassenes, the Peratae and the Sethians, where it makes an integral part. In the system of Irenaeus the Triad is a mere addition. It plays no part. It could be omitted without loss. It is perhaps not important enough here for a long discussion, and so it may be enough to suggest that the conception came from a teacher whose disciples had been the Naassenes, Peratae and Sethians, and had penetrated to the Anonymous School. Irenaeus and Hippolytus consequently incorporated the Triad in their notice.<sup>(1)</sup>

But the conception of the 'primal man', according to Bousset,<sup>(2)</sup> is that of a hero divinity who descends into the darkness of the material world. Such a conception is manifestly inapplicable here, for the 'primus Homo' is the Supreme Father. At this point the further consideration of the matter may be postponed; a problem still one of the unsolved problems of religious history.

What then is this Saga of Irenaeus, I. 30? Primarily it is a document, which because of the presence

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(1) De Faye, 'Gnostiques', p.387, n.  
 (2) Encyclop.Britt, 'Gnosticism'.

of the serpent, Hippolytus assumed to be an Ophite narrative. Irenaeus used it, but - so far as the Latin version goes - did not indicate that it was Ophite. The probability is that, owing to the extreme syncretistic tendencies of the times, and the free interchange of books and doctrines, an Ophite sect wove around their doctrine of the serpent the much older narrative of the Anonymous Sect of the Mother. The matter, from which the serpent details are omitted, is the original and older Gnostic doctrine of which Prunicos is the commanding figure. The rest of the narrative is the editing, into a connecting framework, of Biblical knowledge, of notes and recollections of the author himself, from the teaching of the Sect.

Closely related to the Anonymous Sect, and dependent on it, is the Sect of the Barbelo-Gnostics: who are humorously compared by Irenaeus to a 'growth of mushrooms.'<sup>(1.)</sup> The Being who stands at the summit of the system is curiously not masculine but feminine, with the strange name of Barbelo. The name merits a longer dissertation than can be afforded here, and

(1.) Adv. Haer. I. 28, 2 "et videtur a terra fungi manifestati sunt"

(1)  
 it will be dealt with in an Excursus. The Supreme Father is out of the picture. His existence is merely assumed. Barbelo is the first exteriorisation of the Father of all, his force, his image, his light. Professor Carl Schmidt of Berlin, however, discovered among the Coptic papyri, a Gnostic document which Irenaeus must have used for his notice, considerably curtailed, however. The Supreme Principle is Light, but at the same time it is an abstraction. The words of Irenaeus are: "Some of them suppose a certain Aeon, undecaying, with a virgin spirit, whom they name Barbelo. And they say that he hath a certain Father, who may not be named, and that He was fain to manifest Himself to the said Barbelo."<sup>(2)</sup>

Barbelo is, therefore, the representative of God, a female figure corresponding to the Logos in the ancient speculation. In the Latin version of Irenaeus, Barbelo is feminine and also in the version of Theodoret. This Barbelo is the mainspring of the whole system.

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(1) EXCURSUS III.

(2) Adv. Haer I 29: "Aeonem quendam nonnam senescentem in virginali spiritu, quem Barbelon nominant. Ubi esse patrem quendam innominabilem dicunt", etc.  
~~Ibid. I 29, 2: "Aeonem quendam nonnam senescentem in virginali spiritu, quem Barbelon nominant. Ubi esse patrem quendam innominabilem dicunt", etc.~~

From the great system of Valentinus, on which the Barbelo-Gnostics modelled theirs, the declension is deplorably obvious. In the Valentinus scheme there is a well-thought-out gradation of hypostases until Sophia is reached. The masterhand of a metaphysician is in it. Here, there is only a meaningless procession of Aeons, (Thought, Foreknowledge, Incorruption, Eternal Life.) The teacher who evolved this scheme felt it necessary perhaps to appear original, and sent forth his entities in disorder as if it did not matter how the names came forth, so long as they had the Valentinian flavour.

Another sign of decadence is the image of the light. This is a reflection from the Anonymous Sect of Irenaeus, and a kind of credal sanction given to one of their ceremonies of initiation in which lights figured. And with it was conjoined an echo from the Fourth Gospel. Consequently as Irenaeus says, 'et magnificabant hi magnum lumen et Barbelon' - the joint adoration of Christ and Barbelo.

Then we come to the Creation of the world and man. There confusion is worse confounded. We have a con-

glomeration of Greek names, and names of Barbaric origin, whose futility equals their obscurity. We are in an age when words of portentous sound and obscure signification were held to create the sense of mystery, the very names of the charms and amulets mounting into the solemnities of their creed.

We come to more solid ground when Prunicos appears, That is to say, we come to the original part of their creed, their heritage from the parent body, the Anonymous Gnostics. This 'Prunicos' section is slightly varied. She also extends herself (*extendebatur*): she gives birth to the Archon who will create the visible world. He is called the Protarchon. He, like Ialdabaoth, descends to the lower region. He also is given the demons who bear the names of the passions; Kakia, Zelos, Phthonas, etc., to form a hebdomad, just as Ialdabaoth had his 'septem mundiales daemones'. Then when the mother Sophia returns to the ogdoad, the Archon says aloud 'Ego sum Deus zelator et praeter me nemo est', as in the parent system. There, the notice of Irenaeus stops.

Between the two systems, in ch.xxix and xxx, there



are resemblances and differences. The former have as first principle Barbelo, the latter Prunicos, though Prunicos is appended. The former have Protarchon, the latter Ialdabaoth. Possibly the former had its war-tragedy like the latter, though the narrative, which might give it, is broken off.

Nothing could illustrate better than this Barbelo-Gnostic sect, how a new sect arose towards the end of the second century. Apparently a new mystagogue had appeared with a strange doctrine of a virgin Aeon, at the apex of all his doctrine and practice. To attract adherents it was imperative that he should have common ground. With a success, that is not so apparent to us, he amalgamated his peculiar type of Valentinianism with the doctrine of the anonymous sect, and produced what is known as Barbelo-Gnosticism. The Naassenes, Perates and Sethians were also swarms from the original beehive.

What appears from these Gnostic phenomena of the late second century is this: The great systems of Basilides, Valentinus and Marcion had long passed their zenith. They had lost their distinctive cohesion.

They had opened their frontiers to emigrants of all kinds, so that, as we have seen, the Valentinian Gnostics, for example, at the end of the second century, when Irenaeus composed his great Philippic, and when Hippolytus wrote his 'Syntagma', had degenerated. Valentinus would scarcely have owned the parentage of the 'olla podrida' which bore his name. Sectarianism was rife. There were no frontiers in religion and philosophy unless the Christian Church. Ideas were exchanged and borrowed and recast into strange moulds. It was a time of intellectual and religious decadence. It was the opportunity of the man with a new idea, or the 'sperma-logos' or more frequently the purveyor of magic incantations and charlatanism in general.

About the year 160 A.D. a new and powerful intellect began to be felt in Rome. A school was founded to teach the new doctrine. It was a new idea, of Eastern origin, a religious system with a female divinity. It took years to establish the peculiar doctrine, and to develop the worship of the 'Mother.' It grew, it flourished, and it must have gathered a large body of adherents, to be able to send forth

colonies of Ophites and Barbelo-Gnostics, Naassenes, Perates, Sethians and others, for with inevitable differences they have a facial resemblance to their 'alma mater', and deep seated correspondences also.

To these Gnostic coteries all was grist to the mill. Any passing attraction was embodied; the adoption, for example of bizarre nomenclature, of fantastic theories of world formation, the predilection for romantic pre-cosmic history, and imaginative construction of Old and New Testament narrative: to all this its doors were open. The profound reflection of Basilides and Apelles, the philosophic imagination of Valentinus, the moral interest of Heracleon and Ptolemaeus, the exegetical thoroughness of Marcion, all had degenerated and died down into cultism, ceremonies, sacraments, baptisms, anointings, amulets, 'apologies', and all the paraphernalia of sentimental redemption.

Hippolytus and Irenaeus had a true perception that these sub-Christian and practically pagan societies were a real peril to the Church. The Gnostic peril was not a Basilides or a Valentinus. Such men would have administered a tonic to Christianity. Barbelo-Gnosticism, Ophitism and the rest were the real enemies and obstacles.

X.

The Sources of the Gnostic Heresies

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THE SOURCES OF THE Gnostic HERESIES.

The problem of tracing the Gnostic systems to their source is made difficult by the fact that the Gnostics arrogate to themselves emphatically the title of Christians. They sought by their propaganda to win adherents chiefly from ~~the Church~~ ~~the~~ the Church. Their doctrines were set forth as a superior Christianity. Their professions were accepted by heathen apologists such as Celsus, Plotinus and Porphyry, who ranked them in the category of Christians.

On the other hand, the great Church persevered in denying that they were Christians.

These sects, Irenaeus says, "were playing fast and loose with the Lord's own words", saying the same things but thinking differently." "They, on account of the Church people whom they call "common" and

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- (1) Adv. Haer. I, Pref: *παδίουσ γινύτες τὰ λόγια κυρίου* (falsantes verba Domini) *ὁμοίαι δὲ λαλοῦντες, ἕνόμοι δὲ φρονοῦντας* (similia ... loquentes, dissimilia vero sentientes)
- (2) Ibid., III, 15, 2: "Hi enim ad multitudinem propter eos qui sunt ab Ecclesia, quos communes et Ecclesiasticos ipsi dicunt, inferunt sermones, per quos capiunt simpliciores et illiciunt eos, simulantes nostrum tractatum, ut saepius audiant; qui et iam quaeruntur de nobis, quod cum similia nobiscum sentiant, sine causa abstinenceamus nos a communicatione eorum, et cum eadem dicant, et eandem habeant doctrinam, vocemus illos haereticos..... his separatim inenarrabile plenitudinis suae enarrant mysterium."

"ecclesiastics", give addresses calculated to deceive and entrap the unwary, by imitating our style of preaching, so as to get a more frequent hearing. They complain that, though we entertain the same views as they do, we, without any reason, abstain from fellowship with them, and though they use the same formulae and hold the same doctrine, we call them heretics. To those they have seduced, they impart in private 'the unspeakable mystery of their Pleroma'".

Such a judgment is not easily put aside. Their general character, as it must have appeared to Irenaeus, must be acknowledged to be pagan.

A ~~general~~ glance at the Gnostic Systems will bear out this contention.

(1)  
 "The claim of the 'Gnosis' to be recognised as Christian, rests primarily on the central place of Christ in their systems of thought." Christ is the Redeemer, but not the Jesus Christ of the Gospels. He is the Christ of the higher Aeon-world, Who is sent by the highest Deity for the redemption of the "Light-seed"

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(1) "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart" Art. "Gnosticismus" (Carl Schmidt): "Der Ausspruch der Gnosis auf das Christsein beruhte in erster Linie auf der Centralen Stellung Jesu Christi innerhalb ihres Gedanken-systems."

sunk\_in matter. Christ is consequently a pure cosmic principle: His coming signifies the entrance of the "Light-World" into the visible material world, and thereby the revelation of a hitherto hidden and unknown God. Redeemer-God, and World-Creator-God come into being as opponents, in the course of the cosmological process. Christ is the instrument of the Redeemer-God; the teacher of men, the absolute principle of revelation. His revelation is not the truths of reason, but the knowledge of the God-World process, <sup>(1)</sup> and of the secret mysteries, to redeem men from the evil planet-powers.

As an Aeon, Christ cannot come into contact with matter. Therefore he is 'docetic' in His earthly appearances. One group of Gnostics (Cerinthus, Satornil, Marcus, Basilides) taught that Christ on earth was a union of the higher Christ with the man Jesus at His baptism, while He Himself had neither an earthly existence, nor had suffered on the Cross. The second group (Valentinus, Apelles, Pistis Sophia) makes Christ take to Himself a body out of the ingredients of the

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(1) Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Art. "Gnosticismus": "Die Erkenntniss des Gottwelt-prozess und der geheimnisvollen Mysterien zur Befreiung aus den Banden der Bösen Planetenmächte."

higher world in His descent, and pass through Mary, so that He established an apparent birth.

The Gnostic claims for himself the possession of the divine Pneuma, the spiritual seeds, and so arrogates to himself a higher grade of Christianity, the possessor of secret teaching. Outside and below him are the 'Psychics' and 'Hylics'. He is 'Pneumatic' This is the recrudescence of the pagan 'initiate', the 'τέλειος' as against the 'uninitiated'. This Pneumatic is predestined *ὡς βετέλειος*. He is a child of God, has received the heavenly 'light-sparks', and is alone qualified and equipped by Gnosis and consecration for the 'upward journey'. The rest fall doomed to destruction. A slight concession gives to the 'Psychics' a chance of escaping destruction, but they only attain to the place of 'the middle', they are debarred from the Pleroma.

Redemption is only of the soul. The "flesh," coming from the world of archons, returns back to matter; only the 'light-stuff' is capable of union with the Godhead. Therefore the whole primitive Christian eschatology is abandoned. There is no resurrection of the body, no second Advent, no judgment seat.



The Gnosis which the 'spirituals' obtain is the impartation of the names of the planet-deities, the secret pass-words, and the seals, so that the ascent of the soul may be unimpeded.

Christ Himself brought these mysteries in His descent. He had passed unknown down through these planet-powers, and He had imparted their secrets. Such instructions entered largely into so-called Gnostic worship.

The cultus has a completely Oriental character, with its mysterious consecrations, symbols, seals, invocations, magic formulae. Magic and theurgy play a large rôle. A very striking thing to be observed is that, though essentially there was no need to adopt the Christian sacraments, the Gnostic found a place for Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But characteristically the number of Baptisms is increased. As has already been pointed out, there were water, oil, and fire baptisms. The Pistis Sophia speaks of a spirit baptism also. The Marcosians had a unique sacrament of "Apolytrosis." These mysteries were initiatory and purifying - the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's Supper was a sign of communion. There were further,

the mysteries of anointing and sealing as a ritual for the ascent to heaven.

The Gnostic Ethic was pagan. The flesh belongs to the evil archon world and forms the prison of the soul. So the freedom of the "perfect" lies in mortifying the flesh. Asceticism is the redemption. Sin is no reality of free will, but a matter of nature,<sup>(1)</sup> for evil and matter are synonymous.

Such is the Gnostic sect. There can be no question that fundamentally and in practical life it was a survival or replanting of paganism. We shall examine these things now in closer detail.

At the head of the Gnostic systems stands the awe-inspiring figure of the Unknown Father. Although associated in some fashion with the Father God revealed by Jesus, it certainly is not derived from the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Gnostic 'Unknown Father' was not a creator. Besides, he had associations with figures far removed from the hierarchy of the ancient Israelites.

He stands solitary above all divinities, separated from all creature-like, finite existences. He is designated as the Unknown Father, the Father unnamed,<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Πῆλη. Φιλῶ. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ φουσίη, κ. κ. αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ θεοσίη (N. I. 18)

(2) Pater innominabilis (Adv. Haer. I, 29, 1).

'the unnamable', the 'unborn Father', the 'unborn God',  
 the 'unborn One', Father of All', the 'primal Father',  
 the 'primal Being', the 'Self-Engendered', the 'Father  
 above', the 'Father of all'.

If all the Gnostic figures were traceable to the Old Testament or New Testament, one might hold - with some difficulty, however, - that the Gnostic Father of All is derived from the God of the Christians. But his association with Sophia and Barbelo and Prunicos, with star gods, with Demiurge, with higher Christs and lower Christs, with a character that is an absolute abstraction, makes it certain that one must search for the origin of the Primal Being of the Gnostics in other directions.

The infiltration of religious ideas into the West from the East leads one's investigations to the religions of Asia - and it may not easily be denied that there are in the Scriptural hierarchy repercussions from Asia. The name Abraxas of the Basilidians, and the Caulacau of the same and some allied sects, pre-

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(1) ἀρρητος I. II. I  
 (3) ηγενητος θεος I 25, I  
 (5) προπατωρ I. I.  
 (7) καταπατωρ Εφεση 31, 5  
 (9) πατωρ όλων ad. H. I 80, I

(2) unnamable Father (ad. H. I 24, 3)  
 (4) πρώτων πατωρ Εφεση 30, 1  
 (6) προκρυψή ad. H. I. I  
 (8) άνω πατωρ Εφεση 37. +

clude the narrow field of Jewish origin. The God of the Scriptures was a real Being Who needed no intermediary, Who was the Father to Whom Christ counselled all to come; the God of the Gnostics was a conception of negatives. St. Paul at Athens took up this conception of an unknown God, which Irenaeus ascribes to Saturninus and Carpocrates, and from this text expounded the God of Jesus Christ.

The most powerful religious influence that impinged on the West came from Persia. Mithraism, which almost rivalled Christianity, came in that Westward flowing current, and was in full strength in the second century.

We are in the path of a sure investigation when we find in the highest divinity of Iranian belief, the prototype of the Gnostic 'All Father'. The philosophers of the Persian kings divested the Divine Being of all national elements and elevated Him into the speculative and universal, which developed into the Gnosis of the 'Unknown God'.

(2)

Ormazd or Ahuramazda, the God of the Sky, the sup-

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(1) Acts xvii, 23.

(2) Cf. Encycl. Britt, article, 'Mithra, Professor Sowerman.

reme deity of the realms of air and light, with his intermediary Mithras, his adversary Ahriman, the God of Darkness, profoundly affected Western thought.

The Supreme Deity of the Persians, as a good deity, was confronted with an evil deity. The contrast was between light and darkness. Speculation about the primitive everlasting light seems to have been common among the Parsees from a high antiquity.

It would perhaps be hazardous to speak of the Supreme Being (Bythos) of Valentinus as ascribable to Persian influences. Valentinus did not need to look beyond his revered Plato. But it is different with later systems. For example, in the original account of the system of the Barbelognostics, preserved in Koptic, it runs thus: "The Father of all .... the pure light, into which no one can see with his eyes ... He conceives of his picture alone and sees it in the pure water of light which surrounds him." Further it is stated that his Ennoia performed a work, and "stood before him in the sparkle of light." (1)

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(1) Cf. Iren. Adv. H., I, 29: "Barbelon prospicientem in magnetudinem ... generasse simile ei (i.e. the highest God) lumen. Hanc initium et laminationis et generationis dicunt et videntem Patrem lumen hoc (sc. Christus) unxisse illud sua benignitate, ut perfectum fieret."

(1)  
According to the Gnostics in Irenaeus I, 30, 1,  
the Primal Being is called 'a certain first light' in  
the power of Bythos 'blessed and incorruptible and  
eternal'.

(α)  
In the Song of the Pearl, c.113, the king's son  
speaks: "And bowing my head I worshipped the 'light  
of the Father'." In the late Gnostic systems of the  
Pistis Sophia the Primal Being, for whom the Sophia  
languished, and, led astray by longing, descended into  
matter, is called the 'higher light', the 'light of  
the height', the 'light of lights', that is in the  
'height of heights.'

Here and there in the Gnostic systems occurs the  
designation 'the highest God'. (2) This expression is  
significant of paganism. ? Where monotheism is strong Lxx?  
it is seldom used. St. Paul never uses it. It was  
the usual adjective for deities in Asia Minor. A  
striking inscription found in Aradus is as follows:  
(3)  
"to the Most High God of Heaven, to the highest and

(α). Also known as the "Song of the Soul" (Acts of Thomas) cf. Gnosticism Easy. Britt.

(1) Quaddam primum lumen in vertute Bythi, beatum et  
incorruptibile et interminatum."

(2) Θεός ὑψιστός

(3) Θεῷ ὑψιστῷ οὐρανόθεν ὑ[πέρτατῳ καὶ ἡλίῳ ἀνεκκῆτο Μι]θρα

ὁ βωμός ἐκτίσθαι

and unconquerable Sun Mithras, the altar has been erected."

The God of the great Gnostics is philosophic, pure being, in fact, beyond being, a sublimation even of the Platonic Theos, a God Who could condescend to transient matter only by successive grades of subordinate beings.

Such a conception of God could, to a greater or less degree, be aligned to the Christian conception, but as a conception it is infinitely older than Christianity.

The Redeemer figure is distinctly pagan. The 'Hellenistic theology', in which the Gnostic systems had their being, conceived man as lying in evil plight. The world accessible to his senses was evil - or at any rate very inferior to the transcendent world of light. But man had in him something of that higher world, "seeds of light", a 'Spinster'<sup>(1)</sup>, a "dew of light,"<sup>(2)</sup> mingled with his material body. Could, then, man by any means free himself 'from the body of this death', from this "sema-soma", from this dominance of the evil

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(1) Adv.Haer., I, 24, 1: *Ἐπιτημὴ πικρὰ ἡ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχή, ὅς δὲ δι' ἡμᾶς τὰν ἀνομιῶν καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἐπιπορεύεται*

(2) Cf. Adv.Haer, I, 30, 2: "humectatio lucis."

astral powers and baleful demons, this prison-house of the soul, and return back to the sphere of light? The answer to this problem lies in the figure of the "Soter".

For untold centuries this problem had been incubating in the minds of men. We find a conception (1) breaking through in the Mandaean and Iranian theology. In the Mandaean system we have a myth of the hero-Redeemer's victory over the rebellious demonic powers of darkness. The Light-Hero, "Manda d'Haje", unknown, had stood up against the seven demons, in a figure like their own, and by craft obtained the well-guarded secret of their power, after which he destroyed them. The myth is slightly transformed in another passage. In order to quell a revolt against the world of light, Hibî Ziwa was despatched by Manda d'Haje. He travelled down through the separate worlds of darkness, unrecognised and dwelt there a long time unknown. He descended in the strength of the great Râzâ and in his company. Râzâ signifies 'secret', and the figure is the embodiment of the secret name

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(1) Cf. Brandt 'Mandaisch Religion', Referred to by Bousset re. Erlosungslehre. Hauptprob., p.273. Vide 1 Pet. III 19H, IV, 6: Acts II, 24: Eph. IV, 9: Matt. XII, 40: Rev. II, 24: Rom. X, 6.



through which the Redeemer performs his descent into the subterranean world. The passage through the spheres and past the astral guardians, the symbols and apologies, and pass words, are familiar elements in the systems of the later Gnostics.

The myth of the Redeemer-God Who travels into the underworld to defeat the demonic powers had extended itself far and wide. Do we find traces of it in the New Testament?

This, however, is not the place to discuss such passages. But undoubtedly the influence of this myth is apparent in Hellenistic theology. Gnosticism utilized it, but in this particular, that the earth being a hopelessly evil place, the descent of the Redeemer was to this world, not to the underworld. He came to deliver the souls, to teach them the lore of the spheres, to communicate the names, the seals, the rites by which, on the 'upward journey', the soul would pass the celestial barriers and reach the realm of light. In the Gnostic dualism, this corporeal world becomes at once the world of destruction and of darkness; indeed, it was a very widespread belief in Christian circles that the mission of Christ was to ~~destroy~~

the demons and their works of darkness. The ancient Iranian myth of the Hero-Redeemer could thus be fitted in with a concept of the Christian Saviour.

A few examples of the manner in which this was done may be sufficient. In Irenaeus I, 24, 2, Christ came to effect "the destruction of the God of the Jews and the salvation of believers in Him: again; "the Saviour came for the destruction of evil men and demons and the salvation of all the good." (Iren., I, 24 ).

Similarly in the system of Basilides, it is asserted that the 'unknown Father' sent his first-born 'Nous' to the rescue of the faithful from the sovereignty of the world-creator. Further, the Basilidians teach that the Redeemer had been obliged to hasten through the three hundred and sixty-five heavens, taken by him, and that he had accomplished it in the strength of a mysterious name, "Caulacau". The magical name "Caulacau" had obviously the power to conceal him from the

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- (1) Christum advenisse ad destructionem Judaeorum dei et ad salutem credentium ei. (Iren.I,24,2).  
 (2) *venisse* salvatorem ad dissolutionem malorum hominum et daemoniarum ad salutem autem bonorum (Iren.I,24).  
 (3) Iren., Adv.Haer., I, 24, 3f.  
 (4) "Quemadmodum et ..... nomen esse, in quo dicunt descendisse et ascendisse Salvatorem (esse)"Caulacau".

Powers and to deprive them of their snares.

Does it not seem incredible and almost impossible that such a conception of Christ could have been derived from the New Testament Gospels or Epistles? The Gnostic Saviour is an immigrant from a far more primitive region. The Mandaean and Iranian hypothesis of Brandt and Bousset has much to commend it. The scholarship of the last forty years has accepted it. <sup>(1)</sup> The figure of the Gnostic Saviour or Redeemer cannot, however, be studied in isolation. He is closely associated with another Gnostic figure, that of Sophia, conspicuous in the theology of Valentinus, and recurring in almost all the Gnostic systems.

This is one of the most difficult problems in the field of Gnostic study. It is the assertion of Professor Bousset that one of the female figures which appeared together with the Gnostic Redeemer, was identical with a goddess, who in the later syncretistic age seems to have played a certain rôle, the Helena-Selene (Isis-Astarte). Simon of Samaria may be, as even De Faye admits, a historical figure, though of him we know

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(1) Cf. Buonaiuti, Gnostic Fragments, p.24.

(2) Bousset, Hauptprobleme, p.260.

nothing that can be called history. It is possible that the reference to him in Acts viii, 10, is authentic. De Faye states <sup>(a)</sup> <sub>(1)</sub> that there existed a sect which bore the name of Simon. Hegesippus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, attest this. They had known Simonites, who affirmed they were his disciples. It was a microscopic body. Origen asserts there were not thirty members of this sect in the world, including Palestine.

What Bousset holds is that the legend of Simon and Helene reveals the fact that they were both Hellenistic Godhead figures and that they had a cult. Irenaeus describes how Simon carried this Tyrian Helena about with him, and saying that she was "the first conception of his mind," the "mother of all," by whom at first he conceived in mind to create angels and archangels. <sup>(2)</sup>

This "Simonite Sect" was the first Gnostic system, and though the sect may have known nothing of its founder, it had as objects of devotion Simon and Selene, the Redeemer and the Woman. The Simonian legend of the finding of Helene, a lost woman, in a Tyrian brothel and

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(a) οὗτος ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη

(1) 'Gnostiques', p.430.

(2) Iren. Adv. Haer., xxiii, 2: "Hanc esse primam mentis ejus conceptionem, matrem omnium, per quam in initio mente concepit angelos facere et archangelos."

her salvation and restitution by Simon is a palpable aetiological myth. Behind that is the cult of a Saviour and a female figure who has fallen.

The difficulty that meets us is to account for the fallen goddess. Some Christian Valentinians may have connected the fallen Sophia, with the story, in Genesis, of the Fall, but obviously when we trace the figure through the other systems such an explanation proves quite inadequate. The conception, like that of the Soter, comes from afar.

The Gnostic system had roots in Asia Minor as well as in Persia and Babylonia. We find the female deity in all the systems called by various names, Sophia, Meter, Barbelo, Prunicos. In the East the goddess was called Artemis, Cybele, Anaitis, Leto, Aphrodite. She is the great mother of the gods, the Artemis, whose silver shrines were made in Ephesus, and whose worship St. Paul's preaching had endangered. She dwells in (1) the eighth or highest heaven, whence her name, Ogdoas.

She stands with the supreme figure of the Unknown Father, with the seven lower heavens, the realm of the planetary gods, world-creating angelic powers, whose

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(1) Iren. Adv. Haer, xxx, 4: "Sic quoque hebdomas perfecta est apud Eos, octavum matre habente locum."

leader is Ialdabaoth.

One looks in vain for logic or consistency in Gnostic phenomena. The supreme mother becomes a fallen goddess. Two legends have plainly coalesced, that of the great Asiatic mother, and the other the widespread myth of a goddess who disappears, carried off by the powers of evil, to be set free and taken back home by a divine liberator or brother or betrothed. An echo of that myth comes to us in the Orphic legend.

This fallen goddess finds herself sunk in the material world, hostile and evil, subject to "Heimarmene" and the evil demons. From it she seeks to be freed and obtains her freedom at the hands of the <sup>(1.)</sup> "Soter".

The goddess who has sunk into matter becomes a world creator, either through a Demiurge or world-creating angels. The Gnostics are a part of the men created, who have received a divine spark, a heavenly seed. And just as the fallen goddess is liberated and returns to the Pleroma, so the Gnostics by sacraments, mysteries, formulae, find their way back to the abode of Light.

In all this there is nothing but pure paganism. Where it came in contact with Christianity, the junction of the pagan Gnosticism and Christian doctrine could not

(1.) Adv. Haer. I 4, 4 --- τοῦ χριστοῦ ... ὅς -- τὸν Παροικητοῦ  
 δὲ εἰς ἐπέμψεν εἰς αὐτὴν, γαυτέστι τὸν Σωτήρα "

be other than artificial. Fundamentally Gnosticism is an allegory of the mystery of life. Christianity also brought its evangel to meet and solve the same mystery. There was mutual attraction. The Gnostic Saviour was aligned with Jesus. But it was, so to speak only 'pinned on', it was not fused. The Gnostic salvation remained pagan. It resolved itself into a heavenly marriage. A syzygia between the Soter and the fallen, but restored Sophia. It is the chief idea of the pious practices of the Valentinians to repeat the celestial union of the Soter with Sophia.<sup>(1)</sup> In this respect, the myth underwent a wider development. Just as the 'Soter' is the bridegroom of Sophia, so the heavenly angels, are the males betrothed to the souls of the Gnostics, who are looked on as feminine. This explains the expression used of the Gnostics in Irenaeus I, 6, 4,<sup>(2)</sup> that "they always meditate upon the secret of the heavenly union" (the Syzygia).

Those who possessed the "heavenly seed", the Pneumatics, needed no salvation. It was assured. But the Psychics who represented the Catholic Church, and possess-

(1) Cf. Bousset, Brit. Encycl. art.: 'Valentinus'.

(2) Iren., Adv. Haer., 4, I, 6, 4: " --- δειν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τῷ τῶ  
 συζυγίᾳ μετὰν μυστήριον.

ed the possibility of salvation, had the Saviour's aid. For the Saviour had a threefold nature, first a Pneumatic, second a Psychic, in which he was united to Christus, and a third taken from the celestial elements. He was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary, as through a tube<sup>(1)</sup>. Thus He was a compromise between the docetic redeemer and the Christian Redeemer of actual history. It was also taught that upon Jesus the "divine Soter" or Christ descended as a dove at his baptism.

It is extremely difficult to tell how much of the Valentinianism according to Irenaeus, belongs to Valentinus himself. The fragments reveal him a far truer Christian than his metaphysical scheme. But it must be admitted that there is little in Valentinianism that is not pagan, and less in the later Gnosticisms.

But it is particularly in their sacred rites that there is least trace of Christianity and most of pagan influences. Probably the deepest things in Gnosticism were not philosophy or theology but ritual practices. The men of the type of Valentinus were Christian thinkers, men of the study and the lecture-room rather than

(1) Adv.Haer, I, 12: "



sanctuary. They were the advanced thinkers of a very timid and conservative Church. They found, in their New Testament parchments, a man like themselves, a Paul, who was nothing if not a bold, adventurous and creative thinker. Paul too was an ascetic; he kept his body in subjection. But the spirit of the age was too strong. The Gnosis underwent a deterioration and became a rite, a sacrament, and there the Gnostic movement moved down the incline into sheer paganism.

Gnosticism ceased being a religious philosophy. It became a mystery religion. Such were the Valentinians of the time of Irenaeus, the anonymous Gnostics of Adversus Haereses I, 30, the Ophites, Naassenes, Marcosians, Peratae, Barbelognostics, and the later systems of Pistis Sophia and the books of Jeu.

Gnosticism was steeped in the pagan atmosphere of astrology. The Gnostic 'ascent of the soul' was impeded by the seven hostile planet gods, who were stationed at each planetary sphere. Professor Anz<sup>(1)</sup> is the scholar who has shed the clearest light on this matter.

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(1) W. Anz: "Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnosticismus"  
(1897). <sup>ci</sup>  
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In the Celsus-Origen system of the Ophites, the names of the demonic spirits are given in the following order - Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth (Adonaios) Astaphaios, Ailaoios (Elohim), Oraios. The planet Saturn is explicitly associated with the lionheaded Ialdabaoth.<sup>(2)</sup> The planets are given in that ancient astronomical disposition, according to their distance from the earth - Ialdabaoth (Saturn), Iao (Jupiter), Sabaoth (Mars), Adonaios (the Sun), Astaphaios (Venus), Ailaoios (Mercury), Oraios (the Moon). These seven planetary figures appear in connection with a higher goddess figure. In the prayer quoted by Origen the mystic speaks to Astaphaios: "present me cleansed by the spirit of the woman"<sup>(3)</sup>; and in the prayer to Ailaoios it is: "present me, bearing to thee the symbol of thy mother". And in the Diagram of the Gnostics there occurs in the middle kingdom, where the three circles intersect, the inscription *σοφία φύσις*. In the greater circle of the diagram are found the seven circles of the archons with the inscription Leviathan (the ψυχὴ, the world-soul). This Leviathan is found in the Mandaean system.

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(1) Origen, Contra Celsum, VI, 22 599.

(2) τῷ Ἰαλδαβαοθὶ ἔρχονται συμπάθειν ἕσπρον τοῦ φαίγοντα

(3) Παῖς με παρθένοσ πνεύματι ἰκεκκαθαμένον  
 Παῖς με τῷ ὄψι μετῆνος φέρωντα σοὶ σύμβουλον

Among the Gnostic figures of the Anonymous Sect of Irenaeus there occur the names exactly of the seven archons. Their planetary character is explicitly stated by Irenaeus. "They hold that the holy Hebdomad<sup>(1)</sup> is the seven stars which they call planets." The Sophia appears here as the mother of the Seven, also the 'Prunicos,' the 'left' one, emanated from the higher Aeons as an immature creature. She then has fallen and has descended into the lower waters (descendentem in aquas, I,30,3) and has given birth to Ialdabaoth, from whom issue the remaining six. Ialdabaoth here is first of the archons, identified with the God of the Old Testament (which is a later addition). Ialdabaoth and the six become world creators and world rulers.

In the system of the Barbelognostics (Iren.I 29) the figures of the Seven have paled away. Instead of Ialdabaoth we find the Proarchon (fabricator condicionis hujus), who in company with Authadia creates the Aeons, Kakia, Zelos, Phthonos, Erinnys, Epithymia, an example of the way in which godlike figures have been changed

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(1) Adv.Haer.I,30,9: "Sanctam autem hebdomadam septem stellas, quas dicunt Planetas."

into hypostatic abstractions.

In the system of Simon, the seven and the mother play the chief rôle.

Among the Valentinians the planetary gods have become invisible, except the Demiurge, corresponding to Ialdabaoth who created seven heavens.

The only key which opens this Gnosis mystery of the Planetary Archons, Professor Anz has supplied in his study of the Babylonian religion, but he stops short at a critical question - how these Babylonian planet gods became hostile archons, in the progress of the ancient tradition, to the Gnostic systems.

The discussion of this problem of the seven planetary gods, including the figure of the mother, provides by far the strongest element in Professor Bousset's 'Hauptprobleme der Gnosis'. He combines the investigations of four scholars, Anz, <sup>(1)</sup> W.Brandt, <sup>(2)</sup> Daniel Chwolson, <sup>(3)</sup> and <sup>(4)</sup> F.Cumont.

The distinct statement of Origen that the seven

- (1) Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnosticismus.  
 (2) Die Mandaische Religion.  
 (3) Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus. *lc.*  
 (4) Texts et Monuments relatives aux Mystères de Mithra.

demonic spirits, are connected with the planets, and that the demon leader, Ialdabaoth, was Saturn, can be traced back convincingly to the Babylonian religion. The Babylonian religion centred in the worship of these seven deities. There were five of the planets recognised; Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Mercury and Mars, in the order of the cuneiform. Later, Mercury and Saturn change places. Those five planets were subsequently identified with the great gods of the Pantheon - Jupiter with Marduk, Venus with Ishtar, Saturn with Ninib, Mercury with Nebo, and Mars with Nergal. To these were added Sin, the Moon, and Samas the sun. In late Babylonian religion, the seven were a unit of worship. Diodorus II, 30<sup>(1)</sup> writes "To the lot of mankind those stars bring most things both evil and good."

Chwolson's study of the Ssabians confirms what has been said. The Ssabians were a tribe dwelling on the plains near Basra. Their religion was a worship of the seven planets. The connection with Babylon is obvious. Their names were Sin, Nabug (Nabu), Bal (Jupiter), Balthi (Venus). They had a temple of the

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(1) Πλείστα δὲ πρὸς τὰς γενέσεις ἢ ἀνθρώπων συμβαλλέτω ταύτους τοὺς ἀστέρας ἄγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ.

united planets, and brought slain offerings only to the planets.

The Mithras religion possessed seven planet gods. Celsus (Origen vi 22) knew the mysteries of the Mithras religion, referring to the ascent of the soul through the heaven of the seven planets. Cumont remarks of Mithraism that it, "an offshoot of the Iranian religion, had taken to itself in its progress to the West, the seven planet-godheads from the Babylonian lowlands."

And it is a very curious circumstance that the really oldest sect of Gnosticism of the narrower signification, the Ophites, perhaps buds forth from the Babylonian lowlands. Origen (W.28) calls the founder of the sect a certain Euphrates and Brandt conjectured that "the Peratikos" pointed to a Forat-Marsan near Basra.

But how could it be that these "supreme beings" of Babylonian worship should be the forerunners of the seven lower "demonic beings," or as the "half good half evil" powers belonging to the middle world or fallen from a higher world?

The Mandeian religion is the answer to the problem.

The Mandaeans, also known as Sabians, Nasoreani, or St. John's Christians, were an Oriental sect of great antiquity. The name Mandaean means 'Gnostici.' They possessed a religion compounded of Christian, heathen and Jewish elements and of a Gnostic type. It is of Ophite or Naassene origin, in the opinion of G.M. Thatcher.<sup>(1)</sup> The use of the word 'Jordan' is the same as that of the Naassenes in the *Philosophumena*, the "great Jordan" signifying the sacred water which pervades the world of light. The ancient hierarchy of seven powers is seen here to be degraded; instead of Dlibat (Venus) stands Ruha d' Quada. She was originally Namrus (in the Manichaean system Namrael, a female demon). Nbu is called the 'Messiah of the Lie'. In the place of Sames appears Adonai. Obviously this planet (the Sun) is the god of the Jews. A Father of the Seven is mentioned, Ur by name, reminiscent of Oraios in Origen's Ophic system. We also obtain the name Leviathan (cf. Origen's diagram).

It would be an exhausting task to proceed through the involved and obscure narrative of the Tractates of

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(1) Cf. article on Mandaeism by Conrad Kessler, continuation by G.M. Thatcher, ~~British~~ Encyclopedia BRITANNICA.

the 'right' and 'left' 'Genza', even if it were advisable to do so. What will follow will be in summary.

With regard to the evil spirit, the Ruha, and the seven astral powers, it may be conceded that we have the missing link between Babylon and the Gnostic Systems. The Demonic Powers that impeded the Gnostic soul in the "Himmelfahrt" were originally the pagan star gods of Babylon. It so often happens in conquest. The conquering nation despises the conquered gods and degrades them. The Persians degraded the Beings of Babylonia. And so the conception of world-creating demons came by some proto-Ophites to Rome, and spread through all the systems.

The Redemption (λύτρωσις, ἀπὸ λύτρωσις ) of the soul, ~~which is~~ described as sunk in a material and evil world, was the main concern of the Gnostic, so that Gnosticism is perhaps more a mystery-religion than a religious conviction, a belief in a creed.

The church Fathers throw little light on the subject. They were not interested in ritual. With a strange blindness and lack of instinct, they considered the Gnostic teaching the greater danger, which it certainly was not.



Some concluding remarks may be made on the sacrament of extreme unction, and the Gnostic Eucharist. Irenaeus informs us that the Marcosians recognised a sacrament for those on the point of death. They take, it is said, oil and water, and indeed a specified oil (opobalsamon) and pour it, after the 'adjurations' have been pronounced, on the head of the dying, "ut incomprehensibiles et invisibiles principis et potestatis fiant." The Mandaean cult recognises a baptism of the dying. The purpose of this sealing with oil is clearly for the frustration of the demons and the destruction of their power over men.

The pagan origin of the baptisms and seals and anointings, in spite of the apparently Christian setting, is perfectly obvious.

Again and again we have "the tree" mentioned with the oil. This is the tree of life in Paradise. Many traces of a legend exist that it was an olive tree.

The sources available to us from which to learn the nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist are very scanty. But it may be said that the New Testament <sup>(1)</sup> "communion of the body and blood of Christ" would have

(1) 1 Cor. x. 16 -- οὐκ ἔστι κοινῶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου κ. τ. λ.

seemed very unfamiliar and indeed distasteful to Gnostic circles. The Gnostic Eucharist festival was more akin to the nature festival, the convivial gathering.

In the Clementines there is no mention of the cup in the common meal. It was a ceremony of initiation at which bread and salt were used. The phrase was "to break the Eucharist bread" (Eucharistiam frangere). In Hom. 14, 1, it says, "Having broken the bread at the Eucharist, and having laid down the salt, he gave first to the mother, and after her to us." Or again, "that we may be able in common to share the salt and the bread."

From these and other similar references, it is evident that the Gnostic Eucharist has little or nothing to do with the specifically Christian sacrament. What we see in Gnosticism is simply a festival, going back to a primitive Semitic custom of alliance-making and creation of brotherhoods. The sacramental observance of the eating of bread and salt is nothing else than the festive act of initiation, through which the

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(1) τὸν ἄρτον ἔπ' εὐχαριστίας κλάσας Clem. Hom 14. 1

(2) ἅλων καὶ τρυπέγγυς μεταλαβείν Clem. Hom 13. 8.

youth was accepted into the common life of the sect.

Incidentally a reference may be made to the sacramental festival in Pistis Sophia, a water, fire and spiritual Eucharist. We read in Pistis Sophia<sup>(2.)</sup> 142 ? *Reference*  
 "But Jesus spoke to him: bring me fire and wine branches. They brought them to him, he laid down the offering (prosphora), and placed two pitchers, one to the left and the other to the right of the offering."

(1)

Another curious variant is mentioned by Tertullian, regarding the Marcionites,—the fellowship of honey and milk, by which they nourish their members.

Hippolytus describes the same in reference to the Naassenes. This is the honey and the milk, tasting which, the perfected become "kingless" and share in the Pleroma. (2.)

In no respect were the Gnostic communities further away from the Christianity of the New Testament than in their conceptions of man's last journey. The contrast between the κοιμηθῆναι ἐν χριστῷ (of 1 Cor. xv, 18), and the demon-infested, barricaded way to the place of

(2.) vide 'Hauptprobleme' Brunel, p. 308.

(1) Tertull., Adv. Marc. I, 14: "mellis et lactis societatem, qua suos infantat."

(2.) *Κερβουλ. ν. ρ. π. 160. 10: ταῦτό ἐστι τὸ μέλι, καὶ τὸ γάλα αὐτοῦ γευσσάμενους τὰς τελείους ἑρασιλεύτους καὶ μεταβλέψαντας τὸ πλῆρωμα.*

bliss is absolute. Death was not the "janua vitae", but the vestibule of horrors. The 'ascent of the soul' was the Gnostic's chiefest anxiety. Here we move in naked superstition. There was no mention of faith or hope, no friendly guide. The Gnostic lived in a very unfriendly world. His task was to elude, to escape, to propitiate and so succeed in making his perilous journey. He was taught his 'Caulacaus', 'Saulasaus' and 'Zeesars'; the names of the seven evil archons who barred the passage of each sphere. To know a Ialdabaoth and a Sabaoth was to find the barrier open. He was taught his incantations, such as Irenaeus has given us in I 21 5. "I am a son of the Father, the Father Who was before the whole world - I came to see everything, that which is strange and that which is my own: and deep down there is nothing strange, but only that which belongs to Achamoth. For she is the female Aeon, and she has made all things. I draw my sex from that which was before the world, and take back to it the property from which I came."

Another prayer of the same character is found in I, 13, the effect of which is that the mother throws the

Galea Homericæ over the soul, and so makes him invisible to the potencies and demons which surround and attack him.

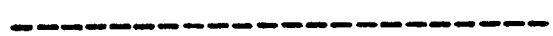
The ascent of the soul was apparently worked up into an experience. The mystic, by secret incantations and sacraments of holy oil and water, was induced into an estatic condition, of which Irenæus gives us a hint in I, 31, 2.

But the consummation of the Gnostic piety and striving was the entry upon a Syzygia with one of the spirits in the Pleroma. It may be that it was only the Valentinians who gave prominence to this. At any rate they had as one of their religious observances the Bridal chamber. Irenæus so describes it - "For some of them frame a bridal chamber and solemnize an initiation, with certain invocations upon those who are being perfected, and they say that what they do is a spiritual marriage, after the similitudes of the marriages on high."

This may frequently have led to scenes of debauchery. Irenæus thinks that the mystics were all women. But the ceremony was for the "Pneumatics", men as well

as women. The bridal chamber may have been a room peculiarly solemn and prepared for the initiation. It has been supposed that in the Valentinian sanctuary there were several rooms apportioned to the grades of worshippers. A curious phrase, may be quoted from Hippolytus, regarding the Naassenes, "we are of all men alone Christians making ready the mystery in the third door." In the sanctuary of Mithras in Ostia, with seven circles on the floor, to which on the walls the seven planets corresponded, Cumont assumes that this partition of the room held a bearing on the mysteries of the various grades.

Whether, however, solemn decorous and inspiring, or, as Irenaeus thought, degrading to the last degree, the closing scenes of Gnostic Christian worship were certainly not inspired by Christianity.



XI.

The Points of Contact with Christianity

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POINTS OF CONTACT WITH CHRISTIANITY.

The saying was current regarding at least some of the Gnostics, that they pretended to be Christians. In other words, and stripped of prejudice, they claimed that they were Christians. The investigations already made will have substantiated that claim to some extent. Exceptions must however be made;— the Ophic systems in particular. And yet Celsus calls them Christians. They were practically pagan cults with a thin veneer of Christian terminology and history. But the systems of Basilides, and Valentinus( with his disciples Hera- cleon and Ptolemaeus,) legitimately deserve the title of Christian-Gnostic . So also Marcion, in spite of his extravagant and implacable exegesis.

It would not be correct to say that the Gnostic movement arose within the Church, expelled eventually to live an independent existence, any more than that the Gnostic movement came from without, and accommodated itself, for a time, to the Church doctrine and fellowship. Gnosticism was not a mere heresy arising in the Church, which had to be excommunicated and destroyed, like Arian- ism. It was a body of opinion which, in these eclectic and syncretistic times, attracted thousands of minds,



learned and simple, and crystallised here and there into coteries and associations. There were Orphic fraternities, Orphic circles, Syrian goddess cults, Pythagorean communities, Mithras lodges, cults of Isis, Platonic Jews - all giving evidence of a very widespread religious interest.

Basilides came from that keenly interested Alexandrine world. We are told that before he came to Alexandria he had been a kind of preacher among the  
(1)  
Persians. He and Isidore his son appealed to prophets with Oriental names, Barkabbas, and Barkoph, Parchor and Cham (Zoroaster).

Valentinus emerges as a young Egyptian, a student of Plato, permeated through and through with the Greek spirit. "Obsessed with the most profound religious and moral aspirations of his time, haunted by the problem of evil and of salvation, he came to Christianity because he believed he would find the satisfaction of the need of conscience, and the solution of the problems that  
(2)  
occupied him." "Become a Christian, he continued to meditate and excavate. Very far from arresting his

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(1) Acta Archelai, c.55 "fuit praedicator apud Persos."

(2) De Faye, "Gnostique", p.73.

flight, Christianity stimulated his thought the more." <sup>(1)</sup>

What then did men like Basilides and Valentinus find in Christianity? It was not the simple Synoptic story, or the Christian sacraments. Their search was on a different plane. They were men of intellectual aspiration, philosophers, searchers after truth. What they saw in Christianity was St. Paul's philosophical presentation of it. Gnosticism came into the Christian Church, when it came at all, <sup>(2.)</sup> via St. Paul. Or if, by another theory, it arose from within the Church, St. Paul is responsible. St. Paul was the mediating influence that conveyed the Gospel and its implications to the European mind. That there was such a thing as Christian Gnosticism is due to the Christian philosophy the Church received as an inheritance from St. Paul.

St. Paul was a Jew, but he was an Alexandrian, a Hellenised Jew. He was not a Platonist, nor a Stoic, though probably he was not ignorant of the Academy or the Stoa. He was a Jew, but independent, creative. Unlike the disciples he had a unique experience of Christ, which dominated his doctrine. His Epistles

(1) De Faye, "Gnostique", "Devenu Chrétien, il a continué de méditer et de creuser. Bien loin d'arrêter son essor, le Christianisme n'a fait que stimuler encore sa pensée."

(2.) To St Paul must be added the fourth Evangelist.

were written in forceful, vital, non-academic, Hellenistic Greek, and he appealed especially to men who were fighting their way to a reasoned faith.

Now if Paul were to be of use to the ardent moral thinkers of his time, he must have shared with them some common platform. The point to be ascertained is this - did Paul have convictions, doctrines, conceptions in common with the cultured minds of the Hellenistic world? It would seem that he had.

These may be briefly summarised:

(1) Paul's views of the world, of the Cosmos, were views of the time. The Universe was the arena of a host of etheral spirits, angelic or demonic, which exercise a potent sway over it. Paul speaks of "principalities and powers", "thrones and dominions", "authorities", "things seen and unseen", "rulers of this Aeon", "elements" of the world.

The present Aeon is subject to the evil powers; indeed the "whole Creation groaneth and travaileth" (Rom.viii 22).

(1) Ψυχαι, δυνάμεις. Rom.viii,38; θρόνοι, κυριότητες Col. ii,16; τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα Col.ii,16; ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου 1 Cor.ii,6; τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου Gal. iv, 3.

St. Paul was not a fatalist, nor in the last resort a pessimist, but he did believe that the world was in the grip of a malevolent power, from which humanity had not the power to escape.

St. Paul was mainly interested in the transcendental world. The world of affairs did not concern him; he <sup>had</sup> little interest in history, or in peoples, or in geography. In that transcendental Cosmos, with its multitude of angels and principalities, there was room for Valentinus to stage his Pleroma and its supra-sensible Beings.

It is true that St. Paul is not a dualist. He has many antitheses, spirit and flesh, light and darkness, the transcendent world and the present world, God and the hierarchy of angels as over against "the rulers of the darkness of this world." But Paul was restrained by his Jewish training from going all the way with Plato. To St. Paul, the flesh was not inherently evil, nor is the body the prison-house of the soul. Professor E.F. Scott <sup>(1)</sup> thinks that he was to a certain extent influenced by the Hellenist conception of matter, as well as the Hebrew one, and that there is a certain inconsistency

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(1) Cf. "The Spirit of the New Testament" p.133. (E.F. Scott)

of thought on the subject. Indeed so vivid was his obsession on sin, that he held that the spiritual element in our nature was impotent to will or do the good. The Greek doctrine, as Professor Mackinnon has pointed (1) out, of the inherent evil of matter, would, in fact, have rendered impossible the Pauline doctrine of redemption operated by, and attainable through Christ for both man and creature.

Paul's cosmology was a well known and well charted field of the Syncretistic circles. He has traces of astral superstition in his writings, the "heavenly spheres", and the "heavenly places." The "groaning and travailing" of the Creation sounds more than a poetical image, it is suggestive that the Universe is a living being, as Plato (2.) taught. Nor can one resist the impression one receives from Romans viii, 39, that the Universe has Entities that at least threaten to separate us from the love of God. In Ephesians ii, 2 there is the strange phrase, "in which ye walked according to the Aeon of this world, according to the prince of the sovereignty of the air, of the spirit that is now active among the sons of unbelief."

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(1) "The Gospel in the Early Church", p.65.

(2.) In the "Timaeus".

There again Valentinus would find a congenial spirit, and a doctrine which he could not call strange.

When we come to Christology, the contiguity of the great Gnostics is striking.

St. Paul's first contact with Christ was not a contact of two living men. Whether or no he had ever seen Christ, and heard Him preach, we cannot tell. He tells us nothing of that. In fact the only parts of Christ's ministry that seems to have profoundly moved and influenced him are the closing events of His life; the Eucharist, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. Indeed, he tells us, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more"<sup>(1)</sup>; that is to say, Christ as He actually lived in earth, the Christ of the primitive tradition, the man personally known to the early disciples. ?

St. Paul's Christology is based on his vision of Christ on the way to Damascus. It was as momentous a revelation as any of the disciples received who saw Him constantly face to face. In truth it made him in no whit behind any of the Apostles.

When he speaks of Christ, it is not as in the Synoptics, the 'Son of man', but the "Son of God", as being

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(1) 2 Cor.v,16.

Εἶπα γὰρ ἔγνωκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἄλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν

more intelligible to his Gentile hearers. Paul's view of Christ was of a Supreme Being, Who had co-existed with God from all eternity, a Christ Who was a Great Cosmic Entity, Who had cooperated in the Creation, and would carry out the plan of God to its great consummation.

(2) The adoptionist view of Christ, the view of the primitive community of the Gospels and of the early chapters of the book of Acts is developed by St. Paul with masterly originality and creative power, into that of a Supra-cosmical Being.

This development occurs in the later Epistles. He leaves the Synoptic and primitive conception behind and advances to the conception of Christ, as the pre-existent Son of God, a Primal Being. In calling Him "the first born of all creation" <sup>(1)</sup> he uses practically the same word as Philo - "All things are created by Him, whether thrones or sovereignties, or authorities or powers, all are created through Him and to Him, and He is before all things, and all things consist in Him." <sup>(2)</sup> He is the medium between God and the Universe. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is in His face. <sup>(3)</sup> He is the image of the invisible God. <sup>(4)</sup> He

(2) Rom. I. 3. τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ ὀρίσθεντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἐγνωσῆναι ἕξ ἀκράτους νεκρῶν κ. τ. λ.

(1.) Col 1. 15. πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως

(2.) 1. Cor. v. 18 τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάσσοντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ

(3.) 2. Cor. iv. 6 φωτισμὸν γὰρ γνώσεως γὰρ δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰ. Χ. ν.

(4.) Col I. 15 ὃς ἔστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἁόρατου.

(1)  
 who was in the form of God took the form of a servant.  
 (2)  
 In Him dwelt all the pleroma of the Godhead corporeally.  
 Grace and peace are to come from God the Father and the  
 Lord Jesus Christ. (3) He receives all authority and  
 dominion in the Universe, and God has given Him a name  
 that is above every name. (4) This great ascription vouch-  
 safes to Jesus the absolutely supreme place next to God,  
 power over all things, superiority over angels, destroy-  
 er of the power of Satan, and the transforming of the  
 world to the purposes of God. Further, He is the Head  
 of the Church and the object of worship. He is the  
 Centre of all the mystic cult and ceremony.

It is not within the purview of this study to dis-  
 cuss the question as to whether this glorified trans-  
 cendent omnipotent Cosmic Being is only a creation of  
 St. Paul's vivid experience and imagination, or whether  
 the Christ of the primitive Christian circle was really  
 Lord of all and needed the elaboration of no man's  
 genius to describe Him. The situation is this that  
 in the accepted theology of the Christian Church the

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- (1) Phil.ii,6 ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων... μορφὴν δούλου ἠεβών  
 (2) Col.ii,9 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς  
 (3) Rom.i,7 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰ. Χρ.  
 (4) Phil.ii,9 Διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερέψωσε καὶ εὐχαρίσαστο  
 αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα



Lord Jesus Christ, of the same substance as God, a Divine Figure, existing from all eternity, was the Christian Redeemer.

But it was not the figure of Christ, as Paul left it, that chiefly attracted the Gnostic. It was the Pauline figure after it had passed through the mystic alembic of the author of the Fourth Gospel. There Christ was equated with the great Logos conception of Plato and Philo. Christ as the Logos was the link between the unseen Father and the material world. The Fourth Gospel is Hellenistic. It drew its essential dualism from its environment - its antithesis of God and the world, light and darkness, the children of God and the children of the Devil. The Synoptic Gospels were unhellenistic, they were realistic, historical. The Gnostics cared nothing for history, except as a thesaurus of "types". The Fourth Gospel moved uneasily and artificially in the domain of history. The story of Christ is secondary. It was introduced to give the academic conception of the Logos Christ flesh and blood. It was written to combat the Gnostic doctrine, - with no great success for the Gnostics set great store by that very Gospel. Christianity thus gave to the world a cosmology, a supra-cosmic eternal divine

Redeemer, a Logos or intermediary between the ineffable Godhead and the material world.

Without doubt the Gnostics saw in Christianity a mystery religion. Many of Paul's greatest sayings are mystical - "Christ liveth in me"<sup>(1)</sup>; "if ye be risen with Christ"<sup>(2)</sup>; "the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God"<sup>(3)</sup>; "the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"<sup>(4)</sup>; "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation"<sup>(5)</sup>; "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery"<sup>(6)</sup>; "the mystery of Christ"<sup>(7)</sup>; etc.

To the world such counsels must have savoured of mystery. They were intriguing. More than that, were they not a Gnosis? In a large measure Paul was a Gnostic, though he would have repudiated every single system ranging under that name. Paul was no more the father of Gnosticism than he was of sacramentarianism, but the germs of both are latent in his system. Paul's strong, human, personal religion kept his system sane and powerful. Take away the personal note, and the goal of his

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(1) GAL II. 20. Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ἢ ἔτι ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός.

(2) COL III. 1. - εἰ οὖν συνήγησθε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ὑψέλιτε

(3) EPH. III. 9. - τίς ἢ ὁκοινωνία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ αποκρυφθέντος ἀπὸ τῶν

αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ  
 (4) EPH. I. 22. - τῷ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἣτις ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πληρωμα κ.τ.λ.

(5) 2 COR V. 17. - ὡς ἐάν τις ἐν Χριστῷ καινὴ κτίσις

(6) 1 COR III. 7. - ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν Θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίου

(7) EPH. III. 4. - ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

teaching eventually becomes Gnosticism.

St. Paul's doctrine of election implied a category of Christians, who because they possessed the Pneuma of Christ, could not be separated from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus the Lord. It is true that he said they were fore-known and predestinated.

The Gnostics of Valentinianism found in Paul one whom they thought they could claim as a teacher of their own doctrine of the "spirituals", who came down to earth with the assurance that they would be saved and needed no Redeemer. But did not Paul teach that the "spirit" was the gift of God through Christ Jesus? Paul's Christian prudence and common sense would have condemned the Gnostic Pneumatic's arrogant claim.

Paul acknowledged the manifold manifestation of the "spirit" in redeemed man, as for example the "charism" of speaking with tongues. But there again St. Paul's good sense differentiated between reality and affectation or hallucination. It is the real St. Paul who says he  
 (1)  
 "would rather speak five words with his understanding that he might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

But when the Gnostics appeared in the Church, there

(1) 1 COR. XIV. 19 - ἄλλ' ἐν ἐκκλησίαις θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοί μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους καταχύσω, ἢ κυρίως λόγους ἐν ἄγνωσται.

was no Paul to guide, nor was there - what the Church had to establish eventually - a creed to prevent liberty becoming license. The Gnostics got a footing in the Christ-mysticism of Paul, and exploited it into the extravagances of unrestrained imagination. Paul was no ascetic. He knew both to abound and to suffer need; ~~but~~ he kept his nature within strict limitations. But he could easily be misunderstood and used to give countenance to the ascetic Gnostics.

Paul's attitude to Judaism and the law of Moses was profoundly interesting to a certain type of Gnostic, such as Marcion. The law to Paul was only a 'pedagogue' to Christ, but he also said "in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything." It was not Paul's considered judgment like the former, but such obiter dicta as the latter that impressed the casual hearer.

Christianity under Pauline influence presented an imposing scheme of Redemption. It is not the simple and natural words of Jesus of Nazareth - "thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace" but a drama which one is to comprehend and experience in one's soul. It is a drama not wrought out on earth, but in the transcendental

sphere. Christ, the eternal divine Son, descends to this earth, undergoes the degradation of the Cross, reascends after His death and resurrection, to acquire the name that is above every name. The facts are, the Descent, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension. This is not the Christology of a simple believer, but of a mystic philosopher. Paul, however, though he soared into this soteriological empyrean, never lost his sanity, his sense of proportion and his adherence to reality. But his very speculation was an encouragement towards other, bolder, more reckless speculations. The Gnostic took heart afresh and "out-Pauled" Paul.

One is often moved to wonder whether there were really two sides to Paul, one the simple side, the belief of the common man, the intimate consciousness of personal sin and personal need, the longing to go direct to God, flinging philosophy to the moles and the bats; and another side, - being all things to all men - which he explored and laid before men of like calibre with himself, a daring attempt to trace out the implications of a Divine Being visiting the earth with the purpose of redemption, and returning to His glory.

If so, Paul did not lack a Basilides or a Valen-

tinus to follow him enthusiastically in his great soteriological schemes.

To make that cosmic salvation complete, the demons inhabiting the cosmos must be included and so we have a Christ who <sup>not only</sup> redeems man from sin, but from the the attack and domination of demons and cosmic necessity. In his enthusiasm for Christ, and in his conviction that no place was too high for Him to fill, and no power so great, and no authority so unlimited that he could not and did not exercise, St. Paul unconsciously left a door open for all manner of extravagancies of intermediary activity between the Supreme God and the Universe.

The cardinal question, however, is this - could Christianity be called a "Gnosis"? St. Paul evidently looks on "gnosis" as an addition to faith. He says that though all may have faith in the Father Creator and in Jesus Christ, yet all do not have "gnosis". It was a privilege of advanced Christians, a "charisma." A study of the relevant "gnosis" passages makes it clear that gnosis was an insight into the mystery of Christ, of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the knowledge of a hidden mystery. It was the strong meat, not the milk for babes, the Christian neophytes. The purely natural man cannot understand. Christ Himself

recognised a gnosis though He did not call it so - "unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."<sup>(1)</sup> Christ recognised that it would be the privilege of the few. "Many are called but few are chosen." It was a knowledge not of this world, a knowledge pre-eminently of redemption, of the full meaning of the Cross, and of the cosmic scope of Christ's work. It was a mystery hidden from the "world rulers of this darkness."

It included implicitly what Paul taught his converts, his interpretation of the Bible, his conceptions of the Eucharist, the eschatology of the Christian faith. The knowledge of these things was a charisma, a gift of God. But from the other side of his nature came the conviction that though he had all knowledge, without charity he was nothing. Even the Gnosis would vanish away. The Gnosis was not so all-important. The greatest of these was charity.

Today we appreciate far more the Paul of the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians than the Paul of the Colossians. His cosmic speculations are a mist before Christ, rather than a crown of glory. But it was just that speculative "gnosis" side of St. Paul and

(1) MARK II. II. ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δίδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ κ.τ.λ.

of the Christian Church that appealed to these eclectic philosophers like Valentinus. He and his friends found in Christianity what they needed, and it is not too much to say that the New Testament in its Apostolic aspect, prepared the way for Gnosticism.

A few words may be added by way of summing up the Gnostic contacts in the New Testament apostolic period. This embraces practically Paulinism and the Johanne<sup>n</sup> g<sup>^</sup>nosis, which really derives from St. Paul.

(1) St. Paul in stressing the contrast between spirit and flesh almost declared that the flesh was the seat of sin.

(2) There was in Apostolic times a tendency towards asceticism. St. Paul kept his body in subjection. He fasted, he abjured wine, lest he should make his brother to offend. He seems to prefer the Christian who abstains from marriage.

(3) St. Paul was essentially a mystic. His "polit-euma", his "world life" was in heaven. (1) The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. (2) His Christian life was based on a revelation of Jesus. (3) His esoteric

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(1) Phil.iii, 20.  
 (3a) Acts ix, 4.

(2) 2 Cor.x, 4.



teaching came from a revelation in the third heaven;<sup>(1)</sup>  
 the details of the Eucharist he "received from the Lord"<sup>(2)</sup>  
 and when, in the agony of the thorn in the flesh, the  
 messenger of Satan buffeted him, God said, "My Grace  
 is sufficient for thee."<sup>(3)</sup>

(3) The Pauline cosmology was purely Alexandrine  
 and fitted the syncretised speculations.

(4) St. Paul had a vivid consciousness of a cosmos  
 peopled with spirits, angels, demons. He speaks of  
 his converts as being at one time enslaved to the ele-  
 ments of the world.<sup>(4)</sup> The passage of the soul from the  
 world to God was as full of peril as that of the soul's  
 life in the body. Neither angels nor principalities  
 nor spirits above or below, nor any other creature can  
 bar the way to the love of God.<sup>(5)</sup> St. Paul held that  
 there was a world of spirits brought into being like  
 the rest of Creation by Christ (Col.i,16). These  
 spirits are ranged in a certain hierarchy to which the  
 current names are given. They seem to be neither wholly  
 good, nor wholly bad, for to them too the Atonement of  
 the Cross extends.<sup>(6)</sup> They too must acknowledge the uni-

(1) 2 Cor.xii 2.                   (2) 1 Cor.i 23.                   (3) 2 Cor.xii 9.

(4) Gal.iv 3 ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἦμεν δεδουλωμένοι.

(5) Sanday & Headlam on Romans viii 38.

(6) Col.i 20 ἃ ποικιλελλῆσαι τὰ πάντα ... διὰ ... τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ  
 ... εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

versal sovereignty of Christ (1 Cor. xv 24: cf. Eph. i 10).

(5) St. Paul's great doctrine was Salvation. Beginning as ~~the~~ personal experience, of a persecutor of the followers of Christ, indeed of Christ Himself, it broadened out and rose in his thought to cosmical significance. St. Paul's Gospel appealed to the whole Creation. Nothing was outside the sweep of Christ's mighty power. But, nevertheless, Paul's supra-cosmic Lord remained still the Christ crucified for the sins of the world. There was a double attraction in St. Paul's Gospel of Salvation to a world that was vitally interested in Redemption. It was supremely great. It safeguarded the awful sanctity and unspeakable greatness of God, but it presented in Jesus, not an abstraction, but a Saviour in flesh and blood.

The Gnostic systems were based on gnosis and did not need a Saviour, and their attempt to graft on the systems the Aeon Christ betrays its artificiality and awkwardness at once. But no Gnostic system could succeed without the concept of Redemption. Consequently the Gnostic Redeemer bears no real likeness to the Man  
(1)  
of Galilee.

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(1) Cf. "The "Gnostic Redeemer" in Hellenism and Christianity." (Edwyn Bevan), p.89.

(6) There is, lastly, in St. Paul's teaching, a tendency towards hypostatizing of spiritual realities. Most students, reading the details of, for example, the Valentinian System, are amazed at the unreality of the superstructure of syzygies of abstract existences, Bythus Sige, Nous Aletheia, Logos and Zoe, Anthropos and Ecclesia, Ageratos and Henosis, Monogenes and Macaria, etc.

Christianity was not immune. We have the "Memra" of Judaism. St. Paul uses 'thrones and powers' and 'principalities and dominions', elements (rudiments), creature (κτίσις) as if they were endowed with personality. The concept Logos is an hypostasis. There is really nothing very obscure or mysterious about this. It is a simple matter to endow a quality with a quasi-personality. It gives vividness and deceives no one. St. Paul's hypostases were nothing more than a vivid picturing of actual powers. At the same time there was a tendency in the age to soften the unwelcome names of astral powers by abstract names. We have an instance in the System of the Barbelo Gnostics, where we

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(1) Cf. Bousset "Hauptprobleme der Gnosis", p.12: "Wir haben hier ein direktes Beispiel, wie ursprünglich plastische Göttergestalten in hypostasenartige Abstraktionen umgewandelt werden."

find the primitive planet-gods represented as Proarchon Anthadia, Kakia Zelos, Phthonos, Erinnyes, Epithymia.

In conclusion it may be said that with all the foreign <sup>in-</sup>filtrations which may have given a cue to Gnostic speculators, and provided, so to speak, grist to their mill, Paul died not a Hellenist, but fundamentally a Jew. His speculation does not trespass definite limits, and remains subordinated to the moral and psychological point of view.

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XII.

The Evolution of the Gnostic Systems.

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"THE EVOLUTION OF THE GNOSTIC SYSTEMS"

After having made an attempt to delineate the possible links of connection with Gnosis, which can be observed in Christianity, we shall endeavour to trace out the lines on which the various Gnosticisms ran, either within the Christian system, or parallel to it, or wholly apart.

The Bousset-Reitzenstein School posits a primitive Gnosticism centring in Syria, a system with a mother-goddess and astral deities, which, with Professor Schmidt, Bousset calls the sect of the Gnostics. From this primitive origin issued the various schools. This hypothesis, attractive in its simplicity, does not cover all the phenomena, though it accounts for some. It is like the hypothesis, in anthropological science, of tracing the human race to one primitive stock in prehistoric antiquity. Experts today have reason to assume more than one stock, and more than one centre of origin.

Now this primitive source is not Gnostic in character. If the dim and shadowy Simon Magus of Samaria represents a late type of it, he is only an itinerant magician, a product of a pagan culture. Instead of a Gnostic source, all we have is a loose amalgam of prim-

itive religions, coalescing from various Eastern localities. Gnosticism is not to be confused or identified with raw material. It had a definite emergence. It appears in the beginning of the Second Century under three or four definite personalities. All of them, Basilides, Valentinus, Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, professed the secret of a profound knowledge. They claimed to find their "Gnosis" in the Scriptures, especially in the words of Jesus and Paul. Some, like the Ophites of the 'Philosophúmena', based their systems on pagan myths, fusing them into material from the Scriptures.

It was a remarkable efflorescence of genius. It was Alexandrine religion and culture making its voice heard in the Church, for if the Church was universal, if it was a catholic Church, then men who were not nurtured in the narrow Jewish tradition had a right to interpret Christianity, as it appeared to their Roman and Alexandrian minds, ~~to~~ their own peculiar religious views and mental equipment. Neither Basilides, nor Valentinus nor even the erudite Ophite, or Naassene or Perate or Sethian were thinking of Syria or Persia or Babylonia. They were children of Mediterranean culture, Hellenistic thinkers, men of their own time,

and they preached Christianity in their own way.

As De Faye says, "Gnosticism is a product of a kind of 'elan vital'. In its first vigour it deploys into three or four different directions, it creates systems vast and manifold: it brings forth a whole luxuriant vegetation; with natural lassitude, it contracts, it concentrates, until its initial force is entirely expended."<sup>(1)</sup>

It has been remarked that Basilides, Valentinus, and the others claimed to possess and to teach the secret of γνῶσις, — what it was, what it included, how it operated, and what it effected. They did not call themselves Gnostics. The first use of the word in a technical sense is in the first epistle to Timothy.<sup>(2)</sup> The name 'Gnostics' is attached by Hippolytus and Irenaeus to a sect of Ophites, the Naassenes.<sup>(3)</sup> It is the name the Carpocratians adopted<sup>(4)</sup> (Iren. I 25,6).

Gnosticism in its narrower (Ophite) significance,

(1) De Faye, "Gnostiques", p.451. "Le gnosticisme ... le produit d'une sorte d'élan vital. Dans sa première vigueur, il se déploie dans trois ou quatre directions différentes, il crée des systèmes vastes et féconds, il enfante toute une luxuriante végétation: avec l'épuisement naturel, il se resserre, il se concentra, jusqu'à ce que sa force initiale soit entièrement dépensée."

(2) ἡ ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις 1 Tim. vi. 21.

(3) Ναασσηνοὶ --- οἱ ἑαυτοὺς Γνωστικῶν ἀποκαλοῦντες

(4) Gnosticos se autem vocant.



and, in its higher forms, came to the front about, or subsequent to the first quarter of the Second Century. It began to decline about the beginning of the Third Century, losing all its distinctive forms, and from the debris of this enfeebled Syncretism there arose the Manichaeian movement.

It will be interesting to learn what one of the most recent scholars on that period, Professor Leisegang, has written as to the nature of Gnosticism:

"Under the title "Gnosis" in the wider sense, every redemptive religion can be understood, according to whose doctrine the redemption is made dependent on the knowledge ( $\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) of God, of the meaning and object of the world and of the individual life, for only such a knowledge makes possible the human habits and acts that correspond to the purposes of God. The awakening of such knowledge is, in other words, a revelation, a work of God, who opens the eye of the soul, and affords it a glimpse into that of God, and guards the world mystery so that it recognises <sup>(2)</sup> "who we are, and what we are to become, whence we have sprung forth, and whither we hasten and from what we are redeemed, what it has to say of our birth and what of our second birth!" <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart; article, "Gnosis". Prof. LEISEGANG.

(2) Excerpta ex Theodoto 78, 2 .

Irenaeus; speaking of the followers of the Valentinian, Marcus, says,<sup>(1)</sup> "The knowledge is the redemption of the inner man, and that is neither a bodily redemption, for the body is corruptible, nor mental, for the mind is the offspring of defect, and is only, so to speak, the dwelling of the spirit, therefore must the redemption be spiritual, that is, the inner spiritual man is redeemed by knowledge, and they are content with the knowledge of all things, and that is the true redemption."

Gnosticism came into contact with Christianity as coteries in whose teachings and sacred rites redemption had the predominant place. It was not a contact of religious philosophies, and it is here that we are face to face with a difficult problem. Professor Bousset marshals all the Gnostic sects as they gathered in Rome or Alexandria. He traces the converging streams with painstaking and sure scholarship to their sources in Syria and the Mesopotamian plain and elsewhere, but he leaves unsolved the problem, how these pagan sects came

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(1) Iren. Adv. Haer. I 21. 4. — ὥστε εἶναι τὴν γνῶσιν ἀπολύτωσησιν τοῦ ἔσω ἀνθρώπου· καὶ μήτε σωματικὴν ὑπάρχειν αὐτῶν, φθαρτὸν γὰρ τὸ σῶμα· μήτε ψυχικὴν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐστὶ ὑστέρημα καὶ ἐστὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ὡς πρὸς οἰκονομίαν· πνευματικὴν αὖν δεῖν καὶ τὴν λύτρωσιν ὑπάρχειν· λυτροῦσθαι γὰρ διὰ γνῶσεως τοῦ ἔσω ἀνθρώπου τὸν πνευματικὸν καὶ ἀρκεῖσθαι αὐτοῦς τῶν ὅλων ἐπιγνώσει· καὶ ταύτην εἶναι λύτρωσιν ἁγῶν.

to arrogate to themselves the title of Christians. It is only fair to say that he kept within his theme, which was "Die Hauptprobleme der Gnosis". Professor Carl Schmidt<sup>(1)</sup> goes only so far as to say that an exhibition of the development of the Gnosis is only possible on altogether general lines.

It has already been pointed out that Christian Gnosticism can have arisen only in two ways. Either there were elements in the beliefs of the primitive Christian circles, or in their acts of worship and sacramental observances, which, deviating from the orthodox current of the Catholic Church, issued in various forms of doctrine and culture, sweeping foreign elements such as serpent worship, amulets and charms and so forth into the various currents, the primitive faith becoming a more or less superstitious Gnosis; or there came forward in the Churches individuals whose interest and enthusiasm had been kindled by the religious mysteries of a neighbouring sect, and in the persistent manner of converts, set to promulgating the new doctrine among

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(1) Die Religion in Geschichte & Art. "Gnosticism" .  
 "Eine Darstellung der Entwicklungsgeschichte der Gnosis ist nur in ganz allgemeinen Linien möglich. Denn der Gnosis ist eine unpersonliche religiöse Massenbewegung wenn er sich auch in viele einzelne Aeste verzweigt hat."

the faithful. Thus for years members with pronounced Gnostic views might remain in the Communion. When eventually they broke off, or were expelled, they formed a body which endeavoured to amalgamate the Christian teaching they had received with the doctrine and culture of the Gnostic sect.

Now, *prima facie*, neither hypothesis can be summarily dismissed. The degradation of simple Christian faith and worship into that which would be quite in keeping with a heathen temple, is not beyond the range of possibility. But such a hypothesis must not leave the actual Gnostic systems unexplained. A degraded Christianity with a few adventitious features such as a Barbelo, or a Prunikos, or a Serpent - and that is all one could expect - bears no likeness whatever to any Gnostic system with its vast hinterland, its indigenous growths, its elaborate ritual and its complicated astral soteriology.

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One of the most recent volumes on the subject is based on this hypothesis. The author, Dr. F.C. Burkitt, says, apropos his remark that 'the Gnostics come before us historically as Christians,' "The view which has

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(1) Cf. "The Church and Gnosis" (F.C. Burkitt, D.D.), 1932. p.9 et passim.

found a great deal of favour in recent years is to regard 'the Gnosis' as a kind of philosophy derived from the Orient, from that East which was only superficially influenced by Greek thought and clarity, a philosophy which is supposed to have been current in the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire during the centuries that followed Alexander the Great, and particularly during the first two centuries of our Era. This view has been upheld with great learning by such scholars as Bousset and Reitzenstein: if I take the other side, it is not only because I think the several systems are best understood when considered as Christian systems, however aberrant, but because I wish, above all, to point out that the dominant cause, the moving factor, which led to the excogitation of these systems, was something inherent in Christianity and the beliefs of the earliest Christians."

Dr. Burkitt's contention seems to be inspired by Schweitzer. Indeed he prefaces his volume with a sentence of Schweitzer's, viz: "However much obscurity surrounds the rise of Gnosticism, the one thing that is certain is that Christian-Hellenistic Gnosis arose out of Christian eschatological Gnosis." Dr. Burkitt develops (1)

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(1) "The Church and Gnosis" p.21.

this theme, tracing the eschatological hopes from the Synoptic Gospels, right down through the Pauline Epistles (though he <sup>(1)</sup> *very clearly* says that Paul in his later Epistles abandons his hope of a speedy coming of the Lord). He continues, "And meanwhile the old eschatological view of the world and its fate continued to persist with unabated strength." The disasters of the Jewish war roused to new life the Jewish hopes. The world too was full of rumours of an impending disaster, a Nero redivivus, and premonitions of the most sinister kind.

(2)

"Could the Christian theory of the world stand the strain of an age of Roman prosperity? The Church still continued to increase, but did it teach a theory, a theology, fit for an enlightened educated man? Was there not a call for a new theology, something which would explain the true nature of "the salvation" attained mysteriously by Christians in terms of current enlightened ideas ..... In due time (such questions) gave rise to such <sup>Gnostic</sup> systems as those of Valentinus and Basilides."

This is an attractive argument, and it will not be disputed that Gnosticism in some forms did meet the claim for an enlightened presentation of Christianity.

(1.) Church and Gnosis (Dunk II) p. 19.

(2.) Church and Gnosis Burkhitt p/s. 21, 22

But where is the evidence of the "unabated strength of the old eschatology?" And even were it true that the Jews were fired to a new hope, what bearing has that on the Christian Church from which, ex argumento, the Gnostics were to arise? The apocalyptic hope, had really weakened with the years and was slowly expiring. Professor Harnack has an illuminating sentence on this matter. He says, "The quiet gradual change, in which the eschatological hopes passed away, fell into the background, or lost important parts, was a result of deep-reaching changes in the faith and life of Christendom."

The Christian theory of the world then did not carry much of a burden in its eschatological hopes.

One must confess to very considerable difficulty in imagining what elements in Christianity could have developed into the general and distinctive Gnostic conceptions. A 'docetic' Christology could not have arisen independently in the Church out of such vivid and triumphant convictions of Christ's real personality. St. Paul's cosmology of a transcendent Divine Figure whose "Name was above every name", opened a door to speculation, but provided no material for Valentinus' Syzygies, or Basilides' three hundred and sixty-five heavens.

It surely could not be thought possible that reverence for the Virgin Mary developed into a belief in an Aeon Sophia, or Barbelo, for the Church during the first three centuries considered Mary just as a human being. Whence else could the 'spiritual principle' have come from? A lofty Christian Platonic speculation might well have developed from Paulinism, but not any of the Gnostic systems we know. No, the elements which distinguished the Gnostic systems came from outside; and for all these reasons the hypothesis that the Gnosis arose from the body of the Christian Church must be discarded.

It is the opposite hypothesis that holds the field. An immense wealth of scholarship has been concentrated on the whole Gnostic movement, which so profoundly agitated and affected the Church. To mention only a few distinguished scholars, Anz and Harnack, Reitzenstein and Hilgenfeld, Wendland and Bousset, Cumont and De Faye, have put the right solution of the appearance of the Gnostic sects beyond all adverse criticism. Gnosticism was not in its essential features a product of Christianity; it was an importation. It was adventitious. Gnosticism, if we choose to use one figure, was grafted on the Church (for a time), or if



we use another, it absorbed from the Church whatever was attractive, and if we may trust Irenaeus,<sup>(1)</sup> advantageous and lucrative.

It is the merit of the French student of the Gnostic movement that he has taken up the problem, where Reitzenstein and Bousset left it with ragged edges, in Rome and Alexandria, and to have concentrated on the three critical generations of the second century. They have explored the head waters and the obscure sources; he has fixed his eyes on the river as it flowed through and around the Christian Churches of the second century.

From the first appearance of Basilides in Alexandria in 120 A.D., to the end of the century, is, roughly speaking, three generations. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian speak to us from the last. All that the scholars have investigated and isolated is there. How they came<sup>(2)</sup> to their individual stature and character in the melting pot of Rome is a different problem.

Gnosticism followed a psychological succession, like every other movement. There is first, in the Orient, a long dim obscure period of the ferment of

(1) Adv. Haer., III, 15.2. "...inferunt sermones, per quos capiunt simpliciores, et illiciunt eos, simultantes nostrum tractatum ut saepius audiant."

(2.) i. e. The Gnostic Systems.

ideas, the swaying hither and thither of concepts, and rituals, and theologies, seeming to issue nowhere. Such is the period of the Persian cosmologies, the astral and nature deities, the figures of Baal and Astarte, the baptisms and ritual feasts, the amulets and charms, the appearance of uncouth prophets and charlatans like Simon Magus, repercussions from which appeared among the Christians of Colossae.

Following that comes the second period, ushered in by men of creative genius and education and culture who created their own philosophy, from the material at hand. Such are Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion. These men may belong to the Church, or they may not. Basilides apparently did not. Valentinus ~~probably~~ did, and ~~probably~~ Marcion also. These men moved in Christian circles, and the matter of their speculations inevitably contained Christian elements as well as their racial inheritance.

From this mixture of pagan suggestions and Christian ideas, Valentinus evolved his philosophy, and came forward as a teacher of Christianity on a broad eclectic and modern basis. He was recognised as a Church teacher for many years, as there was nothing to control his modernist tendencies, no rigid Church law or creed or

sacred book. He was a fearless thinker, an intrepid explorer in the things unseen and eternal. The fragments show him a man of piety. Yet Plato, the Ionian school, the lore of astrology, were part of his spiritual equipment.

The supra-cosmical myth of Valentinus seems to us scientific moderns incredibly grotesque, but was it so to the generation when the second century was young? The necessity for transcendental knowledge was a demand of the age. Like Socrates in the Phaedrus, they were indifferent to nature, for nature had nothing to teach them. What they desired to study and to know was the invisible world. Justin Martyr recounts in his "Dialogue with Trypho" that he had given up attending the lectures of a Peripatetic, because the latter demanded that he should first understand geometry and different sciences before embarking into philosophy. This preparation seemed to him too far removed from what he was seeking. He wished to know God. What were then his transports when he discovered the philosophy of Plato? He seemed to have received wings. Plato had become again the deity of thinkers. The myth of the Phaedrus, telling of the effort of the soul to reach the regions of light, the poetic drama of

the 'Timaeus' with its Supreme God, the subordinate gods, the soul of the Cosmos, the picture in the Phaedo with its Tartarus, Oceanus, Styx and the Acherusian lake, the story of Er in the Tenth Book of the Republic. This sublime idealism haunted the majority of the thinkers of the first two centuries.

Such men flocked to Valentinus and Basilides. Men found no fault with ~~their~~ cosmological hypotheses. Even a hundred years later <sup>(1.)</sup> it was accepted. To hold such a scheme was not inconsistent with remaining a Christian. The Church did not persecute either Basilides or Valentinus. Valentinus left the Church of his own accord. Basilides became a Christian because he believed he would find in Christianity the veritable redemption.

Such men were a kind of aristocracy in the bosom of Christendom. They were the Πνευματικοί. They taught and believed that the true Christian must have a special knowledge, and get more than knowledge, for it included the practice of asceticism. These men inculcated the βίος γνωστικός. It was no easy life. It was too lofty for the common crowd. The Gnostics of Valentinus and his disciples were the select few, and no doubt they appealed to the intelligentsia of the Roman Christian world. They established schools

(1.) *trad of Valentinus*

to which the rising generation repaired to acquire knowledge, a religious philosophy and to practice the "Gnostic life". Under Ptolemaeus and Heracleon, however, a gradual change was taking place. The Gnostic movement veered from religious philosophy to Christian exegesis. Heracleon was applying the new orientation of Christianity to the Fourth Gospel. Ptolemaeus in his letter to Flora makes no mention of the Pleroma, or Sophia, but shows that he has been subjecting the Old Testament to a very human but incisive criticism, far ahead of his day, and revealing the type of cultured mind that the Gnostic movement had attracted. Had nothing happened in the third generation, Gnosticism would only have been a quickening influence to the Church, awakening her out of an official lethargy. But the Church gave the quick-witted, deeply cultured and far-seeing minds no encouragement. Marcion, who longed till the day of his death to be within the Church, found the door of the Sanctuary barred against him, and surely Marcion could have been guided into wise channels. It was the same with Valentinus. He had no desire to leave the Church, but it would seem as if he had been simply frozen out. The warm cordial piety of the Church would have worked wonders with Gnosticism.

With doubtful wisdom it was withheld, and the Church awoke in the third generation to find a hydra-headed pagan movement, which masqueraded under the very name and prestige of Christianity, and by every seductive method, by the multitudinous attractions of magic and fascinating methods of salvation, was sweeping the common folk by the thousand out of the Church. Gnosticism, deprived of Christian piety, degenerated from being a Gnosis, and a "Bios Gnosticos", into a vulgar apparatus of charms and mystery-mongering.

The Valentinians and their great successors had exalted "Gnosis" as the basis of the religious life and of redemption. The Gnostics of the third generation towards the end of the second century laid the emphasis on "revelation" and mystery and rites. <sup>(1)</sup>

Marcus, the leader of the Marcosians, will show the beginnings of the transition from Gnosis to mystery. He professed that the Ogdoad had given him a unique revelation. The risen Jesus is represented as prophesying. Perhaps even more so does Apelles evidence the change. Apelles was the distinguished successor

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(1) Iren. Adv. H., III, 15.2. "...his separatim inenarrabile Plenitudinis suae enarrant mysterium." ibid, "Semetipsos spiritalis vocant, et se nosse jam dicunt eum qui sit intra Pleroma ipsorum refrigerii locum."

of Marcion and began his career as a Gnostic theologian and critic, but in his association with Philoumena, whose 'revelations' (φανερώσεις) he published, he showed that the Gnosis no longer satisfied. The occult and the mystic took its place.

We see this in the later features of Valentinianism, in fact in all the Gnostic systems as they are described by Irenaeus. They are all infected with Sacramentalism, visions, voices, baptisms, anointings. The full force of Eastern superstition which Valentinus had ignored and probably despised, came in like a flood. Religion was now the acquirement of the mysterious means for escaping the demonic powers of the universe and securing the soul's passing, through the barriers of the seven Archons, safely into the Heaven of Light.

In the Coptic documents, this ritualistic scheme of redemption is paramount. It will be recollected that the Ophites, described by Epiphanius, have as their central act of worship, the Eucharist, in which a living serpent figures.

The vocabulary of the sects is full of words like λούτρον, ἁφράγισ, τύπος, ἑωτήριον. These words reveal very primitive pagan ideas, as in the Greek mysteries, the worship of Isis, the cult of the great Mother.

The idea was that only a rite authoritatively and meticulously performed could procure the expiation of sins, and win the good grace of a divinity. The time came when the same mystic idea, the efficacy of the Sacrament, obtained a dominant place in the Catholic Church.

The Gnostic sects at the end of the century were all of them ritualistic and superstitious. They freely borrowed each other's tenets, exchanged their writings, frequented each other's lectures. The strict boundaries of the systems had come down. Gnosticism had in fact to appeal to the common people. As an intellectual movement, it could not endure. The various sects were perhaps not so much organised bodies, as individual enthusiasts with their casual adherents. These prophets took their fees, and competed for popularity.

Thus we find the same features recurring in them all. Valentinianism had to come down to the cultural level and branch out into fantastic and portentous embellishments of the Pleroma doctrine, and multifarious ritualistic observances. Marcus enacted the heavenly blessedness of the neophyte, by giving him a foretaste, an earthly representation of the heavenly syzygy, in his bridal chamber. Pythagoreanism also entered the



systems. All serious reflection had gone. Valentinus would never have a successor like himself. The sun of the classical Gnosis had set. Plato gave place to Diana of the Ephesians.

Gnosticism in this period of dissolution was marked by another sign of decadence, viz. libertinism. Licentious practices doubtless came down from a very remote past. It was a characteristic of the sects of the Syrian Mother. It came to Rome in that constant stream of Oriental paganism. All the Gnostic sects were not affected by it. The Coptic communities violently protested against licentiousness. The original Gnostics were strict ascetics, and abhorred all such things. Marcion would never have tolerated it. Some, however, like the Carpocratians, made it a ritual obligation. Epiphane<sup>s</sup>, the son of the latter<sup>(a)</sup>, proclaimed indifference in the matter of morals. There is neither good nor evil.<sup>(1)</sup> The distinction which was made was an invention of legislation. Nature does not recognise it. The Carpocratians pretended that perfection consisted in exhausting the series of vices, that, ~~according to them,~~ the souls, which had not passed through the complete

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(a) I. E. of Carpocrates.

(1) Epiphanius said: οἱ νόμοι . . . . πικρονομῆν ἐδιδάξαν . . . .  
 τότε ἔμὸν καὶ τὸ σὸν φῦσι, διὰ τῶν νόμων παρεστραθῆν.  
 Irenaeus made him say "sola enim humana opinione negotia mala et bona."

cycle of actions reputed emancipatory, were renewed in another body, until they had paid their debts, which was interpreted in the sense of the parable of Matthew V, 25, "And they were Christians.!"

The third generation of Gnostics all established associations, or fraternities, corresponding to their respective sects. At the time of Valentinus these were like the schools of philosophy, for the cultivation of Gnosis and practice of the austere life. Now, these societies had become religious fraternities, formed to realise the aim of accomplishing a certain expiatory rite.

The third generation of Gnostics, though it witnessed a degraded Gnosticism, attained the height of success and popularity. The "initiation" formerly confined to the few, (the  $\pi\upsilon\lambda\upsilon\mu\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$ ) was now open to the crowd. That superstitious multitude found in the Gnostic sects all that the pagan mysteries could give them. Into these expiatory ceremonies, elements of Christian Sacraments were mingled. This paganism, masquerading in the name of the Christian religion, made serious inroads into the Christian community. It would seem from Origen that some of the sects kept the original name of Valentinus and Basilides and Marcion. So, in the end, we

have Gnosticism, once tolerated in the Church, possibly respected, possibly a handmaiden in the Church's efficiency, may become singularly dangerous. Such were the manifestations which drew upon the Gnostic sects the condemnation of the Church, and, upon the comparatively innocent reputation of the great Gnostics, the objur- gations and anathemas with which Irenaeus has made us familiar. This is the Gnosticism which is pilloried in the writings of the Church Fathers, and this is the Gnosticism, in its similarity of doctrines and worship, and its variety of names, that is gathered up eventually into the embrace of Manichaeism.

A study of the character of Gnosticism reveals that it had two sides. There was for the intelligent few a religious philosophy, and for the populace a diversified apparatus of mysteries. All these Gnos- tic preoccupations with the journey of the soul after death, the demons of the Unseen, the planet gods, the dangers of the Unseen and the Unknown, of which even the simplest soul is apprehensive, the salvation of the soul, the forgiveness of trespasses, -all this is envel- oped in an absolutely pagan atmosphere. Baptism and the Eucharist were only names, the "thing done", the drama, was pagan. The danger to the Church membership could

not be exaggerated. It effected an utter degradation of Christianity, but its effect upon Christian thought was practically negligible. What affected Christian thought so profoundly was the religious philosophy which the sects provided for their adepts. It is this in the main that the Church Fathers, though with much prejudice, attempt to give.

We have already at considerable length discussed the teaching which the great Gnostics gave their students, but even the sects of Hippolytus, the Ophites, Sethians, Peratae and Naassenes and those of the Simonians, to mention only a few, possessed very impressive statements of doctrine. These statements of doctrine show intimate knowledge of philosophy. The theologian of the Peratae knew his Aristotle. The reputed author of the "Apophysis Megale" was an accomplished Stoic. The Sethites had a striking cosmology with two principles, the 'upper light' and the 'lower darkness' with the 'Pneuma' as an intermediary atmosphere, moving and causing motion, a reflection of the Logos doctrine. The Naassene has also been in the Stoic lecture-rooms. The men behind all the Gnostic creeds are intellectuals.

There was no study which so powerfully interested

most of the Gnostics of Rome as the study of religions and mythologies. All of them were versed in the knowledge of myths, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, Phrygian. Hippolytus informs us that Pythagorean arithmetic and astrology were among the principal sources of the Gnosticism of his documents. We have already seen that in Marcus.

The Old Testament came within the category of ancient legends, and was studied with ardour, for profound and secret meanings. The addresses of Jesus, certain Pauline texts from Colossians, texts from the Fourth Gospel are constantly occurring in their discourses, and sometimes absorb their whole teaching.

Now let us remember that so far as the Church was concerned, the city of Rome was a free country. The Gnostics had perfect freedom of thought and speech. There was no ecclesiastical rule of faith to inhibit them. Each Gnostic thinker was a law to himself. If he had worked out an original scheme, he opened a school and gathered scholars. He could teach whatever he liked and just as he liked. A new school and a new sect might appear any day, but it had to take its chance of popularity. Exchange of ideas was inevitable.

Lucrativeness was probably often the determining factor in the adoption of a new doctrine or feature. The Government, like Gallio, "cared for" none of these things. There was perfect freedom of association.

These Gnostic sects in the time of Irenaeus - and there must have been very many more, that had an ephemeral life - reveal how intense must have been the intellectual interest in Rome.

Consider the case of the lady Flora to whom Ptolemaeus wrote, consider the hundreds of intelligent women and men whom that lady represents, with sufficient culture to realise the great problem in the Old Testament, consider the knowledge and the eagerness and thoroughness with which Ptolemaeus answers her query, and promises a further answer.

If there were any doctors in the Church capable of elucidating Flora's difficulties, they do not occur easily to one's mind. Could Irenaeus have helped her? Could Hippolytus? Would they not have reproved her heresy? She might have fared better with Origen had Origen been available. The Church at that time had no ~~message~~ message for anxious and inquiring souls, and we know that, even in Origen's time, that able and fearless student and most successful teacher was driven out of the Church.

The Church has always suffered from the defect of institutionalism. Inspired by its belief that it must embrace the world, and be the only Church in the world representing the Gospel of Christ and the Apostles, it had developed the monarchical spirit, that brooks no rivals. The Church has never been generous to new ideas, to progressive endeavours. Fortunately in the first century this spirit did not become dominant, though it did show itself. What would Christianity have become, if the courage, the faith in the future, the dependence on God's leading and the power of the Cross, the daring to claim the whole Cosmos for God and Christ, all of which constituted the Hellenised Jew from Tarsus, had been suppressed, and Paul driven out from the Apostolic band?

Marcion saw with clear insight that Paul had a vision of Christ and <sup>that</sup> Christ had uttered words that changed everything. "O miracle of miracles", he exclaimed, "ravishing and stupefying, he who goes beyond the Evangel has nothing to say, and nothing to think. There is nothing to which one can compare it."

It would be only the plain word of truth, if one were to say that St. Paul was a Gnostic, and a true

Gnostic, truer than that beautiful picture Clement of Alexandria gives. In the Providence of God, Paul was saved to the Church and to the world. His spirit is in his own words "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, but we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>(1)</sup>

Gnosticism did not alarm the Church seriously until about the end of the second century. Then it was fought. In the third century Gnosticism became popular. It infused its spirit everywhere, for it held the intelligentsia by its religious philosophy, as it did the man in the street by its sacraments and innovations and charms, and it left its mark on the rites and the sacraments of the great Church.

Gnosticism profoundly influenced Origen. His cosmology is the cosmology of Valentinus. Origen taught that it was the fall of the rational spirit in the supra-sensible world to which the Cosmos owes its appearance. The existence of the world is connected with primordial sin.

But it was probably in two more practical directions

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(1) 2.Cor.III, 17, 19.



that Gnosticism influenced the Church.

(1) The Church got the lesson that it should be a religion with a canonical, a sacred book. Up to the time of Marcion there are only indications that the greater part of the New Testament was used in the Church. There was no Canon, no definite ecclesiastical pronouncement that the New Testament contained so many named books and no more.

Marcion organised his body as a Church. He had a cult, an organisation, confessors. He issued to his followers a New Testament, which contained only a mutilated St. Luke, ten Epistles of St. Paul, and no mention made of the Pastorals or Hebrews. It is striking to observe how Irenaeus has learned the lesson, and has made his Refutation rest on the testimony of the Scriptures. It is a definite purposeful use of the Scriptures. Irenaeus protests against the Mon-<sup>(1)</sup>  
tanists rejecting the Fourth Gospel, criticising Marcion who as Tertullian said,<sup>(2.)</sup> openly used a knife, not a pen, when dealing with the Scriptures, condemned Valentinus<sup>(3.)</sup> for using more than four Gospels, and the Marcosians who

(1) III 11.9 "alii vero ut donum spiritus frustrantur, quod in novissimis temporibus secundum placitum Patris effusum est in humanum genus, illam speciem non admittunt, quae est secundum Iohannis Evangelium, in qua Paraclitum se missurum Dominus promittit; sed simul et Evangelium, et propheticum repellunt spiritum" vid. note in Harvey vol II. p. 51.

(2.) De Praeser. Haer. 38 - "Marcion aperte et palam machaera non stylo usus est."

(3) adv. Haer. I 20.1 ἀμύβητον πλῆθος ἀποκρύφων κὼ νόθων γραφῶν.

used an infinite number of apocryphal works which were palpable forgeries. Such a Canon, as Harnack says, must have been at least generally recognised in the days of Irenaeus. Such a collection, he says, is regarded by Irenaeus and Tertullian as completed.

(2.) It is probably unnecessary to elaborate the influence of the Gnostic mysteries on the Catholic Church sacraments. But the greatest proof of the influence of Gnosticism lies in the doctrine of the Church. It created the necessity for something more than the "regula fidei", the necessity for an oecumenically accepted creed. Irenaeus built his edifice better than he knew. He essayed the task of overturning the Gnosis "falsely so called". With a rare insight he took precisely the right line. He had one audience and only one audience in view, and that was his own Church people, people who knew the Word of God. He based his "Refutation" on the Scripture, but in so doing he became the Church's first theologian, not in the dry and frozen accents of a schoolman, but with words often touched with genius, always with tenderness, at times with a justifiable severity, and never lacking the truest moral earnestness, words that have left an indelible impression on the theology and liturgy of the Christian Church.

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Excursus I

The Literary Style of Irenaeus.

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EXCURSUS I.The Style and Diction of Irenaeus.- The Greek Document and the Latin Version -

In the Preface to his great work, Irenaeus, with characteristic modesty and humility, makes apology for his deficiencies as a writer. He acknowledges that it is due to his long exile among Celtic tribes. He begs his correspondent not to expect from him any fluent diction, for, as he ruefully remarks, he had never mastered it, nor any power of composition; also, again, he had not practised himself in that way, nor any beauty of phrase, or captivating style, but that his friend might accept as a friend, what he wrote as a friend, simply, sincerely, and unaffectedly.<sup>(1.)</sup>

It is very much to be doubted if any student of Irenaeus has taken him at his own very modest valuation. Unfortunately the only part of the 'Refutation' which has survived in Greek is Book I, which is entirely devoted to the exposition of the various heresies, and gives small opportunity for any literary grace. At any rate Irenaeus stands

(1.) *Adv. Haer. Proem. 3.*

most favourably with any of the Church Fathers; and if one will only compare him with the Philosophumena, or Clement, or Epiphanius, or Theodoret, as one is bound to do in a critical study of the author, one feels that Irenaeus writes much more simply and easily and clearly than any of them.

But the very Preface to Book I may well stand as an example of what Irenaeus could do. One feels that his apology was quite unnecessary. The whole Preface is a fine section of literary Greek. Consider the vigour of the style in Book I xv 4, and the rich humour of  $\Phi\lambda\upsilon\sigma\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\alpha\nu \Sigma\iota\gamma\acute{\gamma}\nu$  ("chattering silence"). Consider how he castigates the Marcosians, with their thirty letters and four syllables! or the indignant exposure of the Marcosian sacrament, and bridal chamber. When Irenaeus is stirred to scorn he reaches an irreproachable standard of Greek prose.

How one would wish to have the original of some of the splendid passages in the remaining books. Two may be mentioned by way of illustration. The first is an inestimable picture of the degenerate

Valentinians scrambling for popularity (Adv.Haer. III, 15, 2). The other passage is II, 25, 1, where Irenaeus deals with the harmony of Nature amid its variety. The Latin version is uniformly so close, that when turned back into Greek, it reveals what must have been a very eloquent passage in the original document.

It is a striking comment on what has been said,<sup>(1)</sup> to learn from Jerome that the books of Irenaeus were couched in eloquent and scholarly language. Jerome could not be referring to the Latin version, for he expressly includes Irenaeus as among the Greek writers.

Turning to the Latin version,<sup>(2)</sup> it may be said at once that it is almost as old as the original Greek. Tertullian (circa 200 A.D.) certainly used the Latin version. He depended for his book against Valentinus entirely on Irenaeus, and he actually quotes the 'mistakes' in the version. It may have been the work of one of the clergy of Lugdunum. Dr. Hitchcock has a very interesting excursus on the Latin version based presumably on Loof's Handschriften

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(1) Cf. Irenaeus of Lugdunum (Hitchcock), pp.42, 43.

(2) Its title 'Contra Haereres' or 'adversus Haereres' is not commonly used. Ancient MSS have it "Retarqutio et Eversio falso cognominatae ugnitionis." The Greek title was: Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπή τῆς ψευδοτύμου γνώσεως —

der Lateinischen Übersetzung (1888), which repays close attention. Loof does not call it "barbarous Latinity", as does Lipsius.<sup>(1)</sup> But the ordinary student cannot fail to mark the constant stream of Graecisms in his own reading.

The Greek 'genitive absolute' is literally copied ("extremae confusionis non habentis propriam substantiam" for "τῶς ὑστέρᾳ συγκύσεως οὐκ ἔχουσας" II, 7,1); absolute literalness as "nullo modo . . . . nequaquam" for "οὐδένῳ τρόπῳ -- οὐδέποτε" (II, 7,5) or "ut secundum hoc imagines esse" for "ὡςτε κατὰ τούτοις εἰκόνας εἶναι"; "non capit" for "οὐκ ἔνδεχεται", or "a nemine in totum" for "ὑπ' οὐδενος καθ' ὅλον", which should be "a nulla omnino re". "Sicut passus est Basilides" is for "ὅπερ ἔπαθεν ὁ βασιλείδης" and should be "quod Basilidi accidit."

The translator's vocabulary has its limits. He translates ἀποτελεστικῶς ("completely," cf. Liddell Scott) baldly as "Apotelesticos". This ignorance (or was it conscientious fidelity?) leads to impossible Latin, e.g. "ad loquendum eos" is his version

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(1) Dictionary of Christians' Biography (R.A.Lipsius).

for " πρὸς τὸ λεγεῖν αὐτοῦς "; "si enim erat verum" should be "fuisset." The Greek is " εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο ἄληθινόν γινῆσθαι " (the familiar εἰ protesis with the indicative).

Prurientibus Aures is painful Latin, but it is an exact transliteration of κνηθόμενοις τῶν ἑκκοῦν (1.Tim. 4/2). Equally so is "et tanta ..... a nobis sit dictum, though in Greek the plural substantive may have a singular verb.

One often sighs for Cicero, for our slavish interpreter has no way of conveying gracefully the " τὸ πρόθυμον τοῦ πνεύματος ", or the αὐτὸ ὅ ἐστι γῶον than by 'id quod'. These 'id quod's' occur by the thousand and mar the music of the Latin.

But this translator, if conscience makes him write slavish Latin, knows how to write Latin. He has his graces of style, alliteration and assonance. He indulges in chiasmas (terrenum spiritali et spiritali terrenum). He is fond of doublets (plorans et plangens; juste et legitime). He has an affection for superlatives and diminutives (splendidissimus; periculosissimus; flosculum; muliercula). He loves variety (vocabulum changes to verbum, putantes to



arbitrantes; praeterit habitus hujus mundi becomes figura transit mundi hujus, etc.

But the list is almost exhaustless. No reputable scholar would depreciate the humble scribe, with his tender conscience for his beloved bishop. But for him and the nameless Armenian scribe, Irenaeus would be lost to the world, except for the fragments of Epiphanius, Theodoret and Tertullian.

Excursis II

The Gnostic 'Diagram'

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The Diagram of the Ophites.

The world could ill spare one of the most incisive documents of the expiring paganism in Western civilisation, the *Ἀληθὺς Λόγος* of Celsus. It appears to have been written in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The book was lost to the world for nearly a century, and its resurrection is one of the romances of literature. The book came into the hands of Origen, and it must have been in circulation then, or Origen might have ignored it. But he considered it demanded an answer, and the answer was Origen's "Contra Celsum". The work of Celsus is absolutely lost, but Origen has quoted it so extensively and so literally that it is estimated that we possess all of it but a tenth, and of what we have, three fourths is verbatim.

Celsus wrote his book as an attack on the Christians, and in the course of his scathing diatribe, he instanced a Christian sect called Ophites, and then ~~he~~ proceeded to show the purely pagan character of their beliefs and their worship. The Ophites served his purpose in stoning his adversaries. ~~He~~

He gave as an example of this Ophite Christianity an "Ophic diagram".

The reply of Origen was that the Ophite sect was not Christian. In this he was historically right for the Ophites, long before his time, had been expelled from the Church, while on the other hand, there were probably Ophic Christian sects, or sects claiming to be Christians in the middle of the second century.

Origen counters Celsus, saying that he also had found an Ophic diagram; 'Liddell and Scott' do not give any instance of "διάγραμμα" having the meaning of a 'seal', but it may have denoted a charm to wear on the body. The description Origen gives of the 'diagram' he found recalls the symbolic figures of which there are so many examples in the Bruce papyrus "receipts for salvation", given to the initiate, which purchase for him a triumphant passage after death through the archon-guarded circles into the higher world. Such were the σφράγις, the ψῆφοι, the ἀπολογία.

Hilgenfeld in the 'Ketzergeschichte' has pointed

out differences between the two diagrams, but basically they are identical, according to De Faye ('Gnostiques', p.358, note). The diagram contained two concentric circles, on whose diameter was inscribed  $\pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho$  and  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ . A smaller circle hung below with the inscription  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\tau\epsilon$ . This is exactly what we find in Irenaeus' anonymous sect (Adv.Haer. I,30), a primitive Triad of Father, Son and the Woman.

Then there was a series of circles, and intersecting circles, with segments, containing the words  $\gamma\omega\gamma$ ,  $\sigma\phi\iota\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\gamma\kappa\omega\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\upsilon\acute{\nu}\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\phi\iota\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \pi\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ .

Paradise was represented by a fire-circle enclosing a quadrilateral with the trees of the  $\gamma\kappa\omega\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$  and the  $\gamma\omega\gamma$ , guarded by a flaming sword.

The fire-circle and the flaming sword separated the super-terrestrial realm of the world Creator from the terrestrial. This was set forth in the lowest circle which was described as Leviathan.

Then there were seven Archons, each with the figure respectively of a lion, a beast, an amphibian, an eagle, a bear, a dog, and an ass, named Tharphabaoth

or Onoel. In Origen's diagram the names were respectively Michael (the serpent name in Adv.Haer. I, 30), Suriel, Raphael, Gabriel, Thauthabaoth, Erataoth, Onoel or Thartharaoth.

It would be futile to attempt any interpretation, when there must be so much conjecture, but the tout ensemble reveals the strange Oriental world of pagan culture that lived in Rome.

The Christian Church even in the third century was but a little oasis in the desert of Roman heathenism. Gibbon tells us that calculations point to their being in the third century only fifty thousand Christians in Rome in a population of a million souls. The Christian Church, (probably not a central basilica, but numberless little conventicles and house-Churches) was in daily contact with superstition. The terrors of death would make 'receipts for salvation' a desirable possession. Indeed it might be held quite compatible with Christianity, when doctrine and culture were so fluid and unregulated. Many another conception might follow, so that an Ophic coterie or fellowship within or allied to

the Church was quite a possibility. The serpent could be equated with the serpent in Genesis; in fact, these early chapters of the Bible provided much of the material of these sects. In a word, this popular preoccupation with the unseen and the life after death is the real source of the Gnostic systems. If there was a Gnosticised Christianity, ~~there~~ was a Christianised Gnosticism. Basilides, Valentinus, Heracleon, Ptolemaeus, breathe the air of the Church, nourish their souls with its sacred writings, are moved to piety and ennobling sentiments, but the blood of the immemorial Orient is in their veins, and their sub-liminal self is pagan.

Excursus III

The Barbelo

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.The Name 'Barbelo'

The figure of the  $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\tau\upsilon\rho$ , the supreme female goddess Ruhâ of the Mandaean<sup>s</sup>, the nature goddess of the Syrians and Phoenicians, the  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$  of the Ophic diagram, appears again and again in the Gnostic systems.

Dimly she appears as Sophia and Achamoth with Valentinus, prominently among the Barbelo-Gnostics, and in the "Gnostics" of Irenaeus. She appears as Helena in the cult of the Simonites, as  $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\tau\upsilon\rho$  among the Nicolaitanes.

The Barbelo-Gnostic systems give her the name of Barbelo. Most derivations are far-fetched and unconvincing. Harvey suggests that it is an abbreviation of  $\beta\epsilon\rho\delta\alpha$   $\text{ΗΛΩ}$  i.e.,  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$   $\tau\epsilon\tau\rho\acute{\alpha}\delta\iota$   $\Theta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\varsigma$ . Matter as  $\text{ⲓⲓⲨ - ⲡⲓⲒ}$  the daughter of God. Burkitt (Church and Gnosis, 60) derives it from a Coptic word meaning a seed, a grain, the ascription of the genesis of all things to a thought or notion which the Egyptian mind conceived as a seed. If Barbelo were solely confined to the Coptic documents, there would be a certain probability in that derivation. But

the name occurs in systems much anterior to the Coptic writings.

The most convincing solution comes from Bousset, and it is philological. He suggests that it is a mutilation of *παρθένος*. The middle form *παρθενωίς* is found in Epiphanius, and is a clear corruption from *παρθένος*. The writing of *ΒΑΡΒΕΛΩΣ* for *ΒΑΡΘΕΝΩΣ* is from a caligraphic point of view extraordinarily conceivable. Barbelo would then be the maiden goddess.

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Excursus IV

Ialdabaoth

-oOo-

IALDABAOTH.

In the survey of the Gnostic systems the figure of Ialdabaoth frequently occurs at the head of the Seven Archons. It is quite hopeless, as Harvey's note will show, to expect any light from attempts to derive it from Hebrew roots. If any man knew the meaning of 'Ialdabaoth', it was without a doubt Origen, and he tells us plainly (Contra Celsum, vi, 31) that Ialdabaoth is the lion-headed (λεοντοσιδής) deity of the Ophites, and asserts further: *φασι δὲ τὸν λεοντοσιδῆ ἄρχοντι συμπάθειν ἄστρων τῶν φαίνοντα.*

Ialdabaoth is Saturn. The figure Saturn-Kronos is found on a relief from North Africa. Saturn-Kronos is the Phoenician Baal. He is represented as a lion surrounded by rays. In Heliopolis in Syria, Photius tells us " *Ἡλιοπολίται τιμῶσιν ἐν Διὸς ἱδρυσάμενοι μορφῆν τινα λέοντος* ". This Baal figure was identified with the ancient Greek god Κρόνος, and consonance gave the Equation *Κρόνος = Χρόνος*.

According to the Phoenicians the Hebdomad was assigned to Kronos, the Ogdoad to Rhea. This is reminiscent of the Ophite diagram whose chief three

figures are *Πατρις*, *Υιος* and *Ἄγαπη*, and also of the Triad, Father, Son and Woman (in Irenaeus, Adv. Haer, I, 30).

Between Kronos and Rhea of the Phoenicians and Ialdabaoth and Sophia of the Gnostics there must be a close connection, for in the Gnostic systems Ialdabaoth appears as ruler of the Hebdomad. Both the Phoenician and the Gnostic deity stand also with a female goddess Rhea or Sophia, and both are world-creators.

The identification (in Irenaeus I, 30,4) of Ialdabaoth with the God of the Old Testament was due to Marcionite influence. It is not original. Even in some Gnostic circles it was felt to be incorrect, and Sabaoth was substituted. Further the identification is not found with the Ophites of Celsus.

The identification by Origen-Celsus of Ialdabaoth with the planet-god Saturn, is proved by the fact that the planets are given in the order of the old astronomers, according to their distance backward from the earth.

Summing up then, there appears to be so intimate a connection between the figures of the Persian and

Syrian cosmology and the figures in the Gnostic speculations, that it is certain that Ialdabaoth the ruler of the Archons, and the creator of the world, is a purely pagan figure.

Excursus V  
Naassene Hymn

-oOo-

The Gnostic Hymn of the Naassenes.

. As a glimpse into the spiritual life of a Gnostic sect this Naassene hymn is extremely illuminating. Hilgenfeld remarks: "Die ganze Lehre, insbesondere die Erlösungslehre der Naassener ist gewissermassen zusammengefasst in dem Hymnus" etc."

Νόμος ἦν γενικός τοῦ παντός ὁ πρῶτος Ἰνάας,  
 ὃ δὲ δεύτερος ἦν τοῦ πρῶτοτόκου τὸ χυθὲν χάος,  
 τρίτατον ψυχὴ δ' ἔλαβεν εργαζομένη νόμον.  
 Διὰ τοῦτο ἔλαβον κορφὴν περικειμένην  
 κοπιᾶ ἰσχυρᾶ μελέτημα κρατούμενην.  
 Ποτὲ μὲν βασιλείαν ἔχουσα βλέπει τὸ φῶς,  
 Ποτὲ δ' εἰς ἔλεον ἐρῶμένη κλάει,  
 Ποτὲ δὲ κλαίει καὶ κρίνει  
 Ποτὲ δὲ κλαίει, κρίνεται  
 Ποτὲ δὲ κρίνεται ἀψύγκει  
 Ποτὲ δὲ γίνεται ἀνέξοδος. ἢ μελεᾷ κακῶν  
 ἀναβύρινθον εἰσῆλθε πικνωμένην.

Εἶπεν δ' Ἰησοῦς· Εσθήκ, πάτερ,  
 ζήτημα κακῶν τοδ' ἐπὶ χθόνα  
 ἀπὸ σῆς προῆς ἐπιπλάγεται.  
 Ζητεῖ δὲ φυρεῖν τὸ πικρὸν χάος  
 κοῦκ οἶδεν ὅπως διελεύσεται.  
 ταύτου με χάριν πέμψον, πάτερ  
 σφραγίδας ἔχων καταβύσσομαι.  
 Αἰῶνας ὅλους διοδεύσω,  
 μυστήρια πάντα δ' ἀνοιξίω,  
 μορφὰς τε θεῶν ἐπιδείξω,  
 τὰ κεκρυμμένα τῆς ἀγίας ὁδοῦ  
 Γνωστὴν καλέσας παραδώσω.



## [ TRANSLATION ]

"The universal Principle of the All was the first Naas.  
 "The second Principle issuing from the First-born was Chaos.  
 "The soul in its toilsome labour discovered the third Prin-  
 "ciple. Therefore, arrayed in the figure of a deer, she  
 "struggles with death, being wellnigh overborne in the effort  
 "Soon gaining the mastery, she sees the Light, then she  
 "weeps prostrated and pitiable. Anon she both laughs and  
 "weeps. Again she weeps and is judged. Then when she  
 "is judged she dies. Then finds she herself with no re-  
 "turn, and, wandering in her plight, she enters into the  
 "Labyrinth of sorrows.

"Jesus spake: "Behold Father this woeful seeking  
 "upon the Earth, of one who is wandering from Thy Spirit.  
 "She seeketh to escape the bitter Chaos, and knoweth not  
 "how she may win her way through. Wherefore send me,  
 "Father. I shall go down with the Seals. I shall pass  
 "through all the Aeons, then unfold all the Mysteries, and  
 "disclose the Godly Forms. I shall hand down the secret  
 "things of the holy way, calling them the Gnosis."

This strange but beautiful Hymn reveals a spirituality  
 hard to find in the Naassene system. Hilgenfeld indeed  
 writes - "dieser Hymnus schliesst sich die Lehre der  
 Naassener an die altgnostische Vorstellung von der Herab-  
 kunft des Erlösers nicht mehr an."

There is in it a Christian element, which protests against leaving the unfortunate psychics and hylics to their fate as they wander between Light and Darkness. There is an evangelical zeal for the lost, so much so that Hilgenfeld remarks, "so fließt der Jordan wieder aufwärts."

There are echoes from Ephesians, e.g. II, 17: "and came and preached peace to you that were afar off"; III, 15, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; V, 14, "Awake thou that sleepest . . . and Christ shall give thee light."

The framework, however, is still Gnostic. The touching picture of a wistful and distressed humanity, ground down by toil, only to be conquered by death, and then with no escape, wandering in a labyrinth of sorrows, is feelingly painted, but with a Gnostic brush.

And the picture of Christ! This Naassene saw "as in a glass darkly". He could not realise a Saviour saying "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden". He must come down from the unspeakable Presence, He must remember the seals, and so have

His journey unimpeded, and then to open out the mysteries and the Godlike forms, and the hidden things of the Holy Way, and so vouchsafe the knowledge. Probably this is Gnosticism at its best, just as Irenaeus saw it at its worst.

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Excursus VI

Bibliography

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BIBLIOGRAPHY.

If there is an element of romance in threading one's way through one of the veritable labyrinths of religious history, the story of the religious and philosophical criticism of the Gnostic systems is not lacking in that same element . To follow the bibliographic stream from its source in the days of Mosheim, in all its turns and twists, is quite out of the question here.

The Eastern origin of Gnosticism was early observed, Baur going so far as to India, Lipsius to the Semitic cults of Asia Minor, Hilgenfeld to the astral religion of the Parsees. The course of the stream then veered to Greece, and Platonic philosophy. Weingarten sought the source in the Greek mystery-religions, and envisaged Gnosis as in the great circle of mystery-religions of a bygone antiquity. Harnack was of that school, and issued the famous dictum that the Gnosis was "an acute Hellenising of Christianity", and the Gnostics as "the first Christian philosophers and theologians." After Harnack, the stream was given a new course by Kessler, who

fixed his view on the old Babylonian religion as the Gnostic source. He was followed by Brandt who showed that the current had flowed from or through the Mandaean religion. A further step in exploration was made by Anz, who centred the Gnostic faiths in the ancient conception of "the seven heavens" and "the ascent of the soul." Harnack was influenced by those later explorers, and in his "Wesen des Christenthums" characterised Gnosticism as the "inflowing of dualistic philosophy into Christianity." Reitzenstein widened the area of exploration by discovering sources in Egypt.

Attention, since Hilgenfeld's great "Ketzer-geschichte", has been increasingly directed to the Gnostic fragments, which have given quite a new turn to the investigation, and modified the trust ~~that~~ reposed on the reliability of the Church Fathers. Bousset, in his epoch-making work, <sup>(1.)</sup> combined a mastery of Oriental lore with a knowledge of the debris of Gnostic literature, and left students for ever in his debt. A further service has been rendered by <sup>(2.)</sup> Wendland in his full and scholarly investigation of the Alexandrine period. It is an

(1.) Hauptprobleme der Gnosis (Bousset)

(2.) Hellenistisch Römische Kultur (Wendland).

indispensable handbook.

The French have done great service by their genius for archaeology, and Cumont is now a textbook on the origins of religion. De Faye has written two brilliant books on Gnosticism in which he takes possibly too roseate a view of the Gnostic fragments, and holds the Church Fathers in less estimation than they deserve.

Italy has contributed in Buonaiuti a scholar who has concentrated on the fragments, but at the same time supports the school of Bousset. His little volume on "Gnostic Fragments" is the only scholarly work of first rank in English. Since Harvey's two-volume edition, very little has been done by English scholars on Gnosticism. The two recent books by Hitchcock and Burkitt only touch the fringes of the problem. Our best authorities are still the German scholars, whose works, Harnack excepted, are alas! so far as the writer knows, untranslated.

The following volumes have been found useful:-

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others.

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