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CONSIDERATIONS OF METHODOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

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FROM THE DAYS of the Renaissance and Reformation to the present, the Mystery Religions of antiquity have engaged the attention of classical scholars and theologians alike.¹ During what may be called the precritical stage of the study of this subject, it was commonly believed that by the Mysteries a constant succession of priests or hierophants transmitted from age to age an esoteric doctrine, better and nobler than that of the popular religion.² Whether this recondite science had been derived originally from the hidden wisdom of India or Egypt, or from the Old Testament, or even from a primitive revelation to all mankind, was debated with characteristic disregard for historical methodology.

The first scholar who made an exhaustive and critical examina-

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¹ Perhaps the first from the standpoint of classical scholarship as well as Protestant theology to give serious consideration to the Mysteries was Isaac Casaubon. In his *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes* (London, 1614) he attempted to show that sacramental ceremonies in the early Roman Catholic Church were influenced by the ancient Mystery religions. (I have used the Geneva edition, 1655, where the Mysteries are treated on pp. 477 ff.)

² E.g., G. E. J. de Sainte Croix, *Recherches historiques et critiques sur les mystères du paganisme* (Paris, 1784), and F. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (Leipzig, 1810).

tion of the statements of ancient authors regarding the Mysteries was Christian August Lobeck.³ Although Lobeck confined his attention to the Eleusinian, the Orphic, and the Samothracian Mysteries, his monograph, published in 1829, was of the greatest importance in the inauguration of a new era in the scientific study of the subject in general. A great deal of rubbish and pseudo-learning was swept aside, and it became possible to discuss intelligently the rites and teachings of the Mysteries.⁴

Furthermore, it was also during the nineteenth century that archaeology made quite significant additions to our knowledge of the beliefs and practices of devotees of the Mysteries. Excavations of places of worship supplemented the evidence from classical and patristic authors with thousands of inscriptions, hymns, mosaics, gems, statues, altars, lamps, sacrificial instruments, and the like.

It thus became increasingly possible and necessary to make scientific comparisons between the Mysteries and early Christianity. From the latter part of the nineteenth century to the present, many scholars have expressed their opinion regarding the relationship between the Church and the competing religions in the Roman Empire.⁵ As would be expected in view of the fragmentary and occasionally ambiguous evidence, different investigators have arrived at quite divergent results. On the one hand, some scholars believe that only a minimum of outside influence came to bear upon primitive Christianity (e.g., Anrich,⁶ Cheetham,

³ C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus, sive de theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis*, 2 vols. (Königsberg, 1829).

⁴ For a brief summary of some of the earlier discussions of the question of the relation of the Mysteries to Christianity, see Samuel Cheetham, *The Mysteries. Pagan and Christian* (London, 1897), pp. ix sqq.

⁵ Besides the scores of monographs published during the past century which deal exclusively with the relation of the Mysteries to Christianity, there are hundreds of volumes which devote one or more chapters to this question, not to speak of hundreds of additional studies in which the authors more briefly express their opinion on the problem. In addition, there is an enormous bibliography on the Mysteries *per se*. A. D. Nock remarks with subtle sarcasm, "‘Saviour-gods’ and mysteries probably did not bulk so large in the life of the first century A.D. as in modern study"; see his "Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background," in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, ed. A. E. J. Rawlinson (London, 1928), p. 81.

⁶ Gustav Anrich, *Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum* (Göttingen, 1894).

ham,⁷ Clemen,⁸ Kennedy,⁹ Machen,¹⁰ Boulanger,¹¹ Jacquier,¹² Nock,¹³ Heigl,¹⁴ Prümm,¹⁵ and Rahner¹⁶). Others, on the other hand, are disposed to believe not only that the amount of influence was relatively large but also that it made itself felt in the formulation of central and crucial doctrines and rites of the Church (e.g., Hatch,¹⁷ Wobbermin,¹⁸ Gardner,¹⁹ Soltau,²⁰ Brückner,²¹ Reitzenstein,²² Perdelwitz,²³ Loisy,²⁴ Bousset,²⁵ Böhlig,²⁶

⁷ Op. cit.

⁸ Carl Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments, Die Abhängigkeit des ältesten Christentums von nichtjüdischen Religionen und philosophischen Systemen* (Giessen, 1909); Eng. trans., *Primitive Christianity and Its Non-Jewish Sources* (Edinburgh, 1912); and *Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum* (Giessen, 1913).

⁹ H. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (London, 1913).

¹⁰ J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York, 1921), pp. 211-290.

¹¹ André Boulanger, *Orphée, rapports de l'orphisme et du Christianisme* (Paris, 1925).

¹² Ernst Jacquier, "Mystères païens (les) et Saint Paul," *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*, ed. A. d'Alès, III (1926), 964-1014.

¹³ A. D. Nock's essay mentioned above in footnote 5; and his articles on "Le religioni di mistero," *Ricerche religiose*, VI (1930), 392-403, and "Mysteries," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XI (1937), 172-175.

¹⁴ Bartholomäus Heigl, *Antike Mysterienreligionen und Urchristentum* (Münster, 1932).

¹⁵ Karl Prümm, *Der christliche Glaube und die altheidnische Welt*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1935); and *Das antike Heidentum nach seinem Grundströmungen, ein Handbuch zur biblischen und altchristlichen Umweltkunde* (Münster, 1942).

¹⁶ Hugo Rahner, "Das christliche Mysterium und die heidnischen Mysterien," *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 1944 (Band XI), *Die Mysterien* (Zürich, 1945), 347-449.

¹⁷ Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (London, 1890).

¹⁸ Georg Wobbermin, *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Frage der Beeinflussung des Urchristentums durch das antike Mysterienwesen* (Berlin, 1896).

¹⁹ Percy Gardner, *The Origin of the Lord's Supper* (London, 1893); *The Growth of Christianity* (London, 1907); and *The Religious Experience of St. Paul* (London, 1911).

²⁰ Wilhelm Soltau, *Das Fortleben des Heidentums in der altchristlichen Kirche* (Tübingen, 1906).

²¹ Martin Brückner, *Der sterbende und auferstehende Gottheiland in den orientalischen Religionen und ihr Verhältnis zum Christentum* (Tübingen, 1908).

²² Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig, 1910; 3rd ed., 1927).

²³ Richard Perdelwitz, *Die Mysterienreligionen und das Problem des I Petrusbriefes* (Giessen, 1911).

²⁴ Alfred Loisy, "The Christian Mystery," *Hibbert Journal*, X (1911-12), 45-64; and *Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien* (Paris, 1914; 2^e ed., 1930).

²⁵ Wilhelm Bousset, "Christentum und Mysterienreligionen," *Theologische Rundschau*, XV (1912), 41-61; "Die Religionsgeschichte und das Neue Testa-

Macchioro,²⁷ Weigall,²⁸ Case,²⁹ Schütze,³⁰ Holland,³¹ Hyde,³² Vassall,³³ and Prentice.³⁴

Such widely divergent opinions are due, at least in part, to differences in methodology in dealing with the evidence. In what follows an attempt is made to outline some considerations which, it is suggested, must be taken into account in estimating the amount of influence of the Mysteries upon the New Testament.

I. First of all, a distinction is to be made between the faith and practice of the earliest Christians and that of the Church during subsequent centuries. One cannot deny that post-Constantinian Christianity, both Eastern and Western, adopted not a few pagan rites and practices.³⁵ From Asclepius came the practice of incubation in churches for the cure of diseases.³⁶ The functions

ment," *ibid.*, 251-278; *Kyrios Christos* (Göttingen, 1913); and *Jesus der Herr* (Göttingen, 1916).

²⁶ Hans Böhlig, *Die Geisteskultur von Tarsos im augusteischen Zeitalter mit Berücksichtigung der paulinischen Schriften* (Göttingen, 1913).

²⁷ Vittorio Macchioro, *Orfismo e Paolinismo, studi e polemiche* (Montevarchi, 1922); and *From Orpheus to Paul, a History of Orphism* (New York, 1930).

²⁸ Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* (London, c. 1928).

²⁹ Shirley Jackson Case, *Experience with the Supernatural in Early Christian Times* (New York, 1929), pp. 106-145, and *The Origins of Christian Supernaturalism* (Chicago, c. 1946).

³⁰ A. Schütze, *Mithras-Mysterien und Urchristentum* (Stuttgart, 1937).

³¹ A. Holland, *Les cultes de mystères; l'ancienne rédemption païenne et le Christianisme* (Paris, 1938).

³² W. W. Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, 1946).

³³ William F. Vassall, *The Origin of Christianity, Brief Study of the World's Early Beliefs and Their Influence on the Early Church* (New York, 1952).

³⁴ William K. Prentice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God* (Boston, 1953), pp. 139-162.

³⁵ Cf. the following statement in a letter which Flavius Vopiscus attributes to Hadrian: "The land of Egypt . . . I have found to be wholly light-minded, unstable, and blown about by every breath of rumour. There those who worship Serapis are, in fact, Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ are, in fact, devotees of Serapis. . . . Even the patriarch himself, when he comes to Egypt, is forced by some to worship Serapis, by others to worship Christ," *Scriptores historiae Augustae, Firmus, viii* (Loeb Classical Library, III, 399 f., ed. and trans. by David Magie). The fact that this letter is an obvious forgery does not detract from its value in reflecting the opinion of a fourth century non-Christian author who wrote perhaps during the Julian revival. Christian syncretism in Egypt emerged at least as early as the second half of the second century when certain Gnostics established a *Larium* in Alexandria where they venerated images of Jesus, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers (Irenaeus, I, xxv, 6 [I, 210, Harvey]).

³⁶ See L. Deubner, *De incubatione capita quattuor* (Leipzig, 1900); Mary Hamilton, *Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian*

of more than one local demi-god were taken over by Christian saints whose names even, in some cases, remind one of the original pagan prototypes.³⁷ Statues of Isis holding the infant Harpocrates (Horus), as well as the exalted hymns in honor of the Egyptian Queen of Heaven, find their obvious counterparts in the growth of the cult of Mary.³⁸ Just as Sabazios with characteristic gesture — the upper three fingers raised, the other two bent down — blessed his adherents, so the Catholic bishop of the West gave (and still gives) his blessing to the faithful.³⁹ Through various paths the ancient idea of "refrigerium" entered both popular and official circles of the Church.⁴⁰ Processions in which sacred objects are carried for display to the on-lookers, the tonsure of priests, certain funeral rites, the use of lighted tapers, popular ideas regarding the geography of Hades — all

Churches (London, 1906); and E. J. and L. Edenstein, *Asclepius*, 2 vols. (Baltimore, 1945).

³⁷See Ernst Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults* (Tübingen, 1904); W. W. Hyde, *Greek Religion and Its Survivals* (Boston, 1923), pp. 41-85; Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, 3rd ed. (Brussels, 1923), pp. 140-201; G. J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion* (Boston, 1931), and idem, "Roman Religious Survivals in Christianity," in J. T. McNeill (ed.), *Environmental Factors in Christian History* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 72-90.

³⁸While it is doubtless true that the earliest artistic representations of Mary with the infant Jesus do not portray her nursing the child, as was customary in the representation of Isis and Horus (so G. A. S. Snijder, *De forma matris cum infanto sedentis apud antiquos* [Vienna, 1923], p. 69), it is equally true that subsequent Christian art and cultus betray decided borrowings in this and other respects from the cult of Isis (and perhaps also the cult of Astarte); see W. Drexler, s.v. "Isis," in W. H. Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*; Theodor Trede, "Die Himmelskönigin," in his *Das Heidentum in der römischen Kirche*, II (Gotha, 1890), 338-371; Francis Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, I (Cambridge, 1915), 84-89; and Werner Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin, 1930). With reference to the cult of Astarte, see Gustav Rösch, "Astarte—Maria," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, LXI (1888), 265-299; cf. Trede, op. cit., "Die grosse Muttur," pp. 85-121.

³⁹Chr. Blinkenberg, "Darstellungen des Sabazios und Denkmäler seines Kultus" in his *Archaeologische Studien* (Copenhagen, 1904), pp. 66-128, and F. Cumont, *Comptes rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 1906, pp. 72-79.

⁴⁰See A. M. Schneider, *Refrigerium nach literarischen Quellen und Inschriften*, Inaug. Diss. (Freiburg im B., 1928); E. Buonaiuti, "Refrigerio pagano e refrigerio cristiano," *Ricerche religiose*, V (1929), 160-167; A. Perrot, *Le "Refrigerium" dans l'au delà* (Paris, 1937); Mircea Eliade, "Locum refrigerii . . ." *Zalmoxis, revue des études religieuses*, I (1938), 203-208; and J. Quasten, "'Vetus superstitio et nova religio,' the Problem of *Refrigerium* in the Ancient Church of North Africa," *Harvard Theological Review*, XXXIII (1940), 253-266.

these have quite generally acknowledged pagan prototypes.⁴¹ The real difference of opinion, however, arises with regard to the relation of nascent Christianity to its pagan rivals.

II. The nature and amount of the evidence of the Mysteries create certain methodological problems. Partly because of a vow of secrecy imposed upon the initiates, relatively little information regarding the teaching imparted in the Mysteries has been preserved. Furthermore, since a large part of the scanty evidence regarding the Mysteries dates from the second to the fifth Christian centuries, it must not be assumed that beliefs and practices current at that time existed in substantially the same form during the pre-Christian era. In fact, that pagan doctrines would differ somewhat from place to place and from century to century is not only what one should antecedently expect, but also what the sources reveal to be a fact. For example, the grades of Mithraic initiation in the West included that of "Cryphius"; in the East (in its stead?) was that of "Nymphus."⁴² Again, the efficacy of the rite of the taurobolium differed in what was promised to the initiate.⁴³ Methodologically, therefore, it is extremely hazardous to assume, as has sometimes been done, that a certain rite or

⁴¹ See Gerhard Loeschcke, *Jüdisches und Heidnisches im christlichen Kult* (Bonn, 1910), pp. 16-36; A. Dieterich, *Nekyia*, 2te Aufl. (Leipzig, 1913); Andrew Alföldi, *A Festival of Isis in Rome under the Christian Emperors of the Fourth Century* (Budapest, 1937); M. P. Nilsson, "Pagan Divine Services in Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review*, XXXVIII (1945), 63-69; and Hugo Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zürich, 1945).

For a classical statement of the multifarious influence of paganism on the early and the medieval Church, see Charles Reade, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, chap. 74 (Everyman's Library edition, chap. 72). No little research went into this chapter of Reade's historical novel; for his sources, see Albert M. Turner, *The Making of the Cloister and the Hearth* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 186-188.

Some consideration of the earlier period is also given in Jean Seznec, *La survivance des dieux antiques* (Studies of the Warburg Institute, XI [London, 1940]), Eng. trans. and revision, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods; The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York, 1953).

⁴² B. M. Metzger, "St. Jerome's Testimony Concerning the Second Grade of Mithraic Initiation," *American Journal of Philology*, LXVI (1945), 225-233.

⁴³ According to epigraphical evidence, the taurobolium was efficacious for twenty years (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VI, 504, of A.D. 376, and 152, of A.D. 390), for eternity (CIL, VI, 510 of A.D. 376), and, possibly, for twenty-eight years (so an inscription discussed by Cumont in *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions*, 1923, pp. 253 ff.). See Clifford H. Moore, "The Duration of the Efficacy of the Taurobolium," *Classical Philology*, XIX (1924), 363-365.

belief which a Christian author cites must have existed in the same form in pre-Christian days.

III. Another consideration, often overlooked by scholars who are better acquainted with Hellenistic culture than with Jewish, is necessarily involved in the circumstance that the early Palestinian Church was composed of Christians from a Jewish background, whose strict monotheism and traditional intolerance of syncretism must have militated against wholesale borrowing from pagan cults.⁴⁴ Psychologically it is quite inconceivable that the Judaizers, who attacked Paul with unmeasured ferocity for what they considered as his liberalism in regard to the relation of Gentile converts to the Mosaic law, should nevertheless have acquiesced in what is sometimes thought to have been his thoroughgoing contamination of the central doctrines and sacraments of the Christian religion. Furthermore, with regard to Paul himself scholars are coming once again to acknowledge that the Apostle's prevailing set of mind was rabbinically oriented, and that his newly-found Christian faith ran in molds previously formed at the feet of Gamaliel.⁴⁵

IV. In estimating the degree of opportunity afforded the early Palestinian Church of being influenced by the Mysteries, it is certainly a significant fact that, unlike other countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Palestine has been extremely barren in yielding archaeological remains of the paraphernalia and places of worship connected with the Mysteries.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For a balanced essay on the general immunity of Jews from influences of the Mysteries, see S. H. Hooke's chapter, "Christianity and the Mystery Religions," in the symposium, *Judaism and Christianity*; vol. 1, *The Age of Transition*, ed. by W. O. E. Oesterley (London, 1937), pp. 235-250. Despite its valued contribution by collecting scattered materials, E. R. Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 3 vols. (New York, 1953) falls short of proving that pre-Christian, Palestinian Judaism had been influenced by the Mysteries *per se*; see Morton Smith's trenchant critique in the *Anglican Theological Review*, XXXVI (1954), 218-220.

⁴⁵ A noteworthy example of this change of emphasis in Pauline studies is to be found in W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism; Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London, 1948).

⁴⁶ According to the map prepared by Nicola Turchi (in his *Le religioni misteriosofiche del mondo antico* [Rome, 1923]), showing the diffusion of the Mysteries of Cybele, dea Syria, Isis, Mithra, Orpheus-Dionysus, and Samothrace in the Roman Empire, the only cult which penetrated Palestine proper was the Isiac cult. Evidence (is it merely numismatic?) for this cult was found at Aelia Capitolina, i.e., subsequent to Hadrian's rebuilding of Jerusalem c. A.D. 135.

V. That there *are* parallels between the Mysteries and Christianity has been observed since the early centuries of the Church, when both Christian⁴⁷ and non-Christian⁴⁸ alike commented upon certain similarities. In evaluating the significance of alleged parallels in certain crucial areas (i.e., the sacraments and the motif of a dying and rising savior-god), consideration must be given to the following.

A. Some of the supposed parallels are the result of the modern scholar's amalgamation of quite heterogeneous elements drawn from various sources. As Schweitzer pointed out, "Almost all the popular writings fall into this kind of inaccuracy. They manufacture out of the various fragments of information a kind of universal Mystery-religion which never actually existed, least of all in Paul's day."⁴⁹

Even reputable scholars have succumbed to the temptation to be more precise than the existing state of information will permit. Commenting on this temptation, Edwyn R. Bevan says caustically: "Of course if one writes an imaginary description of the Orphic mysteries, as Loisy, for instance, does, filling in the large gaps in the picture left by our data from the Christian eucharist, one produces something very impressive. On this plan, you first

By this time all the fundamental doctrines and sacraments of the Church had been fixed. It should be observed, however, that similar maps which Herbert Preisker includes in his *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte* (Berlin, 1937) indicate no archaeological remains of the cults of Isis, Mithra, and Cybele within Palestine.

Jerome provides literary evidence that at Bethlehem the cult of Adonis found a foothold as a result of Hadrian's attempt to paganize Jerusalem and its environs; *Epistola lviii ad Paulinum*, 3, "Bethleem, nunc nostram et augustissimum orbis locum, . . . lucus inumbrabat Thamuz, id est Adonidis, et in specu, ubi quondam Christus paruulus uagiit, Ueneris amasius plagebatur" (CSEL, LIV, 532, 4-8 Hilberg). See also Wolf Wilhelm von Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 83 and p. 522, note 5.

⁴⁷ E.g., Justin Martyr, *Apol. I*, lxvi, 4 and *Dial.*, lxx, 1; and Tertullian, *de Corona*, xv (CSEL, LXX, 186-188 Kroymann) and *de Praescript*, xl (ib., 51 f.).

⁴⁸ E.g., apparently Celsus, ap. Origen, *c. Celsum*, vi, 22 (GCS, Orig., II, 91-93 Klostermann) and, no doubt with exaggeration, Flavius Vopiscus, *Firmus*, viii (quoted above in footnote 35).

⁴⁹ A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung* (Tübingen, 1911), pp. 151 f. (Eng. trans., *Paul and His Interpreters* [London, 1912], pp. 192 f.). In a similar vein F. C. Conybeare refers to "the untrained explorers [who] discover on almost every page connections in their subject matter where there are and can be none, and as regularly miss connections where they exist" (*The Historical Christ* [London, 1914], p. viii).

put in the Christian elements, and then are staggered to find them there.”⁵⁰

It goes without saying that alleged parallels which are discovered by pursuing such methodology evaporate when they are confronted with the original texts. In a word, one must beware of what have been called “parallels made plausible by selective description.”

B. Even when the parallels are actual and not imaginary, their significance for purposes of comparison will depend upon whether they are genealogical and not merely analogical parallels.⁵¹ That is to say, one must inquire whether the similarities are to be regarded as arising from more or less equal religious experience, due to equality of what may be called psychic pitch and equality of outward conditions, or whether they are due to borrowing one from the other. Interesting as the parallels are which Sir James G. Frazer collected from the four corners of the earth in his monumental work, *The Golden Bough*, by no means all of them are to be regarded as the result of demonstrable borrowing. In seeking connections it is not enough (as F. C. Conybeare pointed out) “for one agent or institution or belief merely to remind us of another. Before we assert literary or traditional connection between similar elements in story and myth, we must satisfy ourselves that such communication was possible.”⁵²

It is a fact that in various spheres close similarities even in phraseology have been discovered which are related to each other by nothing more direct than analogy. For example, in a letter published in *The (London) Times* at the end of July, 1938, the late Professor Harold Temperley pointed out two quite remarkable parallels between speeches made by Canning in 1823 and 1826 and their modern counterparts in Neville Chamberlain’s utterances on July 26, 1938. In a subsequent letter, the Prime Minister disclaimed having previously read either of Canning’s

⁵⁰ Edwyn R. Bevan, in the symposium, *The History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Glasgow, 1929), p. 105; reprinted by Thomas S. Kepler, *Contemporary Thinking about Paul, An Anthology* (New York, 1940), p. 43.

⁵¹ For this distinction, see Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 4te Aufl. (Tübingen, 1923), pp. 226 ff. (Eng. trans., *Light from the Ancient East* [New York, 1927], pp. 265 ff.).

⁵² Conybeare, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

speeches, and concluded that the parallels "indicate simply the continuity of English thought in somewhat similar circumstances, even after an interval of more than a hundred years."⁵³ Or, to take an example from ancient times, a close parallel to the docetism expressed in the apocryphal Acts of John has been discovered in Ovid's *Fasti*.⁵⁴ It would be vain, however, to imagine that Greek Christian writers were indebted to Ovid for their docetic interpretation of Christ's sufferings. So too, as Toynbee points out in his *Study of History*,⁵⁵ the uniformity of human nature sometimes produces strikingly similar results in similar situations where there can be no suspicion of any historical bridge by which the tradition could have been mediated from one culture to the other.⁵⁶

C. Even when parallels are genealogical, it must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries always influenced Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases the influence moved in the opposite direction. In what T. R. Glover called "the conflict of religions in the Early Roman Empire," it was to be expected that the hierophants of cults which were beginning to lose devotees to the growing Church should take steps to stem the tide. One of the surest ways would be to imitate the teaching of the Church by offering benefits comparable with those held out by Christianity. Thus, for example, one must doubtless interpret the change in the efficacy attributed to the rite of the taurobolium. In competing with Christianity, which promised eternal life to its adherents, the cult of Cybele

⁵³ The text of the two letters is given by E. G. Selwyn in the introduction of his commentary on *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1949), pp. 8 f.

⁵⁴ The parallel is discussed by R. L. P. Milburn in *Journal of Theological Studies*, XLVI (1945), 68 f.

⁵⁵ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, VI (Oxford, 1939), 276 ff., and 376-539. On anthropological and cultural parallels in general, see M. P. Nilsson in Gercke-Norden's *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft*, 4te Aufl., II, iv (Leipzig, 1933), 58 ff.; H. J. Rose, *Concerning Parallels*, Frazer Lecture, 1934 (Oxford, 1934); and A. D. Nock in *Gnomon*, XV (1939), 18 f., and *American Journal of Philology*, LXV (1944), 99 ff.

⁵⁶ The two facts that all human beings eat and that most of them seek companionship with one another and with their god account for a large percentage of similarities among the examples from around the world gathered by Fritz Bammel in his interesting study of *Das heilige Mahl im Glauben der Völker, eine religionsphänomenologische Untersuchung* (Gütersloh, 1950).

officially or unofficially raised the efficacy of the blood bath from twenty years to eternity.⁵⁷

VI. Finally, in arriving at a just estimate of the relation of the Mysteries to Christianity as reflected in the New Testament, attention must be given to their differences as well as resemblances. These differences pertain to both language and ideas.

A. It is instructive to consider what words are missing from the vocabulary of the earliest Christian writers. Many ordinary, every-day words of contemporary pagan religions are conspicuous by their absence from the New Testament; words such as *μύστης*, *μυστικός*, *μυσταγωγός*, or the religious terms *καθαρμός*, *καθάρσια*, *κάθαρσις*. Christians are never called *ιεροί*, nor are *ιερόν* and *ναός* ever used of their place of meeting. One seeks in vain for *τελείν* in the sense "to initiate" and its compounds, *τέλος* in the same sense, as well as *τελετή*, *ἀτέλεστος*, and such common words in the Mysteries as *ιεροφάντης*, *ὄργια*, *κάτοχος*, *ἔνθεος*, *ἐνθουσιάζειν* and its correlates, which, as Nock says, "might so well have been used to describe possession by the Spirit." The important point to observe, as Nock continues, is that "these are not recondite words; they belonged to the everyday language of religion and to the normal stock of metaphors. It almost seems that there was a deliberate avoidance of them as having associations which were deprecated. Certainly there is no indication of an appropriation of pagan religious terms."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ So, e.g., Hugo Hepding, *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult* (Giessen, 1903), p. 200, note 7, and Rahner, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XI (1944), 397 f. On the other hand, Moore thinks that "*in aeternum renatus* represents rather the enthusiastic hopes of the devotee than any dogma" (op. cit., p. 363), and Nilsson regards the phrase as reflecting "a heightening which was easy to make in an age when so many spoke of eternity" (*Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, II [München, 1950], 626); but they have apparently forgotten that Augustine tells of having known a priest of Cybele who kept saying, "*Et ipse Pileatus christianus est*" ("and even the god with the Phrygian cap [i.e. Attis] is a Christian"), *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus*, vii, 1, 6 (Migne, PL, XXXV, 1440). The imitation of the Church is plain in the pagan reforms attempted by the Emperor Julian, a devoted adherent to the cult of Cybele. In general see Carl Clemen, *Der Einfluss des Christentums auf andere Religionen* (Giessen, 1933), especially pp. 22-29.

⁵⁸ A. D. Nock, "The Vocabulary of the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LII (1933), 134, who cites additional words common in popular religions but absent from the New Testament. See also Nock, "Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments," *Mnemosyne*, 4th Ser., V (1952), 177-213, esp. 200, "Any idea that what we call the Christian sacraments were in their origin indebted

The few words which are common to the New Testament and the texts of the Mysteries either are so infrequent in the New Testament as to be inconclusive in establishing religious affinities (as, e.g., *μυεῖν*, *ἐμβαραεύειν*, *ἐπόπτης*, each of which appears only once), or have an entirely different meaning in the two corpora of sources (as, e.g., *μυστήριον*).⁵⁹

B. In the nature of the case a most profound difference between Christianity and the Mysteries was involved in the historical basis of the former and the mythological character of the latter. Unlike the deities of the Mysteries, who were nebulous figures of an imaginary past, the Divine Being whom the Christian worshipped as Lord was known as a real Person on earth only a short time before the earliest documents of the New Testament were written. From the earliest times the Christian creed included the affirmation that Jesus "was crucified under Pontius Pilate." On the other hand, Plutarch thinks it necessary to warn the priestess Clea against believing that "any of these tales [concerning Isis and Osiris] actually happened in the manner in which they are related."⁶⁰

C. Unlike the secretiveness of those who guarded the Mysteries, the Christians made their sacred books freely available to all.⁶¹ Even when the *disciplina arcani* was being elaborated in the fourth and fifth centuries (whether as a diplomatic and paedagogic technique and/or as a Christian borrowing from the Mysteries, need not be determined now),⁶² it was still possible to

to pagan mysteries or even to the metaphorical concepts based upon them, shatters on the rock of linguistic evidence."

⁵⁹ See Nock, "Mysterion," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, LX (1951), 201-204.

⁶⁰ Plutarch, de Iside et Osiride, xi (Loeb Classical Library, p. 29); see also lviii, "We must not treat legend as if it were history" (op. cit., p. 139).

⁶¹ Apuleius refers to "quosdam libros litteris ignorabilibus praenotatos, partim figuris cuiuscemodi animalium concepti sermonis compendiosa verba suggerentes, partim nodosis et in modum rotae tortuosis capreolatimque condensis apicibus a curiosa profanorum lectione munita," *Metamorphoses*, xi, 22. On the contrary, Christians not only made available the Greek Scriptures, but prepared versions in the principal vernaculars as well. On the contrast in general, see Harnack, *Bible Reading in the Early Church* (London, 1912), pp. 28 f. and 146 f.

⁶² For the history of views regarding the *disciplina arcani* down to the present century, see Heinrich Gravel, *Die Arcandisciplin*, I Theil: *Geschichte und Stand der Frage*, Diss. Münster (Lingen a/Ems, 1902). For more recent summaries, see A. Jülicher in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, V, 1175 f.; L. Schindler, *Altchristliche Arkandisziplin und die antiken Mysterien*, Program. Tetschen (1911);

contrast the simplicity and openness of Christian rites with the secrecy of pagan Mysteries.⁶³

D. The differences between the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist and corresponding ceremonies in the Mysteries are as profound as their similarities are superficial. Both of the Christian sacraments, in their earliest phase, were considered to be primarily *dona data*, namely blessings conveyed to those who by nature were unfit to participate in the new order inaugurated by the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Pagan sacraments, on the contrary, conveyed their benefits *ex opere operato* by "the liberating or creating of an immortal element in the individual with a view to the hereafter, but with no effective change of the moral self for the purposes of living."⁶⁵

Methodologically it is begging the question to assume that every lustral rite or communal meal in the Mysteries possessed sacramental significance. Actually it is only in Mithraism, of all the cults, that one finds evidence that washing with water was part of the ritual by which a new member was admitted to one or other of the grades in the Mithraic system.⁶⁶ Similarly with respect to sacramental meals reserved for those who had been initiated into the community of devotees, there is singularly little evidence.⁶⁷ Nothing is heard of sacramental meals in Orphism. The drink-

E. Vacandard, "Arcane," *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, III (1924), 1497-1513; and O. Perler, "Arkandisziplin," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, I (1950), 667-676.

⁶³ E.g. Pseudo-Augustine, *Quaestiones veteris et novi Testamenti*, cxiv, 6 (CSEL, L, 305 Souter): *Hinc est unde nihil apud nos in tenebris, nihil occulte geritur. Omne enim, quod honestum scitur, publicari non timetur; illud autem, quod turpe et inhonestum est, prohibente pudore non potest publicari. Quam ob rem pagini mysteria sua in tenebris celebrant, uel in eo prudentes. Erubescunt enim palam inludi; turpia enim, quae illic uice legis aguntur, nolunt manifestari, ne qui prudentes se dicunt hebetes his uiceantur, quos stultos appellant.*

⁶⁴ So, inter alia, I Cor. 10 and the Fourth Gospel. See Nock's discussion of "Baptism and the Eucharist as 'Dona Data,'" in *Mnemosyne*, 4th Ser., V (1952), 192-202.

⁶⁵ Nock, "Mystery," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XI, (1937), 174.

⁶⁶ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, v (CSEL, XX, 204, 29 ff. Reifferscheid and Wissowa). Probably because of its great expense, the taurobolium appears never to have been required for membership in the cult of Magna Mater.

⁶⁷ Albrecht Dieterich's generalization, "It is remarkable that a sacramental meal should play so large a part in the dominant cults of later antiquity" (*Eine Mithrasliturgie*, 3te Aufl., Leipzig and Berlin, 1923, p. 102), exceeds all bounds of legitimate inference from actual evidence.

ing of the *kykeon* in the rites at Eleusis,⁶⁸ which has sometimes been thought to be the prototype of Paul's teaching regarding the Lord's Supper,⁶⁹ is as different as possible from the Christian Communion. The latter was the privilege of the *τέλειοι*, or fully initiated; but the drinking of the *kykeon* was a preliminary ceremony, prescribed for the candidate prior to his initiation. Furthermore, in the Eleusinian rite there was no table-fellowship, nor was the ceremony continually repeated.⁷⁰

The Attis-cult practiced a rite involving eating something out of the timbrel and drinking something out of the cymbal,⁷¹ but whether these actions of eating and drinking had any significance beyond that of a number of other symbolical acts involved in the initiation, is not known. Nor is there any suggestion that all the initiates participated in this ceremony as the central act of worship subsequent to their incorporation into the community — if there was a community — of devotees of Attis.

The supposition that the Samothracian Mysteries included a sacred meal rests upon an interpretation (proposed, e.g., by Dieterich⁷² and Hepding⁷³) of a fragmentary inscription discovered at Tomi on the Black Sea.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, however, the meaning of the inscription depends so largely upon editorial reconstruction of the missing portions that Hemberg in his recent magisterial treatment of the cult finds no reason even to mention the inscription.⁷⁵

Mithraism alone among the Mystery cults appears to have had something which looked like the Christian Eucharist. Before the initiate there were set a piece of bread and a cup of water, over

⁶⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad gentes*, ii (GCS, Clem., I, 16, 19 Stählin), and Arnobius, *Adversus nationes*, v, 26 (CSEL, IV, 197, 24 Reifferscheid).

⁶⁹ So, e.g., Gardner; see footnote 19 above.

⁷⁰ S. Eitrem, "Eleusinia — les mystères et l'agriculture," *Symbolae osloenses*, XX (1940), 140 ff.

⁷¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, ii, 15 (GCS, Clem., I, 13, 12 Stählin), and Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanorum religionum*, xviii, 1 (43, 17 Ziegler). It may be pointed out, for whatever it is worth, that Firmicus makes a point of contrasting the Christian and Phrygian rites; see also William M. Groton, *The Christian Eucharist and the Pagan Cults* (New York, 1914), pp. 81 ff.

⁷² *Op. cit.*, pp. 104 f.

⁷³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 185 f.

⁷⁴ Edited by Gregor G. Točilescu in *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Oesterreich*, VI (1882), 8 f.

⁷⁵ Bengt Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (Uppsala, 1950).

which the priest uttered a ritual formula. Here where the resemblance existed the Church Fathers took note of it, ascribing it to the ingenuity of demons.⁷⁶ It is fair to urge that had there been other parallels between the Christian sacraments and pagan rites, one should expect that contemporary Christian writers would have noticed them and given the same explanation.

The problems connected with the formation and transmission of the words of institution of the Lord's Supper are too complicated for discussion here,⁷⁷ but on almost any view of this matter the Jewishness of the setting, character, and piety expressed in the rite is overwhelmingly pervasive in all the accounts of the origin of the Supper.⁷⁸ Moreover, unlike the sacred meals in the cults of Eleusis and of Attis, the Christian sacrament is not a seasonal rite, but is celebrated quite independently of the time of year. Furthermore, the eucharistic elements are set apart by

⁷⁶ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* I, lxvi, 4; cf. *Dial.*, lxx, 1 and Tertullian, *de Praescr.*, xl.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Tübingen, 1926), Eng. trans. by Dorothea H. G. Reeve, *Mass and the Lord's Supper, A Study in the History of the Liturgy*, fasc. I (Leiden, 1953 —); N. P. Williams, "The Origins of the Sacraments," in E. G. Selwyn (ed.), *Essays Catholic and Critical*, 3rd ed. (London, 1929), pp. 367-423; August Arnold, *Der Ursprung des christlichen Abendmahl im Lichte der neuesten liturgiegeschichtlichen Forschung* (Freiburg, 1937); Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesus*, 2te Aufl. (Göttingen, 1949), and "The Last Supper," *Journal of Theological Studies*, L (1949), 1-10; and A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London, 1952).

⁷⁸ On the Jewish background of the Lord's Supper, see especially Blasius Ugolini, "Dissertatio de ritibus in Cœna Domini ex antiquitatibus paschalibus illustratis," in his *monumental Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrum*, XVII (Venice, 1755), 1127-1188; Georg Beer's introduction, "Zur Geschichte des Paschafestes," in his ed. of *Die Mischna, II Seder, Moëd*, 3. Traktat, *Pesachim* (Giessen, 1912), pp. 1-109, especially pp. 92-109 which deal with the Lord's Supper; Paul Billerbeck's excursus, "Das Passamahl," in H. L. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, IV, i (München, 1928), 41-76; Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London, 1949), pp. 48 ff.; and Jeremias's works mentioned in the preceding footnote.

Whether the Prayer of Aseneth (otherwise called Joseph and Asenath) preserves indications of a Jewish religious meal distinct from the Passover and similar to the Lord's Supper has no immediate bearing upon the present inquiry, for the date of the completed form of this apocryphon may well be post-Christian, and in any case it is basically Jewish in its outlook. For the relevant passages see G. D. Kilpatrick in *Expository Times*, LXIV (1952), 4-8, and J. Jeremias's reply, *ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

The resemblance between the Lord's Supper and certain Mithraic ceremonies, which Justin Martyr explained (see footnote 76 above) as due to the work of demons in anticipation of the Christian sacrament, may be regarded either as fortuitous or as the result of adaptation by Mithraic priests of an impressive rite in the Christian cultus.

prayer; in fact, the giving of thanks is so central in the sacrament that this provides a name for the rite itself (*εὐχαριστία*).⁷⁹

Finally, the differences of cultic vocabulary between primitive Christianity and the Mysteries (see VI, A, above) are nowhere more obvious than in the case of baptism.⁸⁰ That the antecedents of Christian baptism are to be sought in the purificatory washings mentioned in the Old Testament and in the rite of Jewish proselyte baptism, is generally acknowledged by scholars today.⁸¹

E. The motif of a dying and rising savior-god has been frequently supposed to be related to the account of the saving efficacy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The formal

⁷⁹ Nock observes that although paganism expressed gratitude for blessings received, "we cannot imagine copious impromptu prayer in a pagan rite," *Mnemosyne*, 4th Ser., V (1952), 201. In this connection reference may be made to a third century papyrus edited by Theodor Schermann, *Frühchristliche Vorbereitungsgebete zur Taufe*, in *Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung*, III (München, 1917).

⁸⁰ With regard to the Christian terminology of baptism, Erich Fascher concludes: "Aufs Grosse und Ganze gesehen haben die ersten Christen also schon durch die Wortwahl (Wörter, die selten und weder in der Profangräticität noch in LXX kultisch bestimmt sind) ihr Eigentümliches zum Ausdruck gebracht," article on "Taufe," *Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie, Zweite Reihe, 8te Halbband (IV, A, II)*, 2504, 12-17. See also Nock's judgment on the difference of sacramental terminology, footnote 58 above.

⁸¹ See, among many treatments, Konstantin Hartte, *Zum semitischen Wasserkultus (vor Ausbreitung des Christentums)*, Diss. Tübingen (Halle, 1912); Gottfried Polster, "Der kleine Talmudtraktat über die Proselyten," *Angelos, Archiv für neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte und Kulturkunde*, II (1926), 2-38; J. Leipoldt, *Die urchristliche Taufe im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1928); J. Coppens, "Baptême," *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, I (1928), 852-924, especially "Rapports entre les mystères païens et le baptême chrétien," 911-920; J. Jeremias, "Der Ursprung der Johannestaufe," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXVIII (1929), 312-320; Louis Finkelstein, "The Institution of Baptism for Proselytes," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LII (1933), 203-211; H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XV (1940), 313-334; and H. G. Marsh, *The Origin and Significance of New Testament Baptism* (Manchester, 1941).

Reitzenstein's conclusions in his *Die Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1929) rest upon the very dubious methodology of appealing to evidence from the Mandaic literature, which dates in its present form from the seventh and eighth centuries, and is itself partly dependent on Christianity. Recent evaluations of the limited usefulness of Mandaeism in accounting for elements in Christian origins include those by W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 212-219, and C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 115-130. For a guide to the extensive literature on the subject, see S. A. Pallis, *Essay on Mandæan Bibliography*, 1560-1930 (Copenhagen and London, 1933).

resemblance between the two, however, must not be allowed to obscure the great differences in content.

1. In all the Mysteries which tell of a dying deity, the god dies by compulsion and not by choice, sometimes in bitterness and despair, never in a self-giving love. But according to the New Testament, God's purpose of redeeming-love was the free divine motive for the death of Jesus, who accepted with equal freedom that motive as his own.

2. Christianity is *sui generis* in its triumphant note affirming that even on the Cross Jesus exercised his kingly rule (*Dominus regnat ex ligno*). Contrary to this exultant mood (which has been called the *gaudium crucis*), the pagan devotees mourn and lament in sympathy with a god who has unfortunately suffered something imposed on him. As Nock points out, "In the Christian commemoration the only element of mourning is the thought that *men* have betrayed and murdered Jesus. His death is itself triumph."⁸²

3. In all strata of Christian testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "everything is made to turn upon a dated experience of a historical Person,"⁸³ whereas nothing in the Mysteries points to any attempt to undergird belief with historical evidence of the god's resurrection. The formulation of belief in Christ's resurrection on the third day was fixed prior to Paul's conversion (c. A.D. 30-36), as the choice of technical phraseology in I Cor. 15:3 indicates,⁸⁴ and was proclaimed openly as part of

⁸² A. D. Nock, "A Note on the Resurrection," in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, ed. A. E. J. Rawlinson (London, 1928), p. 48.

⁸³ The phrase is Nock's, *ibid.*, p. 49. See also George C. Ring, S.J., "Christ's Resurrection and the Dying and Rising Gods," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, VI (1944), 216-229, and G. Bertram, "Auferstehung (des Kultgottes)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, I (Stuttgart, 1950), 919-930.

⁸⁴ Of no little significance is Paul's choice of the pair of verbs with which he begins this account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, *παρέλαβον* and *παρέδωκα*. These correspond exactly to *qibbēl* and *māsar*, the *termini technici* with which Pirke Aboth, the heart of the Mishnah, opens ("Moses received the Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, etc." 1, 1).

The fact that occasionally either *παραδίδοναι* and *tradere* or *παραλαμβάνειν*, *accipere*, and *percipere*, were used with reference to the Mysteries (for examples see Lobeck, *op. cit.*, I, 39, note; Anrich, *op. cit.*, p. 54, notes 4 and 5; Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 53 f.) cannot be supposed to throw significant light upon Paul's usage in I Cor. 11:23 (*pace* Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* [Berlin, 1913], pp. 288 f.) in view of the facts that (1) no pagan example has been found

the general apostolic *kerygma* from the very earliest days of the Church, as the evidence in all strata of Acts makes abundantly clear.⁸⁵ Moreover, the proclamation of the Resurrection by the members of the Christian community at Jerusalem was not merely a means of confuting their opponents; it was the presupposition of their own communal life.

What shall be said of parallels to the tradition that the Resurrection of Christ took place "on the third day"?⁸⁶ The devotees of Attis commemorated his death on March 22, the Day of Blood, and his coming to life four days later, March 25, the Feast of Joy or *Hilaria*.⁸⁷ According to the Egyptian cult, the death of Osiris took place on the 17th of Athyr (a month corresponding to the period from October 28 to November 26), the finding and reanimation of his body in the night of the 19th. When Adonis rose is not certain, but the reconstruction of a papyrus text makes the third day probable.⁸⁸

There is, however, no need to go so far afield as these beliefs to account for the Christian conviction that Jesus rose the third

which employs both verbs side by side, and (2) as a Rabbi trained at Jerusalem, Paul would not only have known *verbatim* the phraseology embedded in Aboth, but would have frequently heard the verbs used in the course of rabbinical debate.

⁸⁵ See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London, 1936).

⁸⁶ Contrary to W. F. Albright's statement that in the Sumerian original of the epic of Inanna's Descent to the Nether World the goddess "is explicitly said to remain three days and three nights in the underworld" (From Stone Age to Christianity, 2nd ed. [Baltimore, 1946], pp. 341 f. note 81), a careful examination of the epic (conveniently edited by J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* [Princeton, 1950], pp. 52-57) indicates that it is "after three days and three nights had passed" (line 169) that Ninshubur, perceiving that his mistress, Inanna, has not returned from the Nether World, proceeds to make the rounds of the gods, lamenting before each of them in accord with a formula which Inanna had previously given him. Then Father Enki devises a plan to restore the goddess to life; he fashions two sexless creatures and instructs them to proceed to the Nether World and to sprinkle the "food of life" and the "water of life" upon Inanna's impaled body. This they do, and the goddess subsequently revives. The time of the reanimation is not disclosed, but doubtlessly the mythographer conceived it to be considerably later than the period of three days and three nights. On this point also see F. Nötscher, "Zur Auferstehung nach drei Tagen," *Biblica*, XXXV (1954), 313-319.

⁸⁷ Hepding thought that the reanimation of Attis was fixed in the night of the 24th, but the evidence for this is not certain (op. cit., pp. 165 ff.).

⁸⁸ Gustave Glotz, "Les fêtes d'Adonis sous Ptolémée II," *Revue des études grecques*, XXXIII (1920), 169-222, especially 213. Professor Nock calls to my attention P. Lambrechts's study in *Annuaire de l'institut de philologie orientales et slaves*, XIII (Brussels, 1953).

day. It was a widely prevalent belief among the Jews that the soul of a dead man hovered near the corpse for three days, hoping to return to the body, but that on the fourth day, when decomposition set in, the soul finally departed, a belief that seems to be reflected in Martha's comment regarding her brother Lazarus (John 11:39).⁸⁹ Moreover, apart from such parallels, it might be urged that the phrase "on the third day" or "after three days" occurs so often in the Old Testament with reference to the normal interval between two events in close succession that the dating of the Resurrection "on the third day" was both appropriate and inevitable.

Apart from these considerations, however, it remains a fact that the notation of the *third* day is so closely intertwined within all the New Testament accounts of Jesus' resurrection as to point to the conclusion that the Christian witnesses began to experience the resurrected presence of Jesus Christ on the third day after his crucifixion, and some thereupon recalled that he had promised on more than one occasion that, after his death, he would in three days rise again.⁹⁰

4. Finally, Christianity and the Mystery cults differ in what may be called their views regarding the philosophy of history.

A. It is generally acknowledged that the rites of the Mysteries, which commemorate a dying and rising deity, represent the recurrence of the seasons and the vegetative cycle. In other words, these myths are the expression of ancient nature-symbolism; the spirit of vegetation dies every year and rises every year. According to popular expectation, the world-process will be indefinitely repeated, being a circular movement leading nowhere.

⁸⁹ Among many discussions of this belief, see especially Emil Freistedt, *Altchristliche Totengedächtnistage und ihre Beziehung zum Jenseitsglauben und Totenkultus der Antike* (Münster, 1928), pp. 53 ff.

⁹⁰ For an interesting suggestion why Jesus emphasized the importance of the third day after his death, see Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (London, 1947), pp. 199-200. Hoskyns points out that, according to customs of hospitality prevailing in the East, three days constitute a temporary habitation, and the fourth day implies permanent residence. When, therefore, in accord with Hosea's promise that the Lord had not permanently humiliated his people but would raise them up on the third day (Hosea 6:2), "it is said in the Gospels that Jesus emphasized the importance of the third day after His death, what is meant is that He assured to His disciples that death could not permanently engulf Him . . . He would be but a visitor to the dead, not a permanent resident in their midst" (Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, p. 200).

For the Christian, on the other hand, as heir to the Hebraic view of history, the time-process comprises a series of unique events, and the most significant of these events was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unlike the recurrent death and reanimation of the cultic deities symbolizing the cycle of nature, for the Christians the importance of Jesus' work was related just to this "once-for-all" character of his death and resurrection.⁹¹

B. In another respect besides that of repetition, the Mysteries differ from Christianity's interpretation of history. The speculative myths of the cults lack entirely that reference to the spiritual and moral meaning of history which is inextricably involved in the experiences and triumph of Jesus Christ. In fact, not until the fourth century, when doubtless this stark contrast between the two became increasingly apparent to thoughtful pagans, is there any indication of an attempt to read moral values into certain cultic myths.⁹²

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The main purpose of this article has been to deal with problems of methodology and to raise questions regarding the correctness of certain assumptions which, in some circles, are generally accepted as valid. In order to be concrete, the discussion has necessarily involved certain beliefs and doctrines, but these, so far from being exhaustive, are to be regarded merely as selected examples. If any conclusions can be drawn from the preceding considerations of methodology, they must doubtless be, first, that the evidence requires that the investigator maintain a high degree of caution in evaluating the relation between the Mysteries and early Christianity; and, second, that, if a judgment may be hazarded, the central doctrines and rites of the primitive Church appear to lack genetic continuity with those of antecedent and contemporary pagan cults.

⁹¹ It must not be supposed that the recurring annual festival of Easter belies what has just been said regarding the particularity of the Christian message. It has been proved that the celebration of Easter did not arise at once out of belief in the Resurrection, but developed later by gradual stages out of the Jewish Passover; see E. Schwartz, "Osterbetrachtungen," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, VII (1906), 1-33.

⁹² Notably the cult of Attis by Iamblichus as reported by Julian, *Oration V*, and by Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, § iv.



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