

## THE COSMIC TRANSMUTATIONS.

BY LAWRENCE PARMLY BROWN.

MYTHIC transmutations or changes of substances or objects in nature or form, or both, are referable primarily to the natural phenomena of change everywhere and always in evidence, not only in the animal and vegetable kingdoms of the earth, but also in the heaven as connected with day and night, sunrise and sunset, clear and clouded skies, etc. Transmutation in form (and generally also in nature) is metamorphosis, transformation, or transfiguration, as in the life history of insects, or rather of the true *insecta* of naturalists; while transmutation in the nature of a substance in itself formless is transubstantiation, as in natural or artificial chemical processes—whence such mythic transubstantiations as water to wine, and the Eucharistic bread and wine to the flesh and blood of Jesus in the Roman Catholic doctrine.

Words for "bread" are sometimes employed for all solid foods that are transmuted into the flesh or bodies of men, while water or (red) wine is conceived to be changed into blood. Wine is often called the "blood of grapes" or the "blood of the grape," as in the Old Testament (Gen. xlix. 11; Deut. xxxii. 14, etc.); and the juice of the grape is naturally conceived as having been transmuted from water by the heat of the sun, which is also the chief factor in the fermentation of wine. As a mythic variant of blood, the cosmic wine belongs to the red sky of sunrise and sunset, especially to the latter as connected with such drunken solar figures as Dionysus, Silenus and Noah (see previous articles of this series, on "The Cosmic Hemorrhage" and "The Cosmic Madness"). But this wine appears to belong to the rising sun in Gen. xlix. 10-12, where it is generally, even if erroneously, supposed that we have a certain Shiloh (as if "Peace-bringer") who is to come in the future—"and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be (Sept., 'he is the expectation of nations') . . . he washeth his garments in wine, and

his raiment in blood of grapes; his eyes shall be red with wine (Sept., 'more cheering than wine'), and his teeth white with (= as) milk (Sept., 'whiter than milk'). This Shiloh (whether or not in the Hebrew text), was recognized as the Messiah by both Jews and Christians; whence doubtless came the concept of Jesus as a "wine-drinker" who is contrasted with John the Baptist as an abstainer (Matt. xi. 18, 19; Luke vii. 33, 34). Justin Martyr supposes that the Old Testament text signifies that Jesus "would wash those that believe in Him in His own blood. . . . That the Scripture mentions the blood of the grape, has been evidently designed. . . . For as God, and not man, has produced the blood of the grape, so also (the Scripture) has predicted that the blood of Christ would not be of the seed of man, but of the power of God" (*Dial. cum Tryph.*, LIV).

In the Egyptian legend of Horus of Edfu, that god smites the enemies of Ra, and the latter says to the former: "'Thou makest the water of Edfu (red with blood) like grapes, and thy heart is rejoiced thereat.' Hence the water of Edfu is called (the water of grapes)" (Sayce, *Rel. Anc. Eg. and Bab.*, p. 220). In the Destruction of Mankind, the deluge is poured out from seven thousand jars of human blood, representing the red color of the Nile waters shortly after the beginning of the inundation (*Records of the Past*, VI, pp. 105-112). In the *Rigveda* it is said of the miracle-working Aswins: "You filled, from the hoof of your vigorous steed, as if from a cask, a hundred jars of wine" (I, 116, 7—as probably suggested by the solar horse in the red sky of the morning or evening). On the Egyptian Obelisk of the Lateran we read: "The King Ra-Men Kheper (Thothmes III), the son of the sun, like the sun immortal, gives wine" (*Records of the Past*, IV, p. 13). Dionysus was identified with the sun by the Eleans (*Etymolog. Mag.*, s. v. Dionysus) as by others (see Servius *ad Virg. Georg.*, I, 5; Arnobius, *Adv. Gent.*, III, 33), and Pausanias says: "No god is more revered by the Eleans than Dionysus, and they say that he attends their festival of the Thyia. The place where they hold the festival called Thyia is about eight furlongs from the city (Thyia in Elis). Three empty kettles are taken into a building and deposited there by the priests in the presence of the citizens and of any strangers who may happen to be staying in the country. On the doors of the building the priests, and all who choose to do so, put their seals. Next day they are free to examine the seals, and on entering the building they find the kettles full of wine" (VI, 26, 1—substantially the same account being given by Pseudo-Aristotle, *Mirab. auscult.*, 123 [134], and by Athenæus from Theopompus of

Chian, *Deipnos.*, I, 61). According to Pausanias (*loc. cit.*), "The people of Andros also say that every other year, at their festival of Dionysus, wine flows of itself from the sanctuary. If these stories are to be trusted, one might by the same token believe what the Ethiopians above Syene say about the Table of the Sun" (cf. Herodotus, III, 18). Pliny tells us on the authority of Mucianus that the prodigy at Andros occurred every year, on the 5th of January; that the water flowing from a fountain in the temple tasted like wine during the seven days of the annual festival of Dionysus, but if taken out of sight of the temple it again tasted like water (*H. N.*, XXXI, 13).

There is no Old Testament story of transmutation of water to wine; but we have mythic variants in the changing of the waters of Egypt to blood by Moses, and in his sweetening of the bitter waters of Mara (= Bitter) by casting a tree into them (Ex. xv. 23-25). Elisha permanently sweetened a brackish spring at Jericho by casting salt into it (2 Kings ii. 18-22; the saltwater of the harbor of Syracuse became sweet for one day when Dionysius the Tyrant was expelled from his kingdom (Pliny, *H. N.*, II, 104), and the water of the Nile at one time had the taste of honey for eleven days, according to Manetho (Brugsch, *Hist. Eg.*, I, p. 76). In a Christian legend of Egypt, the fountain of Heliopolis had always been salt until the arrival of the infant Jesus and his parents, when it miraculously became a source of sweet water that cured all the sick who drank of it (Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt*, Vol. I, p. 296).

The Gospel miracle of turning water into wine is found only in John and appears to be a sort of companion piece to the multiplication of the loaves (and fishes); the author of the Fourth Gospel probably having in mind that Jesus designated bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood, according to the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper (Mark xiv. 22-24; Matt. xxvi. 26-28; Luke xxii. 19, 20). In the Apocryphal *Acts of John* (8), Jesus at one time turned stones to bread, as doubtless suggested by what the Devil says



THE MARRIAGE-FEAST  
OF CANA.

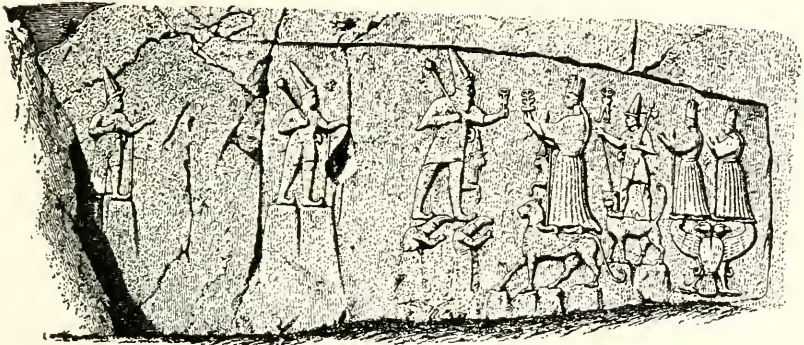
Ivory in the cathedral at Ravenna, 5th-7th cent. (From F. X. Kraus, *Geschichte der christl. Kunst*, I, 156.)

to him in Matt. iv. 3—"If thou art the son of God, speak that these stones may become loaves"; and in the *Revelation of Esdras* the Antichrist is declared to have said, "I am the Son of God, who made stones bread, and water, wine."

The miraculous transmutation in the Gospel of John (ii. 1-11) is related as follows: "And on the third day (apparently from the calling of the first disciples at the close of the preceding chapter) a marriage took place in Cana of Galilee (doubtless at night), and the mother of Jesus was there; and Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And being deficient of wine, the mother of Jesus says to him, Wine they have not. Jesus says to her, What to me and to thee, woman (A. V., 'Woman, what have I to do with thee')? Mine hour has not yet come. Says his mother to the servants, Whatever he may say to you, do. And there were six water-jars of stone standing according to the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three metretæ (A. V., 'firkins').—Says Jesus to them (the servants), Fill the water-jars with water. And they filled them to the brim. And he says to them, Draw out now and carry (some of the contents) to the master of the feast. And they carried it. But when the master of the feast had tasted the water that had become wine, and knew not whence it is—but the servants knew who had drawn the water—the master of the feast calls the bridegroom and says to him, Every man first sets on the good wine, and when they (the guests) may have drunk freely, then the inferior: thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of the signs (or 'miracles') Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him." This is the first miracle of Jesus, according to John, just as the changing of the waters to blood was the first plague inflicted upon the Egyptians as one of the miracles of Moses. But the Johannine marriage-feast appears to have been recognized as a variant of the great feast of Rabbinical tradition, which is to inaugurate the coming of the Messiah, and at which he shall drink wine made from the grapes that grew in Paradise during the six days of creation and were since preserved in Adam's cave (Buxdorf, *Synod. Jud.*, p. 460). The *Fo-pen-hing-tsi-king*, a Chinese life of Gautama Buddha, relates that this last Buddha declared that when one of his predecessors attended a wedding in the city of Jambunada, he not only kept the foods and drinks miraculously undiminished during the feast, but caused the host's uninvited guests to come and partake of it, even as the host had silently wished (according to Lillie, *Buddhism in Christianity*, pp. 169, 170; *Popular Life of Buddha*, pp. 305, 306).



The mythic marriage is primarily that of the sun (see Phædrus, I, *fab.* 6), either with the earth or the moon—whence, doubtless, the Athenians at one time celebrated marriages at the new moon (when she was in conjunction with the sun—Proclus *ad Hesiod. Oper.*, 782). Practically nothing is related of the Johannine bridegroom, and there is no reference to the bride; but in the mythic view the bridegroom is a mere variant of Jesus (the figurative “bridegroom” of John iii. 29, cf. Mark ii. 19, 20, etc.), while his mother and the bride are duplications of wider variation. Thus the Virgin Mary is often called the Rose of Sharon and Lily of Israel; epithets from Canticles ii, where the bride is “a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys,” who is brought by the bridegroom to “the banqueting-house”—literally “the house of wine,” as in the Septuagint. The



BEL-MARDUK AND ISHTAR (ASTARTE).

Phrygian basrelief from Boghaz-Köi, supposed to represent the marriage of the solar god and the lunar goddess. (From Carus, *The Bride of Christ*, page 8.)

Greek Hebe (= Youth), who fills the cups of the Olympian gods with nectar (for wine—Homer, *Il.*, IV, 2), is married to the solar Heracles after his ascent to Olympus (*Od.*, XI, 603; Hesiod, *Theog.*, 950). In an ancient Greek representation of this marriage (see frontispiece, upper half), the winged Eros (Love) hovers between the seated Hebe and the standing Heracles; on their right are Zeus and Hera, while on their left are Aphrodite and two female attendants with the winged Himeros (Desire) between them (the lower half of the picture does not relate to the subject of this article).

In all probability the Johannine story had its primary suggestion in some version of the Dionysiac legend of the transmutation of water to wine. The Dionysia were primarily vintage festivals in

honor of Dionysus as the god of wine, and they were always celebrated with the drinking of wine, drunkenness, and revelry—in which respect they were much like marriage-feasts. The Attic festivals of Dionysus were four in number: the “lesser Dionysia” in the month Poseidon (corresponding nearly to our December); the Lenæa = Of the Wine-Press, in Gamelion = Of Marriages (our January, nearly, and the Ionian Lenæon); the Anthesteria = Flowering, in Anthesterion (our February, nearly), and the “great Dionysia” in Elaphebolion = Of the Deer-Hunter, Artemis (our March, nearly—see Smith’s *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, s. v. “Dionysia”). The “great Dionysia” belong to about the



#### MARRIAGE OF DIONYSUS AND ARIADNE.

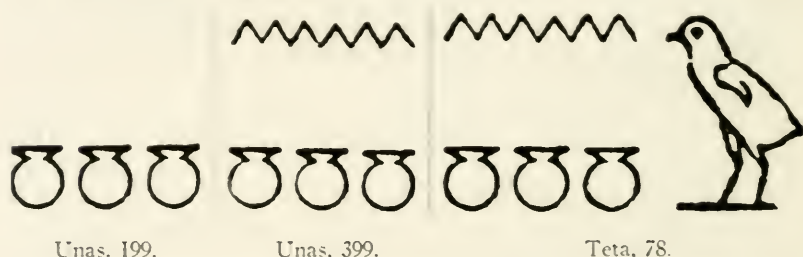
Picture on a Perugian amphora. (From A. Baumeister, *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums*, I, p. 441.)

time of the spring equinox, and spring is nature's marriage season. The spring equinox was the time for marriage of men and women in ancient Persia (Strabo, XV, 17), and it is generally believed that the marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne was enacted in Crete every spring—other mythic marriages celebrated in the same season being those of Adonis and Aphrodite at Alexandria, of Siva and Parvati in India, and of the King and Queen of the May in Europe (see Frazer, *Golden Bough*, II, pp. 108, 229). The festival of the “great Dionysia” corresponds roughly to the Passover as the great spring festival of the Jews; but John places the marriage at Cana some little time before the Passover in Nisan (ii. 12, 13), probably in

the preceding month Adar, answering approximately to the Greek Anthesterion, in which the Athenians celebrated the annual marriage of Dionysus and the woman (otherwise Ariadne) who acted the part of his queen (Demosthen., *Neacr.*, 78; Aristot., *Constit.*, III, 5). And as the Anthesteria were of three days' duration, there is a possibility that John's "on the third day," when the wine was exhausted, originally belonged to the last day of the Anthesteria. But a Jewish marriage-feast generally continued for seven days (Gen. xxix. 27; Judges xiv. 12, 17), and the Dionysiac festival at Andros, at which water became wine, also continued for seven days, from the 5th to the 11th of January (according to Pliny, as above cited). The Roman January answers approximately to the Attic Gamelion, the month "Of Marriages," with its Dionysiac festival of the Lenæa = Of the Wine-Press; Aristotle speaks of winter as the most auspicious season for marriages (*Polit.*, VII, 15), and we find the miracle at Cana finally assigned to the same day as the Epiphany or Manifestation of Christ at his baptism, Jan. 6 (see Epiphanius, *Adv. Haeres.*, II, 1, 29, etc.).

The Johannine six water-jars are generally supposed to have been for the washing of hands before and after meals (cf. Mark vii. 2-5; Matt. xv. 2); but it cannot be confirmed that this number of vessels was ever employed by the Jews for such a purification or for any other purpose. In the mythical view the Johannine jars represent the sources of the rain that is transmuted to grape juice and wine, and in all probability they were derived from the nature mythos in which Dionysus was the solar transmuter. According to Chrysostom, He who performed the miracle at Cana is the same who annually changes the rain into wine, through the vine (*Hom. in Ioan.*, XXI). As the miracle belongs to the spring (apparently not very long before the Passover, according to John), it is quite probable that the primary suggestion for the six jars is to be sought in the celestial Hyades (= Rainy), sometimes reckoned as six. It is true that the "rainy Hyades," together with the Pleiades (both in Taurus), "are the protagonistic stars of the second month" of spring (see Brown, *Primitive Constellations*, I, p. 289), to which month belong the Palestinian "latter rains"; whence it follows that the Johannine chronology is not in strict accordance with the concept of the six jars as the sources of the "latter rains." It is also true that seven stars are generally recognized in the Hyades group, as in that of the Pleiades; but nevertheless the seven of both groups were sometimes reduced to six. Thus according to Hyginus, six of the seven Hyades as terrestrial nymphs fled with the infant

Dionysus when Lycurgus threatened him, wherefore in gratitude the god placed them among the stars, making a group of six (*Poet. Ast.*, II, 21); and according to Pherecydes the Logographer, these six nymphs were the nurses of Dionysus on earth (*Apollod.*, III, 4, 3). Some derived the word Hyades (Ἵάδες) from Hyes (Ἵης), a surname of Dionysus, as also of Zeus (*Hesych.*, s. v. Hyes); while others referred it to the V-shaped figure of the stellar group. Thus Hellanicus of Mytilene says that the Hyades were so called from the Greek letter υ, "or because at their rising and setting Zeus rains" (*Frag.*, LVI), and some of the Latins called the group "the Roman V" (*Allen, Star Names*, p. 388). The Greek υ was the Pythagorean symbol of life, otherwise represented by the numeral six; while the Roman letter V corresponds to the Hebrew and Arabic Vav, with the numerical value of 6 and the general shape of the Babylonian single wedge which represents 6 as a unit, as well



#### OLD HIEROGLYPHIC FORMS OF THE NAME NU.

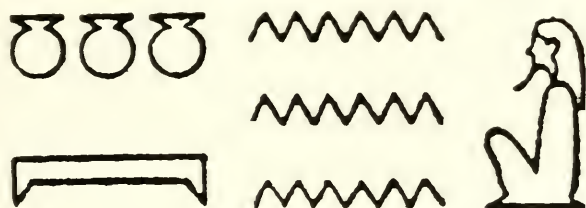
(From Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, I, p. 283.)

as I. But as the author of John probably places the Cana miracle in Adar, the twelfth Jewish month, whereas the rainy season of the Hyades belongs to the second month, Ijar or Zif, it is entirely probable that the six water-jars were referred in a secondary view to the six months' rainy season of Palestine, October to March inclusive—the remaining six months of the year being practically without rain. Roughly speaking, the Palestinian year is thus divided into a winter of rain and a summer of clear weather, with the production of grapes belonging to the latter season. In one view, therefore, the Johannine jars may well have been taken for multiple variants of the Jar of Aquarius as the source of the midwinter rains of Western Asia; this Jar being duplicated in the opposite sign, Leo, as the constellated Crater or water-jar (*Hydria*) from which the Nile inundation was sometimes conceived to be poured out, and which Manilius calls the Bowl of Bacchus (= Dionysus—see Allen,



*Star Names*, p. 183). The Nile god has one, two, or three water-jars (Horapollo stating of the three that one is for the soil, one for the ocean, and one for the rains—*Hieroglyph.*, I, 21); while Nu, the Egyptian name of the god of the heaven as an upper sea, was originally written with three such jars, or the three jars with the sign for water; the final form being the three jars (for the pronunciation) together with the signs for the heaven, water and a god (Budge, *Gods*, I, p. 283). In rainless Egypt the three jars of Nu were conceived as the sources of the Nile; and they appear to be represented by the three empty kettles miraculously filled with wine at the Elean festival of the Thyia attended by Dionysus (see above).

In connection with the marriage at Cana, there can be little doubt that six, as the number of the jars, was also recognized as the number of marriage, procreation, and creation, as it was in the mystico-mathematical system of the Pythagoreans. Clement of Alexandria says that he thinks that "the Pythagoreans reckon six



FINAL HIEROGLYPHIC FORM OF THE NAME NU.

(From Budge, *op. cit.*, I, p. 283.)

the perfect number, from the creation of the universe (in six days), according to the prophet (Moses, in Gen. i); and (they) call it Meseuthys (= Between the even ones) and Marriage, from its being the middle of the even numbers, that is, of ten and two. . . . And as marriage generates from male and female, so six is generated from the odd number three, which is called the masculine number, and the even number two, which is considered the feminine. For twice three are six. . . . also man is said to have been made on the sixth day" (*Strom.*, VI, 16). Philo Judæus had previously made much of the number six—as the number of creation and of the day on which man was created—as the first perfect number (the second being ten)—as connected in principle with unity (it was a basic number or unit in Babylonian arithmetic)—as both odd and even—and as sometimes called "harmony and matrimony" (*Quæst. in Gen.*, I, 91; II, 32, 45, 56; III, 49); and he also says that it is both male and female, being the multiple of the first odd or male num-

ber, three, and the first even or female number, two—"whence it was fitting that the universe was created in six days" (*De Mundi Opific.*, 3). Six was considered the perfect number as being the sum of its divisors, one, two, and three (Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 30); and according to Marcus the Heresiarch, it possesses the power of production and regeneration, whence the "dispensation of suffering" (i. e., the Crucifixion) occurred on the sixth day and in the sixth hour (Hippolytus, *Philosophum.*, VI, 42). Six was called "Aphrodite the mother" by the Pythagoreans, who recognized it as the symbol of life (Iamblichus, *Theolog. Arithm.*, 10); while Proclus affirms that it is allied to "soul" (in *Tim.*, III). The soul as the life principle was sometimes associated with the blood: again,



NUT POURING THE WATER OF LIFE ON THE SOUL OF THE DECEASED IN THE FORM OF A BIRD.

Isis and Nephthys witnessing. (From Lenormant, *Histoire de l'Orient*, III, p. 202.)

with the breath (= spirit): and the Chinese have the "Six Breaths," which produce all things in silence, and the "Six of Earth" (probably as a cube), in contradistinction to "Heaven's One" (Kidd, *China*, p. 292). The dove is the bird of Aphrodite, and six doves are sometimes figured breathing the soul into the infant Jesus (Didron, *Christ. Iconog.*, p. 125). The Greeks identified their Aphrodite (the Roman Venus) with the Egyptian Hathor (Het-hert = the House above) who originally belonged to the eastern heaven; but as she was finally assimilated to Nut (the feminine counterpart of Nu) as a figure of the whole heaven (see Budge, *Gods*, I, p. 428), she is sometimes represented in the cosmic sycamore tree, pouring the "water of life" from the celestial jar upon the deceased, thus

reviving him for his resurrection and ascension into the celestial regions. She is recognized as a female counterpart of Ra, the sun (*ibid.*, p. 429); and thus, if the marriage at Cana be referred to Egyptian mythology, the bride and bridegroom would represent Hathor and Ra. Hathor was associated with the rise of the Nile at the summer solstice; and as the red color of the river shortly after its rise was sometimes attributed to blood, in all probability the "water of life" poured out by Hathor (or Nut) was conceived to be transmuted to blood for the revived deceased. Simon Magus



HEBE POURING NECTAR FOR THE EXHAUSTED HERACLES.

Vase painting. (From Inghirami, *Monumenti Etrusche*, Pl. XXXVI.)

declared that he had changed air (= breath or spirit) into water, then the water into blood, and finally solidified the blood into flesh, forming a new human being (*Clementine Recognitions*, II, 15). And it may well have been conceived that the wine transmuted from water at the Cana marriage would be changed to blood for the new human being who would spring from that marriage. In the accompanying Greek representation, Hebe pours a cup of nectar for Heracles, her husband to be, who has just ascended to Olympus in

an exhausted condition—perhaps as suggested by the Egyptian concept of Nut or Hathor with the revivifying “water of life.”

Stories of miracles suggested by the natural transmutations or transformations in the vegetable kingdom are numerous and various. In the Homeric hymn entitled “Dionysus and the Pirates,” the god confounds the pirates with wondrous deeds when they forcibly take him to sea; causing wine to bubble up through the ship, while a vine loaded with clusters of grapes grows over the mast and sails. In a favorite Apocryphal legend of the infant Jesus, he sows wheat with his own hand, and at the proper time it produces a miraculous harvest in point of quantity (*Pseudo-Matthew*, 34; *Gospel of Thomas*, First Greek form, 12, Latin form, 10; see also Donehoo, *Apocryphal Life*, p. 118). In a variant legend, Jesus enters a field of wheat newly sown and commands it to become ripe, which it does immediately (Donehoo, *op. cit.*, p. 94, note). The propagation of trees from cuttings or slips was probably the primary suggestion for the many miracles of the blossoming rod or staff, such as that of Aaron (Num. xvii. 5-8). Jesus is fabled on one occasion to have planted three staves which immediately became as many trees, covered with bloom and fruit; while on another occasion, on May 25, an olive tree grew from a staff that he stuck in the ground (Donehoo, *op. cit.*, p. 107). In one form of the legend of the sacred sycamore tree of Matarea (see *Gospel of the Infancy*, 24), the fountain brought forth beneath it by the infant Jesus is led in streams through the country and causes barren trees to bear fruit (Xaverius, *Persian Life of Christ*, p. 102). Generally speaking, trees are green and fruitful in the summer half of the year, and dry and barren in the winter; the sun-god being the mythical transformer in all seasons. In a representation of the solar Mithra we find a tree in leaf connected with a bull’s head (for Taurus as the spring sign), while another with fruit is connected with the opposite or autumn sign of the Scorpion (Montfaucon, *L’antiq. expl.*, I, Plate CCXV).

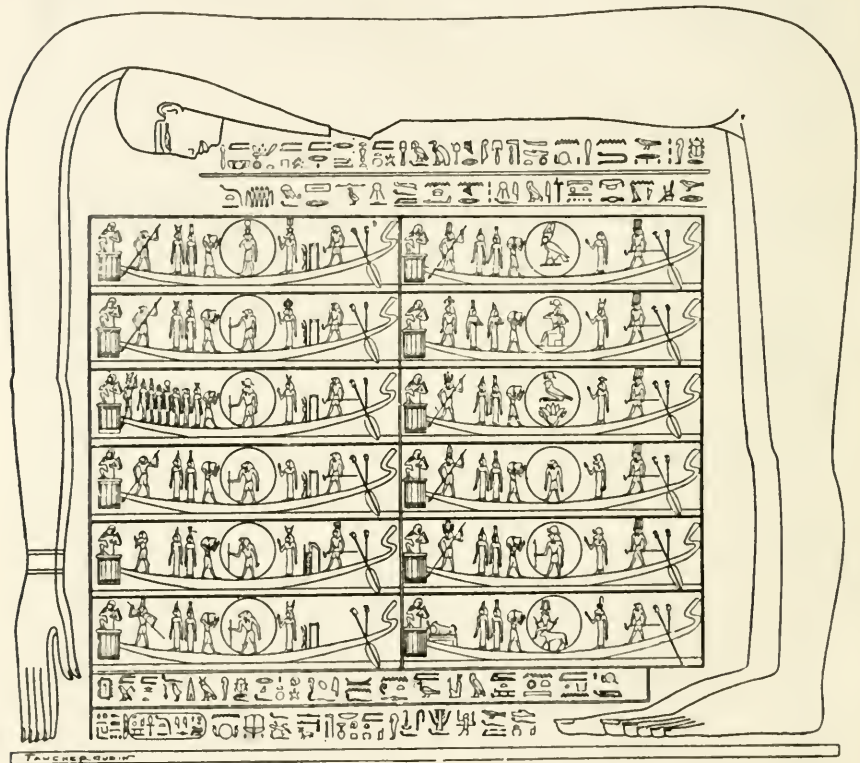
In the Canonical Gospels the only miracle of Jesus belonging to the vegetable kingdom is the one in which he causes a green tree to become leafless and dry, and this is also the only miracle of a destructive nature in these Gospels. It was probably introduced on the suggestion of Joel i. 7, 12, where the destruction of the fig-tree, which withers or dries up together with other trees, was naturally taken in connection with the earthquake and darkening of the sun in the following chapter (ii. 10); and the two latter elements reappear in connection with the Crucifixion of Jesus, while



the miracle of the fig-tree is placed shortly before that event—four days before, according to the Gospel chronology. This, however, leads to the inconsistency of making Jesus find a fig-tree in leaf in the spring season; for the leaves are preceded by the fruit, the early crop of which begins to form in spring and ripens in summer (Pliny, *H. N.*, XVI, 49; Hackett, *Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 133). Mark's story (xi. 12-14; 20-23) is as follows: "And on the morrow (the day after our Palm Sunday), having gone out from Bethany, he (Jesus) hungered. And seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, he went if perhaps he will find anything (i. e., any figs) on it. And having come to it, nothing he found except leaves, for it was not the season of figs. And answering, Jesus said to it, No more of thee forever let any one eat fruit. And his disciples heard. . . . And in the morning (of the next day), passing by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And having remembered, Peter says to him, Rabbi, see, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is dried up." Matthew alone (xxi. 18-22) repeats the story, with some variations: omitting the statement that it was not the season for figs and stating that the tree "dried up immediately" after Jesus cursed it. All authorities are agreed that it was not the season for figs when this cursing occurred, whence some suppose that the tree had put forth leaves out of the ordinary course of nature, and that Jesus therefore expected to find fruit on it—for the figs precede the leaves. But this not only denies the omniscience of Jesus, but makes him curse the tree for not bearing fruit out of season. Strauss conjectures that the story was originally symbolical of unfruitful Israel (*New Life of Jesus*, 81; cf. Luke xiii. 6-9), as if that nation were expected to be fruitful out of season; but both Mark and Matthew obviously intend the story to be taken literally. The Gnostic Docetæ identified the Gospel fig-tree with the great cosmic tree, without regard to seasons; and according to them Jesus cursed it "because he did not find upon it that sweet fruit, the sought-for produce" (figuratively of the Israelites or men in general—Hippolytus, *Philosophum.*, VIII, 1).

Stories of the metamorphosis, transformation, or transfiguration of men and gods are found in the most highly developed mythologies as well as among primitive peoples generally. In Greek mythology such transformations are legion, many of them being collected by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. The chief of the Greek transformers is Zeus (Jupiter) in his solar character; while Proteus, the Greek old man of the sea (probably a cloud figure originally) had the power of assuming all possible shapes (Homer, *Il.*, IV,

410, 455, etc.). In the *Book of the Dead* the deceased "arises as the living soul of Ra in heaven. He performs the prescribed transformations" (CXXVII, 11, Saïte). He is "the lord of the transformations" (CXXXIII, 10), like Horus, who is "radiant every day, and the master of transformations" (CXXXV, 1, Saïte—or "whose transformations are many," Theban). Twelve of the chapters in the *Book of the Dead* consist of formulas through



TWELVE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE SUN-GOD IN THE HOURS OF THE DAY.

Edfu. (From Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 89.)

which as many transformations of the deceased are effected—into a dove, the serpent Sata, the bird Bennu, the crocodile Sebek, the god Ptah, a golden hawk, the chief of the principal gods, a soul, a lotus-flower and a heron (see Renouf, *Rel. Anc. Egypt*, p. 189). On a monument from Edfu the twelve transformations are assigned to the sun-god in his journey through the twelve hours of the day (Rochemonteix, *Edfou*, Plate XXIII, C; Champollion, *Mon.*, Plate

CXXIII; Maspero, *Dawn*, p. 89). Like the solar Ra and Osiris, the deceased may take any of the divine forms; whence it is said of him in the *Book of Respirations* (6): "Thy soul is divinized in heaven, to make all the transformations thou desirest." He becomes a Bennu (= Phoenix, a figure of the rising sun—Budge, *Gods*, II, p. 97) in the most important of his transformations (*Book of the Dead*, XVII, 27; XXIX, C. 1, etc.). In the *Litany of Ra*, where that sun-god appears both as the *pantheos* and the cosmic man, he is called "the god with the numerous forms in the sacred dwelling" (i. e., the heaven—I, 32); the forms especially mentioned being those of the at-fish, ram, scarabæus beetle, and lion (I, 23, 26, 32, 33 and 56). Again, "his form is that of the transformer" (*ibid.*, I, 36); he has seventy-five forms (I, 76), and the deceased king to whom the *Litany* relates is called both "the Royal Osiris" and "Ra himself" (II, 2). In other texts, the solar Osiris makes for himself various forms in the underworld (*Book of the Underworld*, in Budge, *Gods*, I, p. 230, etc.); and "The secret dwelling is in darkness in order that the transformations of this god may take place" (*Records of the Past*, I, p. 90). Again, during the conflict following the slaying of Osiris as a man, the enemies of Ra transform themselves into crocodiles and hippopotamuses, intending to swallow him; but they are conquered by Horus, who during the same conflict takes the form of a winged (solar) disk and afterward that of a lion, while Set changes himself into a serpent after he is slain in human form by Horus (Budge, *Gods*, I, pp. 478-482). In the Harris Magic Papyrus, the soli-cosmic Osiris takes the form of a monkey (probably for a storm-cloud) and afterward that of a crazy man (for the stormy heaven—*Records of the Past*, X, pp. 152, 153.).

Although the transformation concept was probably utilized in Egypt for the purpose of accounting for the various assimilations of originally distinct deities, it is evident enough from the above-cited texts that the sun-god was always recognized as the great transformer—doubtless because he was conceived to assume different shapes in each month of the year as in each hour or other division of the day. Thus in one text he says that he is Ra when he rises and Tem (or Tum) when he sets (Budge, *Gods*, I, p. 335), while in another he says: "I am Khepra (the scarabæus god) in the morning, and Ra at noonday, and Tem in the evening" (*ibid.*, I, p. 352)—just as the Hindus identified these three phases of the sun respectively with Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, who were thus recognized as one god (*Asiatic Researches*, I, p. 267; V, p. 254).

In the view in which the daily revolution of the sun is divided into three equal parts by these three phases, they correspond to the three seasons of the Egyptian year; while the twelve hours of the day correspond to the twelve months. In his *Epistle to Anebo* the Egyptian, Porphyrius asks: "What is the meaning of those mystic narrations which say that a certain divinity is unfolded into light from mire...and that he changes his form every season (*ōpa*, here for 'month') according to the signs of the zodiac?" And the answer is found in Iamblichus where he says that "the sun is diversified according to the signs of the zodiac, and every season changes his form" (*Theolog. Arithm.*, 3). In a hymn of the *Mahabharata*, the soli-cosmic deity is "the (one) god in twelve persons," and it is said to him: "Thou dividest thy person into twelve parts, and thou becomest the Twelve Adityas"—the Hindu gods of the months (*Vana Parva*, V, 189). The forms of the sun-god especially mentioned in the *Litany of Ra* as above cited—the fish, ram, scarabæus and lion—were not improbably referred to the zodiacal Pisces, Aries, Cancer and Leo; while Taurus corresponds to the bull-form of Osiris (as Asar-Hapi or Serapis). The Persians appear to have transferred some of the characteristics of the sun to Sirius, the brightest of the stars: for we find Tistar (= Sirius) assuming successively the forms of a man, a horse and a bull, and producing rain for ten days and nights in each form—or for a month of thirty days in all (*Bundahish*, VII, 4; *Tistar Yast*, 13, 16, 18).

The twelve ordinary months become twelve cycles of some two thousand years each in the great year of the precession of the equinoxes through the signs of the zodiac; and it is here in all probability that we have the primary suggestion for the periodical incarnation of the deity—a concept that reached its most highly developed forms among the worshipers of Vishnu. The number of his *avatars* or "descents from (heaven)" are variously given in Hindu works, the most popular group comprising ten forms in as many incarnations—a fish (Matsya), a tortoise (Kurma), a boar (Varaha), a man-lion (Narasinha), a dwarf (Vamana), Rama with the ax (Parasuruma), Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki—all belonging to the past except Kalki, who is yet to come on a white horse, sword in hand, for the destruction of the wicked (*Ayeen Akbery*, III, pp. 285-292). Kalki corresponds to the future incarnation with a sword who comes on a white horse at the close of the current cosmic cycle, in Rev. xix, 11-16; and there can be little doubt that the mystic lamb of that Jewish-Christian book was recog-



nized as the Aries incarnation (*ibid.*, V, 6). The Pisces precessional month began at about the beginning of the Christian era, whence doubtless some of the early Greek and Roman Christians identified Jesus with a fish (see the preceding article of this series, on "The Cosmic Multiplications").

In Section XI of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the incarnate Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna in the form of the cosmic man. He "made evident unto Arjuna his supreme and celestial form. . . . The glory and amazing splendor of this mighty being may be likened to the sun shining at once into the heavens with a thousand times more than usual brightness. The son of Pandu (i. e., Arjuna) then beheld within the body of the God of Gods (Krishna), standing together, the whole universe divided forth into its vast variety." To him Arjuna says: "O universal Lord, form of the universe! . . . I see thee, difficult to be seen, shining on all sides with light immeasurable. . . . the sun and moon thine eyes; thy mouth a flaming fire, and the whole world shining with thy reflected glory. . . . The (three) worlds, alike with me, are terrified to behold thy wondrous form gigantic." And Krishna answers, "Well pleased, O Arjuna, I have shown thee, by my divine power, this my supreme form, the universe, in all its glory." Finally, Krishna changed back to "his natural (human) form, and having assumed his milder shape, he presently assuaged the fears of the affrighted Arjuna."

The appearance of Gautama Buddha in his divine or celestial form is perhaps the most conspicuous event of his life on earth. In the *Book of the Great Decease* (IV, 47-52), the beloved disciple Ananda places upon Buddha "that pair of gold-cloth robes, burnished and ready for wear," and the former says to the latter: "Wonderful, O Lord! Marvelous, O Lord! that the color of the Tathagata's (Buddha's) skin should be so pure and purified. For when I placed upon the person of the Blessed One this pair of gold-cloth robes, burnished and ready for wear, it appeared bereft of its brightness." Buddha replies that the Tathagata's skin becomes thus pure and purified on two occasions; on the night when he is supernaturally enlightened, and on the night when he finally enters Nirvana (i. e., when he dies); and the account closes with a poetical quotation which attests the antiquity of the legend:

"The pair of gold-cloth robes were brought by Pukkoso:  
The Master, when begirt therewith, in golden color shone."

In the Malalankara-vatthu version of the story, it is said of Buddha that "His body appeared shining like a flame. Ananda

was exceedingly surprised. . . . 'Your exterior appearance,' said he to Buddha, 'is all at once white, shining and beautiful above all expression' (note to above, in *Sacred Books of the East*, XI, p. 82). The *Fo-pen-hing-tsi-king* (part of which is translated in Beal's *Romantic History of Buddha*) tells of the transfiguration of the child Buddha, at a time when he was being praised and bedecked with jewels—"the glory of the prince's body eclipsed the glory of these gems, so that their brightness was not seen, and they all appeared dark and black even as a drop of ink." Buddha was also seen on Mount Pandava, sitting in the shade of a tree, "his body glorious as a bright golden image. . . . as the brightness of the sun and moon in the midst of the mountain"; so that the people said, "This is no mortal man, for never yet did man possess such beauty, and shed abroad such glory" (XXII, 2). He passed the night on the mountain, and in the morning went to the city of Rajagriha, where the people were filled with awe at beholding "the spiritual luster" that shone from his body (XXIII, 1; in Beal, *Romantic History*).

In the Old Testament account of the Giving of the Law on Sinai, God said to Moses: "Come up unto Jehovah, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy from the elders of Israel, and prostrate yourselves at a distance. And let Moses alone come to Jehovah. . . . And Moses. . . . arose early in the morning, and built an altar below the mountain, and twelve memorial pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel (corresponding to the twelve signs of the zodiac). . . . Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy from the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness. . . . And Jehovah said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mountain, and be there, and I will give thee the two tablets of stone, and the law and the commandment. . . . And Moses went up into the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day he (Jehovah) called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud. . . . and Moses was in the mountain forty days and forty nights" (Ex. xxiv. 1, 4, 9, 10, 12, 15-18). When he returned, Moses found that the people had made a golden calf, and in his anger he not only destroyed this image but also broke the two tablets on which Jehovah

had written the ten commandments (*ibid.* xxxii. 19, 20). But replicas were subsequently written by Jehovah on Sinai; and when Moses returned with them "the skin of his face sent forth rays" (A. V., 'had become shining'; Sept., 'was made glorious'), so the people feared to approach him except when he put on a veil (*ibid.* xxxiv. 1, 4, 28-35). According to the *Book of Enoch*, men shall not be able to behold the faces of the elect ones at the time of the Judgment, for the Lord of Spirits shall cause his light to illumine their faces (XXXVIII, 4). In the *Litany of Ra*, that sun-god is addressed as Senekher = Shining Face, and "his form is that of Senekher" (I, 62); while, as we saw above, the whole body of Buddha shone brighter than gold, and that of Krishna shone brighter than the sun—whence it seems that Moses in his glorified transfiguration is of solar character, while the sun-god himself is represented by Jehovah in his glory "like devouring fire" (just as Ra has the form of "the burning one" and is "the master of light," in the *Litany*, I, 40, 75). Furthermore, the destruction of the golden calf coming as it does after the institution of the Passover at about the time of the spring equinox, with its sacrifice of a male lamb and change of date for the beginning of the year (Ex. xii. 2-11), suggests that the lamb was substituted for the calf by the Israelites, and that this substitution and change in the calendar belong to the epoch when the spring equinox retrograded from Taurus into Aries.

The generality of the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era held that the history of Moses as the first Redeemer would be repeated in that of the Messiah as the second Redeemer (*Eccl. Rab.*, I, 9; *Mishna, Sanh.*, 111a, etc.). In the figurative language of 2 Cor. iii. 7-iv. 6, the veiled glory of the face of Moses represents the Old Testament dispensation which is superseded by the "glad tidings" of Christ; the veil being taken away from "the surpassing glory" of Christ, "who is the image of God," so that Christians "with uncovered face beholding the glory of the Lord (God) as in a mirror (i.e., in Christ), to the same image are being transformed (*μεταμορφούμεθα*) from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit (God)." It is not impossible that we have here the immediate suggestion for the Gospel story of the Transfiguration of Jesus, the earliest extant form of which is presumably in Mark ix. 2-10, where it is evidently an interpolation, breaking as it does the connection between verses 1 and 11. But the Gospel story is certainly intended to be taken literally, whereas in 2 Corinthians the transformation (of both Christ and his followers) is spiritual, somewhat like that of Enoch, whose "spirit was trans-

figured" when he was translated into the heaven (*Book of Enoch*, LXXI, 11). Mark's story follows: "And after six days (i. e., on the seventh day, doubtless originally the Jewish Sabbath, as in the Mosaic account of the appearance of Jehovah in his glory), Jesus takes with him Peter and James and John, and brings them alone up into a high mountain apart. And he was transformed (*μετεμορφώθη*; Vulgate, *transfiguratus est*; A. V., 'was transfigured') before them: and his garments became shining, white exceedingly as snow, such as a fuller on the earth is not able to whiten (or, 'he became shining, and his raiment became white like snow,' according to the Sinaitic Palimpsest). And appeared to them Elijah, with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And answering, Peter says to Jesus, Rabbi, good it is for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what he should say, for they had become greatly afraid (like Arjuna at the transfiguration of Krishna). And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out of the cloud (the voice of God, who spoke to Moses out of a cloud), saying, This is my son, the beloved (as at the baptism of Jesus, Mark i. 11; Matt. iii. 17; Luke iii. 22): hear ye him (cf. Deut. xviii. 15; Acts iii. 22; vii. 37). And suddenly having looked around, no longer any one they saw but Jesus alone with themselves"—and "as he was (before his transformation)," according to the *Diatessaron*. The story closes with the descent from the mountain and the charge of Jesus that no one should be told of the occurrence till after his resurrection. Matthew (xvii. 1-9) has substantially the same story, with the same Greek word for "he was transformed": but with some variations and additions. Thus this Evangelist says of Jesus that "his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light, . . . and a luminous cloud overshadowed them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my son, the beloved, in whom I have found delight: hear ye him. And hearing it, the disciples fell upon their faces, and were very greatly affrighted. And having come to them, Jesus touched them, and said, Arise, and be not terrified. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus alone." In Luke (ix. 28-36) the account is recast throughout—"And it came to pass after these words about eight days (probably 'on the eighth day' in the original of Luke's version, with Sunday instead of Saturday recognized as the Sabbath), that having taken Peter and John and James, he (Jesus) went up into the mountain to pray. And it came to pass, as he prayed the appearance of his face (became) changed, and his



clothing (became) gleaming white (or, 'as the light of lightning'—*Diatessaron*). And behold, two men talked with him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appearing in glory spoke of his departure (i. e., his death) which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were oppressed with sleep; and having awoke, they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him. And it came to pass, as these (two men) departed from him . . . a cloud came and overshadowed them (the disciples) and they feared as those (two men) entered into the cloud: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my son, the beloved (or, 'the chosen,' as in the Sinaitic Palimpsest and the *Diatessaron*, answering to 'the Elect One' of *Enoch*, XC, 5, etc.): hear ye him. And as occurred the voice, Jesus was found alone." The story is wanting in John; but there is an allusion to it in 2 Peter i. 17-18, where the writer follows Matthew in a general way, but rather loosely refers to "the apostles" as eyewitnesses of the scene. This probably suggested the statement in the *Apocalypse of Peter* that the twelve disciples went with Jesus into a mountain; and when they begged him to show them one of the dead in the other world, "suddenly there appeared two men (Moses and Elijah) standing before the Lord toward the east, on whom we were not able to look, for there came forth from their countenance a ray as of the sun" (4-6).

It should be sufficiently evident without detailed comparisons that the Gospel stories of the Transfiguration are to a large extent mere variant composites of the two (or more) stories of Moses, in the latter (or last) of which he appears with his shining face; while the shining or gleaming garments of Jesus are like those of the glorified Buddha (and Krishna).

Primarily the three Apostles with Jesus are counterparts of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, who with Moses "saw the God of Israel" on Sinai; and they also serve as the number of witnesses required by Jewish law (Deut. xix. 15; Luke ix. 28, etc.). Peter, James and John were also the witnesses of the raising of the daughter of Jairus and of the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, while James and John had desired seats on the right and left of Jesus in his "glory" (Mark x. 37) or "kingdom" (Matt. xx. 21). Moreover, in Mark iii. 17, James and John are called "Boanerges" (= Sons of Thunder, with reference to their zeal), and in Ex. xix. 9, 16, 18, Jehovah appears on Sinai in a storm-cloud, with thunders and lightnings, smoke, fire and earthquake. Moses alone went to Jehovah in Ex. xxiv, his three companions evidently remaining somewhat lower on the mountain; whence in all probability Jesus was conceived

to have gone somewhat higher than the three Apostles when he was transfigured—which gives a symmetrical arrangement of the typical seven figures in the scene, with the three visitors from heaven highest of all, doubtless in the air according to the original concept. Jehovah was alone when he appeared to Moses; but he is accompanied by Moses and Elijah in the symmetrical Gospel arrangement of the seven figures. Without this arrangement, Enoch might well have been included with Moses and Elijah, as they were the three human beings supposed by the Jews to have been translated to heaven, the rest of the dead being in the underworld (Heb. xi. 5; Josephus, *Antiq.*, IV, 8, 18; 2 Kings ii. 11, etc.). Moreover, Moses and Elijah (without Enoch, for the reason suggested) were probably recognized by the Gospel writers as a sort of connecting link between the old and the new dispensations, attesting the Messiahship of Jesus.

The identification of the Mount of the Transfiguration of Jesus with an actual mountain or hill in Palestine has been abandoned in despair by critical commentators; in fact, we may be sure it would have been definitely named had such an identification been plausible. The Gospel mountain corresponds not only to Sinai, but also to Pandava in the transfiguration of Buddha; and in the mythical view all three mountains represent the dome of heaven, primarily with the sun-god in the meridian. This is probably the position of Jehovah in both the Mosaic and Christian scenes, while in the latter Moses and Elijah are on Jehovah's right and left, to the east and west. In the same view, Jesus is also in the meridian, below Jehovah, as is Peter with James to the right or east and John to the left or west; and as Jesus is the Pisces incarnation, while Peter is recognized as the Apostle of that sign, the sign itself may well have been conceived as in the meridian at midday at the time of the Transfiguration—with Jehovah and Jesus as duplicate solar figures, and James and John perhaps in Gemini and Sagittarius respectively. This would appear to put the original date of the Transfiguration of Jesus at the spring equinox in Pisces, about a year before the Crucifixion; for that equinox retrograded into Pisces about the beginning of the Christian era.

In the Gospel stories Jesus does not appear to undergo any actual change in form, in which respect these stories are like those of Moses and Buddha, but unlike that of Krishna. But it is not impossible that Mark (and Matthew) employed the word *μετεμορφώθη* (= "was metamorphosed" or "transformed") on the suggestion of some symbolical reference to the metamorphosis of the

Messiah for his incarnation in the Pisces precessional period; for the Greek word properly signifies an actual or apparent change in form or figure (whence the A. V. "transfigured"); and while the Messiah is symbolized by a lamb in Revelation (as if for the Aries incarnation), Jesus was frequently represented as a fish by the early Christians (for the incarnation of the Pisces period). Luke omits the statement that Jesus "was transformed," and states instead that "the appearance of his face changed"; while the *Diatessaron* has it that "Jesus changed and became after the fashion of another person, and his face shone like the sun" (XXIV, 3). According to the *Acts of John* (4), that Apostle beheld the transfigured Jesus as naked and not in any wise as a man, but standing on the ground with his feet whiter than snow and luminous, and his head reaching into the heaven; and when John cried out in fear, Jesus again became as a man of small (or normal) stature.

In the *Gospel of the Infancy*, Jesus transforms boys to kids, but shortly restores them to human shape (40); and he also restores a man who had been changed into a mule through witchcraft (20, 21).