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Joseph McCabe Index

The Works of Joseph M^cCabe

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The Christs That Rose

In the year 384 A.D. a swarthy and remarkable young man of thirty years entered Rome and gazed for the first time upon its splendors and gaities. He came from Roman Africa, and he was going to make a fortune by teaching rhetoric in Rome. His name Augustinus; and he little dreamed that until about the year 1950 A.D., or thereabouts, he would be known all over the world, and greatly honored, under the quaint name of St. Augustine.

In *Life and Morals in Greece and Rome* (Little Blue Book No.1078) we may see something of the superb city and wonderful life which Augustine would admire. Here I am going to tell one experience which he described in later years. He was not yet a Christian: neither was Rome, for he tells us that even then, three centuries and a half after the death of Christ, seventy years after the Emperors had begun to make an acceptance of Christianity "the pathway of ambition," still "nearly the whole nobility of Rome"-which means the whole of its educated men-were pagans. Imperial gold had built a church or two, but the great city of a million people scorned the new religion. It had a score of more attractive religions; and it was the very popular annual procession through the streets of one of these that Augustine saw.

This was in March, 385 A.D., the beginning of spring in Rome, and when the priests of Cybele, "the mother of the gods," celebrated their "holy week." It had begun with a procession, on March 17 when priests and devotees carried reeds: as they carry palms in a Catholic church on the first day of Holy Week in our time. Five days later- Sunday to Friday is five days-there was a second solemn procession. The priests bore a sacred emblem through the streets to the temple on the Palatine Hill; and the emblem was the figure of a beautiful young god, pale in death, bound to a small pine tree, which was crowned with violets. Attis

was dead, and the procession went its way with ceremonial sadness.

The next day was the "Day of Blood." Attis had bled, and his priests and worshipers must bleed. In the full ritual of the cult of Attis and Cybele, in the east, the priests tore from their bodies the organs of manhood and held aloft their great sacrifice to the mother and divine lover. Rome did not permit this; but priests and worshipers gashed themselves and made the blood flow; and drums thundered, and howls of lamentation rose, and the eunuch priests rent their flowing robes. Attis was dead: the beautiful Attis.

And on the next day he rose from the dead. It was the Hilaria ("Day of Hilarity"), a very popular Roman festival, when all things were lawful, because your heart rejoiced to know that Attis had come to life again. Two days later was the part of the festival at which Augustine assisted. The priests took the black stone (phallic stone) with a silver head, which represented Cybele, for a ceremonious bath in the Almo; and they return through Rome, with horns blowing and drums throbbing, frantic with rejoicing, while the two great hedges of Roman spectators supported them with an orgy of sexual songs and jokes and embraces. The spirit of love was born again.

It was long years afterwards, when Augustine had become a very solemn and very sour and very puritanical bishop, that he described these things. I need not reproduce his comments. But he hints that at the time the religious life he saw in Rome made him lean to the Academic philosophy (an early type of Agnosticism). His mother Monica was a Christian, and she sought the conversion of her son with all the fire with which she had once sought a lover. But Augustine smiled disdainfully at the Christian Church in Rome.

Although he does not say so explicitly, one reason for his aversion must have been the sight of these two Holy Weeks. In the same month as the pagans the Christians opened a Holy Week with a palm-bearing procession, and five days later they mourned before the figure of a pale young god nailed to a "tree" (as they chanted), and two days later again they went into a frenzy of rejoicing because he had risen from the dead. The one Holy Week was a frank drama of the death and resurrection of love: the other was, at least in theory, a spiritual and ascetic drama. But Augustine would look from the pale young Attis on his tree to the pale young Christ on his cross, from resurrection to resurrection, and wonder . . . Cybele and Attis were ages older than Jesus.

The modern American Christian who may in some audacious moment open the opulent pages of Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (especially the volume *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*) and read about this ancient cult of a slain and resurrected god, has at first a strange fluttering of the heart; then he sets it all aside with a forced laugh. This, he says, is "science." Guessing again: theories. He sees in the

footnotes a formidable list of authorities. They are all Greek and Latin and Arabic and German. He can't read a word of them-not even if the books existed in the United States.

So I introduce the matter on the authority of one before whom the Christians must bow in silence. Augustine saw this in Rome, in the year 385; just before paganism was fiercely persecuted and suppressed by the men who wrote pathetic books about the persecutions they had suffered.

And there was in Rome about the same time another very learned man to whose authority every Christian must bow, St. Jerome. In his Commentary on Ezekie1 St. Jerome says (I translate the Latin):

Hence as, according to the pagan legend, the lover of Venus, a most beautiful youth, is said to have been slain, then raised to life again, in the month of June, they call the month of June by his name, and they have a solemn celebration in it every year, in the course of which his death is mourned by the women, and afterwards his resurrection is chanted, and praised. (Migne edition of Jerome's works, vol. XXV, col. 82.)

Jerome, who spent a large part of his life in Palestine, is speaking of the east-the whole region of Palestine and Mesopotamia-and the "most beautiful youth" is Tammuz. The goddess whom he calls "Venus," in Roman fashion, is really the Babylonian Ishtar, the Astarte of the Phoenicians and the Hebrews. Attis, to whom I have referred above, was the slain and resurrected god of the Phrygians:

"the Lord," as he was known over all that part of the earth, whether priests called him Tammuz or Attis. "Lord" is in Palestinian language "Adon." Even the Bible some times gives Adonai (really Adoni-"my lord") as a name for God; and the Greeks took it for a proper name and created the beautiful young god "Adonis," the lover of Venus, who died and rose again every year.

And they were not surprised, because they thought nothing of bringing the dead to life. Asclepius had brought so many dead back to life that the monarch of the world of the dead got jealous and had him slain; and, being a god, he in a sense rose from the dead. Anyhow, other gods of Greek mythology had died and risen from the dead; and so, when this fascinating ritual of a holy week came along to Greece from Syria, the women quite generally adopted it.

Thus in every land where Christianity spread the slain and resurrected god, and the dramatic annual celebration of his death and resurrection, were quite familiar. It was Tammuz all over the plains of Mesopotamia, from Ur of the Chaldees to Jerusalem. It was Attis all over the region to the north and northwest of Palestine and through the old Phoenician civilization on the coast of Palestine and Asia Minor. It was Adonis in Greece, then in Rome,

and gradually all over the Greco-Roman world. We may be sure that Augustine had seen it in Carthage before he went to Rome. We may almost suppose that the Romans took it with them to Spain and Gaul, if not Britain.

I may seem to have overlooked Egypt; but Egypt was precisely the classic home of the myth of a slain and resurrected god. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" is merely an epitome of what the Egyptians chanted for ages about their great god Osiris, the judge of the dead, one of the oldest and most revered gods of Egypt. He had been slain by "the powers of darkness" embodied in his wicked brother, Set. His sister and wife, Isis, had sought the fragments of his body and put them together again. And he had arisen from the dead, and was enthroned in the world of souls, to judge every man according to his works. The resurrection of Osiris was the basis of the Egyptian's firm hope of eternal life. Every year the fair strip of land along the Nile mourned for days over the slaying of Osiris and then rejoiced exceedingly over his resurrection.

You may nervously say, you may hope, that all this is really later than the death and resurrection of Jesus...Queer how my pen stumbles over that word. It wants always to write "Christ"; and the explanation may be interesting, even instructive.

From forty to thirty years ago I was a monk of the Order of St. Francis, and we were taught never to pronounce the name "Jesus" except in prayer, and to bow our heads whenever it was pronounced. If ever we saw it on a piece of paper that lay about we were reverently to burn the paper. Ten years stamped that so deeply on my nerves that even now, in my learned and blasphemous age, with the entire story of religion through the ages unfolded before my mind, I hesitate a little to use the word Jesus. That is parable. Apply it to religious psychology and the religious instinct and the sentiment of faith. All are the product of education and environment.

You may, then, say impulsively, that somehow the Christian belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus got amongst the pagan religions, and they borrowed it. Many desperate things have been said by religious apologists, but I am not aware that any one of them ever said that. He would have to be very remarkably indifferent to the absurdity of his statements. Augustine and Jerome lived in the fourth century, it is true; but neither they nor any other Christian Fathers dreamed of saying that the pagans had borrowed from Christianity. It took them all their time to defend their own church from the charge of borrowing from the pagans. Every apologist has to meet that scornful charge from Jews and pagans.

However, one must put aside at once any idea of these slain and resurrected gods being modeled on Jesus. It is as absurd as it

would be to say that the biography of Julius Caesar was modeled on that of Napoleon!

Cyril (Bishop) of Alexandria refers to the celebration as of very ancient date. It never occurs to him that the pagans borrowed it. He says (Commentary on Isaiah, II, 3):

The Greeks invented a solemnity in which they mourned with Venus for the death of Adonis, and then affected to rejoice when they found returning from the under world him whom they sought; and this ridiculous ceremony took place in the temples of Alexandria down to our own time.

A much earlier Father of the Church was Firmicus Maternus: the most stupid man who ever wrote a valuable book. The book is called *The Errors of the Profane Religions*, and it is a treasury of the pagan beliefs and ceremonies which the Church Christianized. Firmicus cheerfully concluded that the devil had given the world these legends in advance so as to spoil the chances of Christianity when it came. So all the early Christians thought. He says (Ch. II) of the Egyptians:

They have in a temple an image of Osiris buried, and this they honor with an annual lamentation. They shave their heads . . . they beat their breasts. And when they have done this for a few days, they pretend that they have found the fragments of the torn body (of Osiris), and they lay aside their grief and rejoice.

So a modern Chinese student might write home to his wondering mother after seeing the Holy Week ceremonies in some Catholic church of the United States today! And notice that Alexandria has two slain and resurrected gods. Cyril has told us, above, of the worship there of Adonis or Tammuz. In fact, it had at least three (and most probably more) annual resurrections, for the worship of the Persian god Mithra flourished there, as everywhere else; and the Mithraists, as Firmicus expressly tells us (I will give the passage later), every year laid a statue of Mithra on a bier, mourned his death, and then, in a blaze of candles, rejoiced at his resurrection. And Alexandria did not differ from the other cosmopolitan cities of the time. It is in Rome that Firmicus describes the Mithraist celebration- Augustine, doubtless, saw that also-and of the Adonis ceremony he says: "In most cities of the east Adonis is mourned as the husband of Venus and . . . his wound is exhibited to the spectators." I have to translate these passages from the Latin or Greek for my readers, as religious writers do not seem anxious to put them before their modern followers. I use the famous Migne edition of the Fathers, the work of the learned Benedictine monks-who at one time really were learned, and correspondingly liberal-and I notice that the monastic editors, finding these constant references to the deaths and resurrections of pagan gods, make this comment in a footnote: "This dramatic representation, in which a dead man (god) was

mourned and was honored in the dark, with chanted lamentations, until, the lights being lit, the mourning turned to joy, we find in different forms in almost all the mysteries" (vol. XII, col. 1032). Now, those "mysteries," whether Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Persian, Phrygian, or Greek, go back to long before the time of Christ. Plutarch, in his *Lives* ("Alcibiades," XVIII), speaking of the sailing of the Greek fleet for Syracuse in the year 415 B.C., says: "It was an evil omen that the festival of Adonis fell in those days. Numbers of women bore images, like dead bodies, and held mock funerals; and they mourned and chanted the solemn hymns." He wrote also a whole treatise on the Egyptian cult of Isis and Osiris.

But the Bible itself takes us back to the fifth century. The passage I quoted from Jerome is in a commentary on Ezekiel, in which we read (VIII, 14): "And behold there sat women weeping for Tammuz." So several centuries before Christ the lamentations over Tammuz, to be followed by jubilation over his resurrection, had spread from the dying empire of Babylon to Judea.

And there is much earlier reference in the Bible which is rarely noticed. The passage I quoted from Cyril of Alexandria is found in his Commentary on Isaiah. The bishop has arrived at this very obscure passage (XVIII, 1-2):

Woe to the land shadowing with wings which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying: Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, etc.

This is abominably mistranslated from the Hebrew text. If the reader cares to compare various translations of the Bible in different languages, he will see that none of the translators understood the passage. But Cyril of Alexandria did. The Greek text of the prophet which he uses says plainly, "That sendeth hostages by the sea and letters of papyrus upon the water"-and Cyril tells us what this means.

As I will show in the fourth chapter, the Egyptians said in their legend that the body of Osiris floated to Byblus, on the coast of Syria, and Isis went there to recover it. Cyril gives the whole legend of Adonis-I will reproduce his words later-and rightly identifies Adonis with Tammuz and even with Osiris. Then, to explain the "letters of papyrus" in Isaiah, he tells us that every year the "friends of Venus" (priestesses of Aphrodite) mourned at Byblus, and the women of the land "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," the land (to translate the Hebrew text correctly) "of the fluttering of the wings of birds," wrote a letter on papyrus, put it on a raft, and sent it out to sea. It was supposed to float to Byblus and to inform the "friends of Venus" that her lover's body had been found, and so their mourning turned into the joy of the resurrection.

Sir J. G. Frazer has evidently been himself puzzled at this point. He overlooks the important passage in *Isaiah*, and considers that the connection of Osiris with Byblus (which is given in Plutarch) is a late addition to the legend. "Byblos" is not only the name of the city of Aphrodite in Syria, but it is also the Greek word for "papyrus," the material on which the Egyptians wrote, so Frazer thinks that some Greek writer got confused between the two. If he had carefully studied Cyril of Alexandria, he would have realized how interesting the matter is. Isaiah-the genuine prophet Isaiah, not the forger of the second part- plainly says, about the year 700 B.C., that in his time the women of Egypt-I am confident that he means simply Egypt, and is confused about the geography-sent a letter yearly to the priestesses of Byblus to turn their laments over the death of Adonis into the joy of resurrection. That is full biblical authority for the death and resurrection celebrations of both Osiris and Tammuz seven hundred years before Jesus was born!

But to any properly informed person these biblical references are as superfluous as it would be to quote the authority of President Wilson for the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The legends and the annual celebrations were already hoary with antiquity when Isaiah and the writer of Ezekiel referred to them. This we shall see presently. I have given this introduction to the old myths, on the authority of Christian and biblical writers, merely to prepare the reader for a candid examination of the myths of the resurrection which we find in the New Testament.

The Gospel Fairy Tale

It is not probable that one modern Christian out of one hundred thousand knows that centuries before the time of Christ the nations annually celebrated the death and resurrection of Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Mithra, and other gods. Tell it to your neighbor, and he will laugh. That is, he will say, the "science" of comparative religion. But I write these books in the hope that directly or indirectly, they will reach Christians. I am giving a full, serious, simple, and easily verified examination of the Christian creed in every aspect; and this aspect with which I now deal is one of the most important, and to me most fascinating, aspects. So I approach it on lines on which any believer may accompany me.

What will he say? Surely not, as the early Christians did, that the devil inspired the pre-Christian nations with these resurrection myths. That is, frankly, childish. We shall in the end search for, and probably find, the real roots of the myth in the early mind of the race. I take it that my religious reader will be puzzled. He ought to have known these things before. Why cannot his writers and preachers candidly face them? All that I ask him to do for the moment is to make, with me, a more careful examination than he has ever made before of the evidence for the resurrection in the New Testament.

There is a remarkable difference between the evidence for the virgin birth and that for the resurrection. I must here assume that the reader has seen *Did Jesus Ever Live?* (Little Blue Book No. 1084), in which I discuss the age and respective value, or lack of value, of the various writings of the New Testament. Paul comes first: then Mark (except the last part): and so on. Now the earlier parts know nothing whatever about a miraculous birth of Jesus, but they are quite certain of the resurrection. Unless we deny the genuineness of the whole of the Epistles, which is a desperate venture, Paul was absolutely convinced of the resurrection; and this proves that it was widely believed not many years after the death of Jesus. His insistence in the Epistles shows, of course, that it was disputed. The statement was a piece of folly" and a "stumbling block" to the converts from paganism; precisely because they saw resurrection-celebrations every year. But the belief existed, and Paul was sure of it, within a few years of the crucifixion.

Well, let us examine the story as it is told by the writers of the Gospels. *Mark*, the oldest Gospel, has the simplest account: that is to say, *Mark* as you read it in your American bible today. It is the easiest thing in the world to prove that these Gospels have received additions and interpolations. Turn to Matthew xxviii 19: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Not only had Jesus given his disciples exactly the opposite instructions (Matthew x 5-7), but he certainly never baptized, or ordered the baptism of, anybody; and he never taught any cut-and-dried Trinitarian doctrine of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It took the Church three centuries to settle these matters. Even orthodox theologians, in fact, admit that this ending has been flagrantly tacked on to the Gospel of Matthew in the fourth century.

Now the oldest manuscripts of Mark end at v 8 of ch. xvi. The rest of the last chapter is in an entirely different style, and it flatly contradicts what precedes. In v 7 an angel says to the women: "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." According to the writer of the Gospel as it originally was, the three women told nobody, for they were afraid. So the new writer (v 9) makes Jesus appear in person to one of the women, and she goes to tell the "mourning and weeping" disciples. They refuse to believe; and a second apparition was heard of by them with the same refusal to believe. These clever men had, presumably, seen daily proof for two or three years that Jesus was God, and *Mark* says that he had foretold his resurrection to them; but they stubbornly refused to believe in his power to come to life again and they timorously thought that the whole business was ended! The entire passage from v 9 onward is preposterous.

But the earlier part is not much better. The three women went early on a Sunday morning to "anoint" the body of (God) with "spices." How you anoint a body with spices I do not know; or why they waited until two days after the burial. In Judea in April no one would dream of anointing a body two days dead; and Jewish laws permitted them to go after sunset on Saturday. Moreover, they are supposed to know that the tomb is closed with a stone which they cannot move, but they take no man with them, and they idly wonder (v 3) how they can get it done. Then they find "a young man" sitting inside (what one sits on in a tomb is not clear); and, of course, they cannot tell an angel when they see one-and even the word of an angel only frightens them; and we are asked to believe that three gossipy Jewish women-it would be a greater miracle than the resurrection-had these tremendous experiences, and were expressly ordered to tell them, yet went home and told nobody, even that the body of the Lord was missing!

The truth is that the whole final narrative of *Mark* is a tissue of interpolations and contradictions. Joseph of Arimathea had already (xv 46) had the body properly prepared for burial. Even the officer in charge of the soldiers is made to say, at the cross: "Truly this man was the Son of God." A likely expression for a Roman officer; but the chief point is that with all these portents all the relatives and followers of Jesus are smitten with grief and confusion. They are supposed to know that the most sublime thing in history has happened under their eyes:

God in human shape has died and released mankind from the curse. Yet they weep copiously, and are "amazed," "afraid," and slink off into quiet corners to whisper to each other. It is a most clumsy fabrication. Obviously, some early life of Jesus, in which he was conceived merely as a good man, and was correspondingly mourned, has been crudely tampered with by these later resurrectionists; and, as the first interpolations were not strong enough, more were added. The Church, which the Catholic imagines as "guarding the deposit of revelation" was improving it every half century.

Matthew has another, and still later version, completely contradicting *Mark*. The tomb is here supposed to be sealed by the Jewish authorities, and a guard set over it. That is to say, the most learned of the Jews are supposed to think that Jesus had foretold his resurrection-while the disciples are uniformly represented as refusing to believe it when it did occur-and thinking that there might be a melodramatic attempt to steal the body and say that he was risen. Then there is a "great earthquake" (not other wise recorded), and even this is not enough to shift the stone, so an "angel of the Lord" (a pure spirit) comes down and puts his shoulder to it, and then sits on it (outside the tomb, not inside, as *Mark* says), presumably wiping his brow. And the angel's countenance is "like lightning," etc. Yet the ladies in *Mark* merely

thought him a strange "young man," and took no notice of his orders; while Matthew makes them see a squad of hardy soldiers tremble before his glory.

In Matthew, moreover, the two women (who are three in *Mark*), instead of getting a fright and remaining miraculously dumb, run at once, with "great joy" to tell the disciples. Another touch is added by making Jesus appear to them on the way to Jerusalem; whereas Mark makes the first apparition to one woman only, and at a later date. Then these chocolate soldiers are supposed to go and tell the high priests about the strange business, and the priests bribe them to say that they all fell asleep on sentry duty. In Ch. xxvii (v 65) Pilate has refused a squad of Roman soldiers, and has told the priests to use their own police, which they did. In Ch. xxviii (v 14) the police have turned into Roman soldiers, responsible to "the Governor" (who has expressly refused to have anything to do with the matter); but they are quite willing, for a few dollars, to expose themselves to sentence of death (for sleeping on sentry duty-no priest could save a Roman soldier from sentence for that). But, of course, this is only "if it comes to the governor's ears" (v 14); and a trifle such as a resurrection from the dead, in a quiet city like Jerusalem, was not likely to reach his ears.

Then the disciples are told to go to a secret rendezvous on a mountain in Galilee if they wish to see the risen Lord. They do not believe a word of it, but they go, and they see him. A human body transfigured (now that it no longer lives an earthly life) by an indwelling divine spirit ought to be a wonderful spectacle. No: "some of them doubted." It must have been a very ordinary sight...I really cannot go on. It is too childish for words. Let us try Luke.

Luke (being a doctor, they say) provides the women- there are now "certain others with them"-with "ointments" as well as spices; though he has already made Joseph of Arimathea have the body properly prepared and interred. They do not see a shining angel sitting on the stone outside, smiling at a squad of terror-stricken soldiers (or policemen), as Matthew says, or "a young man" sitting inside, as Mark says. But "two men in shining garments" (strange how persistently Jewish women can't recognize angels) suddenly appear and tell them. They run home and remind the disciples that Jesus had really foretold that he would rise on the third day; a detail which everybody had forgotten. The disciples call this an "idle tale." They think, apparently, according to all the Gospels, that the Jesus they knew was not in the least likely to rise from the dead. It is a nightmare of mysteries-or contradictory inventions.

Then a new version is drawn upon. Some Christian group which follows Peter in opposition to Paul makes him "run" to the tomb; though in the preceding verse he has pooh-poohed the "idle tale."

He finds the shroud; and, unfortunately, he does not tell us what Jesus wore when he left this behind. Peter was alone; but the John group in the Church wouldn't have this, so in John (xx 3) Peter runs a race up the hill with John, and is beaten. In John also the details about the linen multiply; naturally, as it is an older Gospel, and the peculiar character of the Gospel narratives is that the farther a writer is removed from the events, the more he knows. Paul knows very little:

Mark a little more than Paul: Matthew and Luke (about the end of the century) still more: and John (well in the second century knows everything.

However, Luke, "the physician," makes Jesus, who now has no metabolism in his transfigured body, walk a few miles with two of the disciples; and so naturally that they never for a moment suspected his identity, though he proved at great length to them how Jesus was bound to die and rise again. He seems to have trodden the dust of the road with them for several hours. However, they go home in great excitement, when they at last realize that their casual acquaintance on the road is God, and they tell the others. And Jesus, who in the two earlier Gospels refuses to meet the disciples in Jerusalem, and appoints a melodramatic meeting-place in Galilee, now appears to them in the city. Although they had been so well prepared (as well as by three years of miracles) they were "terrified and affrighted." Even the marks of the nails on his hands and feet left them skeptical. The only thing that could convince them was, curiously enough, to see that he could eat fish and honey. Finally, in flat contra diction to the earlier Gospels, Jesus tells them not to leave Jerusalem, and they boldly invade the temple and sing the whole story at the top of their voices.

After this we need not linger over John. Another decade or two have added materially to the legend. Now we learn that Nicodemus and Joseph did anoint the body of Jesus; and very effectively, because they are said to have used about a hundredweight of myrrh and aloes (xix 39-40). So Mary Magdalene does not take spices. She is alone, moreover, and she sees no angel and no policemen. She runs home and tells Peter (and, of course, John), and they run a race; and they see no angels; and we are still told, for some mysterious reason, that they had no recollection whatever of Jesus saying that he would rise again. However, Mary goes back-still alone-and sees two angels; and even in face of this glorious vision she sobs and complains that somebody has stolen the body of Jesus. One would think that there were body-snatchers in ancient Judea.

We will suppose that the bright eyes of the retired sinner were dimmed with tears, for the next verse is too strong, even for Orientals: Jesus, the transfigured god man, appears to her, and she thinks that he is the gardener and that he stole the body!

"Woman," he says harshly to his friend; but the next moment he whispers tenderly "Mary," and her eyes are opened. "Rabboni" ("My Rabbi"- just what Jesus had said nobody ought to be called), she cries, and apparently . . . anyhow, he has to say, "touch me not." So she tells the disciples, and John agrees with Luke against *Mark* and Matthew, that Jesus did appear to the disciples in Jerusalem, and that the melodramatic rendezvous on a mountain in Galilee is piffle.

In fact, Jesus appeared twice to them, *John* says; and, although he walked through a locked door, one of them, "doubting Thomas," wouldn't believe that he was God until he saw that there was a wound in his side. John does, it is true, then send them to Galilee. But it is funny. After Jesus has breathed the Holy Ghost on to them (xx 22), and given them such terrific powers as that of absolving from sin, they return to their humble profession of fisher men on the Sea of Tiberias! And they have to be convinced all over again- by the usual strange evidence of eating- and then, apparently, they go back to business once more.

My dear Christian friend, do you really expect me to take all this seriously? I am accustomed to a critical study of historical documents, and this . . . It is the most appalling jumble of contradictions, and the tale grows under our eyes in the course of the first century. It is as crude as anything in ancient mythology. There is not the slightest pretense of consistency in the various versions and successive additions to the original story. Let us turn to *Paul*, and see if we can ascertain what the original story was.

We get little help from Acts. The author repeats what he has said in Luke about apparitions, and he enlarges a little upon the ascension; which is not known to any other writer. Jesus, we are asked to believe, took his disciples (as usual) up a "mountain," and from there he rose physically in the air until he disappeared in a cloud. It is perfectly amazing to find people in the twentieth century who regard such statements as historical. It is just the myth of Hercules ascending to heaven in a cloud.

Paul's Epistles are the earliest documents; and they give us to understand that the followers of Jesus believed in his resurrection and his appearances to various friends at least a few years after his death. On any serious canon of evidence that is the only witness to the resurrection that we can be asked to consider. The Gospel stories are late, contradictory, and often absurd. Paul's Epistles were, of course, written long after the death of Jesus, but we must clearly put back his belief in the Resurrection to the time of his conversion. He was convinced by the followers of Jesus at Jerusalem that the prophet had risen from the dead and had been seen by Peter and by the whole eleven (somewhere he says twelve) apostles.

There are certain details in Paul which must be considered. The Epistles are very sparing in details-these had not yet been invented -but Acts puts into the mouth of Paul a speech made in the synagogue at Antioch. In this speech Paul plainly says that it was, as we should normally expect, the Jewish authorities who buried Jesus; and in that case his body would be put in the common pit for the burial of crucified criminals. Paul says (Acts xiii 27-29):

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher.

This flatly denies all the picturesque details in the Gospels. If a companion of Paul wrote this, as all suppose, the first story of the resurrection was quite different from that in the Gospels. Paul was a Jew, and he knew Jewish law; which not a single Gospel writer seems to have done. There was no need whatever to wait until Sunday morning. The Sabbath prohibition of work ended at sunset. The whole Gospel story is a fiction that could only grow and find acceptance amongst foreigners.

Paul, on the other hand, is the only writer who makes Jesus appear to five hundred at a time. It is amusing to find Christian writers emphasizing this "large number" of witnesses to the resurrection. We have not a single witness to the resurrection. None of the women or men who are supposed to have gone to the tomb and seen Jesus has left us any testimony. A late writer forged a Gospel in the name of John. A still later writer forged in the name of Peter a Gospel with such fantastic details about the resurrection that even the early Christians, whose faith was great, rejected it. And evidently this story of an apparition to five hundred, which circulated early, was in the course of time considered too strong, and was abandoned.

In the end, therefore, we come down to the single statement of Paul that the Jewish authorities cast the body of Jesus into the pit, but some of his followers said that Jesus subsequently appeared to them, and so he must have risen from the dead. Some believed this, and others disbelieved. Paul's insistence implies that, and in one place (*I Cor. xv 12*) he says that some Christians do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It was, however, generally believed, and it is useless now to ask how the belief arose. Clearly, according to the earliest versions, the apostles scattered when Jesus was arrested, and they returned to their work as fishermen. Later they said that they had seen the Lord"-such details as those about the women are far later in appearance-and they resumed preaching in his name. Is it a novel thing in religious history for enthusiasts to see visions? Quite the contrary. Down to our own time, in Spiritualism, it is the most common of experiences. Scores

of Roman Catholic saints claim to have seen Jesus in the flesh; and the Protestant denies every word of it.

The belief in the resurrection is thus a quite normal event; especially as Jesus was held to be the Messiah, and the resurrection of the Messiah was held to have been predicted. But the elaborate story in the Gospels is not merely a myth. It is a fairy tale; and we clearly see the growth of it from 50 A.D. to 120 A.D. Whether or not the world-wide belief in the resurrection of gods disposed the followers of Jesus to believe in his resurrection, the growth of the story, as the decades went on, is plainly influenced by the other myths, and we will consider them more closely.

The Mourning over Tammuz

There seems to be no doubt whatever amongst biblical scholars, critical or orthodox, that Isaiah wrote the passage I have quoted in the last chapter. It must therefore have been written before the year 700 B.C. The Egyptian alliance was then a burning question in Judea. But the Hebrews had very dim ideas about geography, and Isaiah apostrophizes the land "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," the land "of the rustling of the wings of birds." He plainly means Egypt, and it is natural to assume that he refers to the Delta region, where flocks of birds lived amongst the reeds. He does not say, as Frazer does, that they floated letters on the river but on the sea.

From here, he says, the women send letters on rafts to some people abroad, and Cyril, living on the coast of Egypt, gives us the meaning. Every year the Egyptian devotees of Osiris and Isis float a message in the sea to the devotees or priestesses of Astarte at Byblus. Neither the Roman Venus nor the Greek Aphrodite was known in the east in those days. The goddess whose "friends" mourned in Byblus was the Phoenician Astarte, a variant of the Babylonian Ishtar. The divine lover whose death the priestesses mourned was the Phoenician Adonis, "the Lord" (*Adon*) Tammuz of Babylonia. We shall see in the next chapter what the Egyptians and their god Osiris had to do with Byblus. For the moment we will inquire what Byblus was, and what happened there.

Byblus, which claimed to be the oldest city of the Phoenicians, was famous at least in the millennium before Christ, for its magnificent temple of Astarte. It was on a height, not far from the sea, and travelers still find there a massive piece of masonry which seems to have been the pedestal of a column. We know, in fact, that the chief object of veneration, the emblem of the goddess, in the great open court of the temple, was a phallic stone: a tall cone or obelisk. Astarte was, very frankly, the goddess of love, and her sanctuary was an unblushing garden of love. But with Astarte was associated a handsome young male god, Adonis ("the Lord"). How could people be satisfied with a goddess of love without a lover? At all events, where, as we have repeatedly seen, two deities had to

be accommodated in the religion of a people, or the claims of two rival priesthoods adjusted, they were mated as brothers, or husband and wife, or mother and son, and so on. This was generally effected by a priest-made legend. We see in the volume on Egypt (Little Blue Book No.1977) that there were in that country three or four colleges of priests which were centers for the manufacture of legends; and we learn in the volume on the Old Testament (Little Blue Book No.1066) that the priestly college of the Jews was equally enterprising.

In the older nations, which did not take these legends with all the fierce solemnity with which the Jews held theirs, the stories were modified and enlarged as time went on, and I will give the legend of Astarte and Adoni in its last form, as Lucian, Plutarch, and Cyril give it, just before the sun of Syria was darkened by the shadow of the cross, and the scent of the myrtles and cooing of the doves of Astarte were thrust into the horrid category of sins.

King Cinyras, says Cyril with great scorn, was fabled by the Phoenicians to have yielded to a passion for his beautiful daughter Myrrha at a harvest festival, and to have engendered the lovely child Adoni. We are by this time familiar with the naiveté of the pagan world. Their families of gods mingled incessantly with mortals. There was no abyss of stupendous awe and majesty between mortals and immortals. A goddess espied a handsome youth in the river and came down to him; or Zeus, perhaps, caught sight of a maiden in her bath. These pagans, we must remember, still lay in darkness and the shadow of death. One must not expect them to rise to the height of a god who passes sentence of damnation on the whole race for one woman's peccadillo, or burns a maid for all eternity for listening to the whisper of the heart he has created in her.

Well, to return to Cyril and the legend. The king was ashamed-it is more probable that here we have another variant of the monarch who seeks the life of the new born divine child-and he had the infant cast away on a mountain. But the nymphs or spirits of the mountain adopted it, and the child grew to be a male beauty and a great hunter; and one day, as he hunted, Astarte saw and fell in love with him. In another and probably older version, Astarte was also his mother, having fallen in love with the handsome Cinyras.

In fact, there is a whole thicket of interesting myths here. Cinyras was a real name of Phoenician kings of the island of Cyprus, and this legendary Cinyras was the son of the legendary king Pygmalion, who fell in love with a statue of Astarte (or Aphrodite) and took it to bed. (It is the later Roman poet Ovid who makes Pygmalion a sculptor who falls in love with a statue.) Pygmalion, Cinyras, and Adoni were all said to be very handsome and amorous, and to have instituted sacred prostitution in the

temples of Astarte and lit the flame of sensuality over the entire region.

But let us return to St. Cyril. You will prefer his chaster language to my somewhat free discourse. He says:

They say that Venus, the brazen hussy, saw him there (Adoni hunting) and fell in love with him, and copulated with him and embraced him unceasingly. This offended Mars, the rival for the affections of Venus, and he assumed the form of a wild boar and killed Adoni while he was hunting. Whereat Venus mourned exceedingly. She was so overcome with grief and fear that she went down into the lower regions to bring back her lover. But Pluto's wife saw the beauty of the youth, and she would not let him go; and they came to an agreement that they would divide the year into halves, and each in turn should have him for a season. When Venus announced this to her friends and worshippers, the event was made a feast or celebration.

Cyril then writes the passages which I quoted in the first chapter: that the Greeks invented a death and resurrection festival, and that the women of Egypt united with the women of Phoenicia by sending a letter on the waves. As Isaiah tells us, all this was done ages before anybody in the east ever heard of "Greeks"; but, of course, a learned Father of the Church cannot be expected to have the foggiest notion of history or geography. We can be sure that at least in the second millennium before Christ the Phoenicians of the north and the islands annually celebrated the death of Adoni, the mourning of Astarte, and the glorious reunion of the ethereal lovers. We will go beyond that presently.

Sir J. G. Frazer dwells with particular elegance and affection on this exotic section of his survey of religion, and I advise the reader to enjoy at least his volume *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. He describes a beautiful valley some distance east of Byblus, which was known in antiquity as the Vale of Adonis. Here Astarte met the youth, or here she wept over his torn body—the legends differ—and the river Adonis still runs red with the blood of the god once a year (though modern chemists put a more prosy interpretation on the redness), and the red anemones glow in the woods, and the maids of Syria used to mourn, as Mary mourned at the tomb; but only for a season, as Adoni was to rise again from the lower regions ("he descended into hell." Professor Osborn and Professor Pupin solemnly recite in their creed today), and love would again refresh and adorn this weary world.

The Phoenicians very early extended their rule and civilization to the rich island of Cyprus, a day's sail away across the Mediterranean, and here was the second great center of the cult of Astarte and Adoni and love. It is possible that much of the learned work of Frazer and others in this field will have to be reconsidered. When they began, our knowledge of ancient history was wrong. We

knew Phoenicia, as the great naval power, and Egypt and Babylonia and Greece. We had some knowledge, too, of a powerful kingdom of a mysterious people called the Hittites, to the north of Palestine. But we did not know that there was as great a civilization as any of them in the island of Crete, and that its fleet mastered the sea, and kept the Phoenicians in the position of small pirates until about 1500 B.C. I will return to this later.

Probably after the fall of Crete the Phoenicians took over Cyprus, and it was there that they located the amorous adventures of Pygmalion and Cinyras. On the south western side of the island, about a mile from the blue sea, is the miserable modern village of Kuklia. I know well such places in the neighboring island of Crete, and can picture it. There are Adonises there today by the score: young men of almost feminine loveliness and entirely Phoenician ignorance. Once every year still, as I tell in another volume (*Phallic Elements in Religion, Little Blue Book No.1079*), the men and women of Kuklia and the district meet at some old stone, and anoint them, and make magico-religious passes and naughty jokes, and believe that this promotes the fertility of their wives. For those stones are the sad relic of the once glorious temple of Astarte and Adoni. This is ancient Paphos, the perfumed garden of love planted amidst the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

On this hill, in the first (and probably second) millennium before Christ stood the beautiful and wicked temple of Aphrodite (or Astarte), where the symbolic doves (now a symbol of innocence!) cooed amorously amongst the pillars, and the pairs of horns (which link the place closely with the ancient Cretans) stood out on the facade, and a great white cone or obelisk in the courtyard unblushingly announced to the world what kind of offering the goddess asked. It was a replica of Byblus: sacred prostitution, and an annual celebration of the death, descent into hell, and return to light of Adoni.

Already before the time of Jesus many religions mingled here. In Cretan ruins three thousand five hundred years old we find the cross, Greek fashion, as perfect as it is in Athenian churches today. In the temple of Paphos were the pairs of horns as in Crete and the star and crescent as in modern Mohammedan Turkey. Greek influence had set in, too, and turned Astarte into Aphrodite, or even Venus. But back of it all is an old, old cult of a great mother goddess, mother earth, the spirit of love and giver of fertility. She was the one deity of the Cretans; though just toward the end of Cretan history we find creeping in the figure of a young god-the strong young god who is to fertilize the divine mother. She was (with a sky god) a great deity of the Hittites; and Frazer shows that they too had the divine son. She was the Frigga of the Teutons, the Venus of the Romans, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, the Isis of the Egyptians, the Astarte of the Phoenicians and Hebrews, and the Ishtar of the Babylonians.

So we go back a step further in history. Astarte is the many-thousand-year-old goddess of the Babylonians, Ishtar. Adoni is the equally old, or maybe older, god of Mesopotamia, Tammuz, over whom "the women mourned." He goes back to the days of the old Sumerians, the semi-Mongolian founders of Mesopotamian civilization; and I should not be surprised if, through them, we can one day connect Ishtar with the Shin-Shin-Mo ("Holy Mother") of the Chinese.

At what period in Babylonia history Ishtar was mated with the old god Tammuz, and he was turned into a handsome young lover, we do not know; but the Phoenician version of the myth must itself go back to at least 1500 B.C. I need not give the final legend at length. It is much the same as the Phoenician. Tammuz dies and descends into hell (the lower world), and Ishtar braves all its terrors in search of him. In the little volume on Babylon (Little Blue Book No.1976) I quote an ancient hymn to Ishtar, recounting her devoted search in the home of the dead. While Ishtar was below, the streams of fertility on earth dried up. Nature languished, and love was impotent. The great gods heard the petition of mortals, and the queen of the lower world was forced to compromise. Ishtar was sprinkled with holy water (the Water of Life) and allowed to depart with Tammuz. So every year from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, maids and matrons laid the pale and handsome Tammuz on a bier and mourned; and then the glad tidings of the resurrection spread and an easter joy succeeded the lamentations. The effigy or statue laid on the bier figured a comely young god clad in a red robe; and it was anointed and bathed by the women, who chanted their dirges to the shrill music of flutes, let their long black hair trail in the wind, beat their white breasts, and burned incense to the god.

So popular was the annual celebration with women that even after the stern "reform" of the Jewish religion the writer of Ezekiel, to his intense disgust, finds the matrons of Jerusalem, with disheveled hair, beating their breasts over the figure of Tammuz within a stone's throw of the temple. Far away in Athens, about the same time, women are making little "gardens of Adonis," flowers and plants set round a bier, and weeping shrilly over the Babylonian god whom their Aphrodite loved. Far to the south, in Alexandria, women, not content with their Osiris, placed little statues of Aphrodite and Adoni on couches, and arranged fruit and flowers and cakes round them, and mourned. In Babylonia itself the festival was in the month of Tammuz (June-July), and the Greeks seem to have adopted the same season, though some writers put it in the spring. At Byblus the solemn celebration was in the spring.

The day of mourning over Tammuz in Babylonia, the seventeenth day of the month Tammuz, was also a kind of All Souls' Day. People made it the occasion of a general

commemoration of the spirits or memories of their dead relatives. It is still a fast in the Jewish calendar, showing how thoroughly the cult was once established in Judea; though, of course, the modern Jew thinks that in his fast he is mourning the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans- which took place ages after the fast began. The Christian smiles; but his Good Friday and Resurrection morn are the continuation, under the arc lamps of modern science, of the death and resurrection festivals of the oldest pagan days, and I am not sure that what he calls the sublime theme of his sacred drama- the blood-atonement- is really more elevated than theirs. We will consider that later, and I will close with another quotation from St. Jerome which ought to be equally unpalatable to Jew and Christian. In his Letter to Paulinus (Vol. XXII, col. 581, of Migne edition of his works), written from Palestine, he says:

This Bethlehem which is now ours, and is the most august spot on earth, was foreshadowed by a grove of Tammuz- that is to say, Adonis- in the cave where the infant Christ once wailed the lover of Venus had been mourned.

The man who can think it a coincidence that the birth of Christ was located in a cave in which the rebirth of Tammuz had been celebrated for ages is indeed a man of great faith.

The Resurrection of Osiris

So, ages before Christ, a death and resurrection festival was celebrated at Babylon (and further east), Alexandria, and Athens, and in every city that lay between them. Now if you will take the map of the world, and draw a ring with your finger round those three cities, you will find that the circle embraces nearly the whole civilized world of the time. Outside it there remain only Egypt, to the south, and the civilized part of Asia Minor. We shall now see that these regions were as familiar with the death and resurrection celebration as all the other regions of the civilized world.

I began the first chapter with an account of such a celebration in Rome in the year 385 A.D.; and we have historical information that the cult was introduced into Rome in 207 B.C. It was the cult of Attis and Cybele (commonly known as "the mother of the gods"), and it was introduced from Phrygia, in Asia Minor.

North of Phoenicia or Palestine in ancient times was the somewhat obscure kingdom of the Hittites, who were at one time powerful enough to take Babylon. We have found a Hittite monument with three figures which seem to be a trinity of the sky-father, the earth-mother, and a divine son; so it is fair to assume that a more or less similar celebration flourished amongst the Hittites. How ever that may be, the Phrygians, who covered the region from the west of the Hittite kingdom to the Dardanelles, had one of the most noted cults of a slain and resurrected god.

The great deity of the Phrygians was a nameless "mother of the gods," plainly the old mother-earth goddess. It was a common trick of the priests who rose to power later to give the older gods the title of mother or father of the gods, and, so to say, pension them off. Cybele, as the Greeks named this goddess, remained the supreme deity, as in Crete; but a young male god was closely associated with her. Attis, as he was called, was said in the legend to have been originally a comely young shepherd who was loved by Cybele. He was said to have been born of a virgin. There were two versions of his death. In one he was, like Adoni, slain by a boar: in the other he castrated himself, and bled to death, under a pine tree. The latter is clearly the older legend, a natural incident in a phallic religion; and hence it was that on the great festival the priests of Cybele castrated themselves and held up the bloody organs to the heavens.

I described the modified version of the celebration which was permitted in Rome. March 17th was the day of the reed-bearing procession (Palm Sunday), March 24th was the terrible Day of Blood ("Good" Friday), when the combined din of flutes, horns, cymbals, and tambourines, and the dirges of the processionists, stirred priests and devotees to make their awful sacrifice. The statue of Attis, bound to a pine tree, was carried in procession, and then laid in a temporary sepulcher in the temple; just as the sacrament is, for exactly the same period, put away in a temporary recess or tomb in Roman Catholic churches in Holy Week today. Next day (or two days later) the tomb was opened, and the statue of Attis exhibited amidst frenzied rejoicing. Attis had risen from the dead.

Here is another most dramatic and popular annual celebration of the death and resurrection of a fair young god spreading over the world from an ancient center. Take a citizen, say, of Tarsus in Asia Minor in the days of Jesus. He could not fail to know of the annual celebration of the resurrection of Attis, which was famous all over the Greco-Roman world. He could hardly be ignorant of the festival of the resurrection of Adoni at Byblus and Paphos, both within a short distance of his city. If he were of an inquiring mind, he would know that Adoni was only the Lord Tammuz of the great kingdom of Babylonia; and if he were a Jew, he would know that the Jews themselves long mourned the death and rejoiced in the resurrection of Tammuz. Paul was a Jew of Tarsus, of an inquiring mind.

And he would, presumably, know that the Adoni worshipers of Byblus had a close connection with Egypt, to which we now turn. Many a writer of the time confuses or fuses, as even Cyril of Alexandria does, the cults of Attis, Adonis, Tammuz, and Osiris. A god had been slain and had risen from the dead; and these were merely different names given to the god in different regions. They were wrong. It is a most important feature of our story that this

legend of a slain and resurrected god arose in quite different parts of the old civilized world. Tammuz, Attis, and Osiris are three separate and independent creations of the myth-making imagination.

Yet the rites of the mourning over Osiris were much the same as in the case of Adoni. I give in another book the outline of the legend of Isis, Osiris, and Horus but it may be useful to give here a more detailed account of it. The time came in the evolution of religion, as I explained, when the claims of Osiris, Horus, and Isis to the homage of men had to be adjusted. They were made co-equals in a holy family, and gods whose priests were no longer powerful enough to exact, so to say, a place in the front window, were awarded the lesser honor of having given birth to Osiris and Isis, or of being less distinguished or even disreputable members of the same family.

For some reason the old Egyptian god Set was to be discredited, and he was made the murderer of the very popular Osiris: the god who held in Egypt almost the place that Christ had in Christendom. The philosopher Plutarch wrote in the first century a treatise *On Isis and Osiris*, and he gives us the final version of the legend which was current in Egypt. Incidentally he gives us information about the cult of Isis which confirms what I say in another book about, not merely the virtues, but the asceticism, of the later Egyptians. The priests of Isis shaved their heads (and bodies) and wore white linen garments in token of the purity which the religion of Isis demanded. They never ate flesh meat or vegetables that had been in contact with manure; and no wine was admitted into their houses. Salt even was eschewed, since it led to an increase of the appetite for food and drink. In fine, the cult of purity was pushed so far in later Egypt that Plutarch tells us (and seems to believe) that the semen of kings was received in glass tubes and thus conveyed to its destination without the contamination of flesh.

But I am concerned only with the story of Isis and Osiris, and I must greatly abridge the long and rambling story. Nut, the sky-goddess, was the spouse of Ra, the sun-god, who begot Osiris. By a frivolous adventure with Thoth (the divine messenger) she gave birth to Isis, and by a farther intrigue with Seb, the earth-god, to Set. Isis and Osiris so instinctively loved each other that they had relations with each other-unwittingly, Plutarch later says, in the obscurity of the divine mother's womb. Osiris became ruler of Egypt, which he civilized, and he then set out to civilize the world, while Isis cultivated her virginity at home. Both these circumstances enkindled the anger of the saturnine Set (his father, Seb, is the equivalent of the Roman Saturn), the prince of darkness; as Osiris was the prince of light, virtue, and wisdom. He enticed Osiris to enter a handsome chest, fastened it down with molten lead, and had it flung into the river.

The desolated Isis sought the body of her brother and lover high and low. This search for the missing god or goddess is a common feature, and was dramatically represented in all the old "mysteries." In time she learned that the chest or coffin had been borne by the Nile out to sea, and had been stranded on the coast of Syria near Byblus. Here it became entangled in a tree, which grew to such princely proportions that the king had it cut down and converted (with the coffin inside the trunk) into a column of his palace. Thither came Isis in mortal guise. She accepted the office of nurse to the queen's child, and at night she took the form of a swallow and circled round and round the column. But as she was burning away the mortal flesh of the child, she was recognized, and she departed for Egypt with the column as a gift. Hence the connection of Byblus with Egypt to which I have referred.

Here the legends get even more mixed than the Gospel legends. One story, only briefly referred to by Plutarch, is that in the form of a hawk Isis lay upon the dead body of Osiris and thus miraculously conceived her son Horus. The other legend, which Plutarch follows, is that she left the coffin at a place in Egypt while she went to see Horus. Set found the coffin, cut the corpse into fourteen pieces, and scatted them. Isis made diligent search and found all the pieces but the penis, which the fishes had swallowed. (Frazer here suggests that the legend may recall a prehistoric custom of cutting off a dead king's organ and using it to promote fertility.) However, Isis, to confuse Set, had each of the parts buried where she found it; so that there were fourteen graves of Osiris (besides relics, duplicated and triplicated, in the temples) in Egypt. But Egyptian documents give a finish to the legend which is lacking in Plutarch. Isis and Horus put together the fragments of the dead god, and as the sacred wings of Isis fluttered over the corpse, the great god Ra restored him to life. He "descended into hell" or was appointed the Lord of the Underworld. And it was a common practice after death for an Egyptian priest to mimic this restoration of Osiris over the corpse as a pledge of a glorious resurrection in the kingdom of Osiris.

I can imagine a preacher reading these infantile details and asking what earthly relation there is between this farrago of nonsense and "the sublime story of the resurrection of Jesus." But I explain in the book on Religion and Morals in Ancient Egypt (Little Blue Book No.1077) that Osiris, the Judge of the Dead, was as stern a moral judge as Jesus himself; and, to every Egyptian, personal immortality, prefigured by the resurrection of Osiris, was the firmest of beliefs. The main point is, however, that, when we strip away late embroideries, we have here a doctrine of a beneficent god slain by the powers of darkness and rising again from the dead. The Pyramid Texts- inscriptions on the inner walls of the oldest pyramid tombs-show that this was common Egyptian

doctrine three thousand years before Christ, and it must go back before the dawn of civilization.

This legend was not only familiar to every child of Egypt as one of the most sacred of his beliefs, but it was annually embodied in a sacred drama or pageant of great solemnity. In the month of November, the period of sowing the corn in Egypt, a famous celebration took place at Sais, one of the centers of the Osiris cult. There were four days of mourning and lamentation over the dead god, whose sufferings were dramatically represented on a lake-I presume, on an island in a lake-at night, while the people illuminated their houses. Three days later the priests bore to the river a golden casket into which they poured water; and at that moment the worshipers raised the cry that Osiris had been found. A gold figure of a cow with a black pall represented Isis during the sacred drama; and the shaven priests and the worshipers beat their breasts and lashed their shoulders. Some even ripped the bandages from healing wounds and let the blood flow. In other places where the passion-play was given, a boy impersonated Osiris, and was "found" by the priests.

Frazer identifies this with the general festival of Osiris which he next described, but it seems to me that the above is a description of the "mysteries" of Osiris to which Plutarch refers. The national festival of Osiris lasted no less than eighteen days and included a most elaborate ritual in the temple. Inscriptions and bas-reliefs in the temples show that the image of Osiris was buried, and in the end he was shown rising from his bier under the spreading wings of Isis. A great feature of the festival, all over Egypt, was the making of images of Osiris with grains of corn planted inside them and gradually growing out of them: a symbol of new life, of the resurrection of the corn-spirit from what was left of the dead plant. Whatever the meaning-we will discuss this later-all Egypt was from time immemorial familiar with a story of a suffering, slain, and risen god, the greatest benefactor of mankind; and, in spite of the phallic elements in the legend, the "easter" of the Egyptians came to be regarded as a time of intense fervor for purity and repentance.

But we have not yet finished with the older pagan world, if we would understand how thoroughly every part of it was saturated with the myth of a resurrected god. We have up to the present said nothing about Persia: the land which took over the supremacy of the world when Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt fell, the religion which spread over the world, from Persepolis to Britain, at the very time when Christianity was a pale growth struggling for existence in that tropical forest of religions.

Mithraism preceded Christianity with an austere belief in a savior from sin who was born of a virgin, in a cave in midwinter, and was annually represented as such before the worshipers in its ascetic

temples. And Mithraism also preceded Christianity, by centuries, with an annual representation of the atoning death of Mithra and the joy of his resurrection. It is Firmicus Maternus, the Christian Father, who tells us this in his *Errors of the Profane Religions* (ch. XXIII):

On a certain night [in March] an image is laid upon a bier, and it is mourned with solemn chants. When they are sated with this fictitious lamentation, a light is brought in. Then the mouths of all the mourners are anointed by a priest, who murmurs slowly: "Rejoice, followers of the saved god, because there is for you a relief from your grief."

Firmicus, sublimely unconscious of the image on a bier (or cross) or the fictitious lamentations of Good Friday, of the anointings and rejoicings of Easter morn, proceeds to ridicule his Mithraist rival:

Thou dost bury an image, thou dost mourn an image, thou dost bring forth an image from the grave, and, wretched man, when thou hast done this, thou dost rejoice. . . . Thou dost arrange the members of the recumbent stone. . . . So the devil also has his Christs.

It is profound pity that the simple-minded Firmicus does not give us the full ritual. The weird and complicated ritual of the Catholic Church during Holy Week has probably borrowed scores of details from Mithraism.

Persia, and the entire sphere of influence of Persia, thus fall into line with the other nations. And here there is not the least trace of a phallic cult. The note is sin and salvation. Mithraism was as austere as Puritanism. Mithra was originally, not a fertility-god, but a sun-god. He had become the spiritual sun, the pattern of virtue, the savior from sin, the light of the world.

South of Byblus, in the great Phoenician city of Tyre, was another celebration that must not be omitted. The great god was Melcarth (commonly called Moloch), and a large effigy of him was solemnly burned every year. It is an obscure ceremony, but Josephus speaks of a festival at Tyre called "The Awakening of Hercules," and we may conclude that the burning of Melcarth was the equivalent of Hercules who, as we shall see, immolated himself on a funeral pyre, and ascended in a cloud to heaven.

From Tyre the Phoenicians, the great colonists and navigators, took their Melcarth over the seas. Carthage sent special envoys to the celebration in the mother-city every year. As far away on the coast of Spain, at Gades (Cadiz), which the Phoenicians founded, a great effigy of Melcarth was fired annually, and the god would rise again. Even in Tarsus of Cilicia-where Paul lived-there was a similar annual celebration.

Thus the old world elaborated its legends and bequeathed them to the new. The stream flowed on. But the Greek world, in which the new religion developed, had, besides temples and priests of every one of these older cults, very important myths of its own, and we must see these before we try to understand the meaning of this worldwide celebration.

Greek Resurrections

About two thousand years before Christ the pioneers of the Greek race reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and gazed with astonishment and delight on the blue waters and golden hills and islands. What were the precise features of the gods and goddesses they brought with them from the north, what still more primitive deities they adopted from the people whom they found already settled in Greece, how their poets and bards gradually enriched and transformed their early legends, it is difficult to say. But long before they became civilized, and borrowed the legends and cults of the older civilizations, they had myths of their own which aptly prepared them for the religion of Attis or Adonis or Christ. For some reason, which we will seek in the next chapter, the mind of man came in most parts of the world to conceive a legend of death and resurrection which your religious neighbor probably believes to be the unique property of his own Church.

Let me give one further illustration before we examine the Greek myths. When the Spanish priests crossed the seas to take the Catholic gospel to the "heathens" of Mexico, they were astonished to find that what seemed to them a caricature of it already existed in the country. There were austerities and atonements, monks and nuns, confession and communion, and many other remarkable anticipations of the wares they brought from Spain. "The devil has his Christs," they said, with old Firmicus Maternus. For us these resemblances throw a most interesting light on the evolution of religion. These Indians, starting from almost a polar district on the other side of the globe, isolated by vast spaces from the rest of the world, developed rites and beliefs singularly like those of ritualistic Buddhism in southern Asia and of Mithraism and Christianity in the region of the Mediterranean.

We have a relevant illustration of this in a spring- festival of the Aztecs which contains at least the germ of the death and resurrection myth. I may quote a description of it which I wrote a quarter of a century ago in my Church Discipline:

About the beginning of April one of the finest of the war-prisoners at hand was chosen to represent the god. He was clothed in the resplendent robes of Tetzcatlipoca and awarded eight pretty pages and four of the most charming maids of the community. He dined luxuriously, with the highest nobles of the land, and was in every way entertained as if he were the god he impersonated for

twenty days. On the last day of his reign his fair companions accompanied him on the royal canoe to the distant shore of the lake; and from the last kiss he turned with his pages toward the sinister temple beyond. The pages left him at the foot of the pyramid, and he mounted the solitary steps, playing the sacred flute. When he reached the summit, he was seized by the Aztec priests and flung upon the deep-stained altar; and in a few moments his sated heart was quivering before heaven in the outstretched hand of the sacrificer.

We find the same practice in other parts of the ancient World. In fact, in one form or other there was almost a Worldwide belief that the god, or a representative (king, prisoner, effigy, etc.) of the god, died, or had to die, every year. Gods, being immortal in some sense, rise again when they die, so where the death of the god himself was celebrated, the feast of the resurrection followed. But for a poor war-captive or even a royal representative of the god there would be no resurrection.

In Greece we find various myths which bear upon this worldwide tendency of the human imagination. In some cases the legend as we have it is evidently modified by the contact of the Greeks with the oriental peoples and for that we must make allowance. But two ancient myths, in particular, which became vital elements of Greek religious thought and life, familiarized the entire nation with the idea of a divine death and resurrection, a descent into hell and ascent into heaven; and these legends and the ritual they inspired reached the height of their popularity in the period before the spread of Christianity.

Zeus, the sky-father, the great god of the Greeks, corresponding to the Roman Jupiter, was mated with Hera (Juno). But in Greek mythology another matron-goddess Demeter, is awkwardly placed on much the same level as Hera, and was much more popular. Most probably she is the customary mother-earth goddess of the people whom the Hellenes found in possession of Greece when they entered it. "Meter" is the Greek for "mother," and, although "De" is not the Greek for "earth" (which is "Ge"), it is probably the same word in an earlier tongue. We saw that in Crete, which influenced Greece before the Greeks arrived, the only deity was the mother-earth goddess; and scholars do not seem to have paid sufficient attention the persistent statement of Greek writers that they got their "mysteries," originally, from Crete.

We will take it that the Greeks found this mother-goddess so deeply rooted in the mind of the people amongst whom they came that they had to admit her to the Olympic family. And Demeter had a daughter, Persephone, who also had to be admitted. They, of course, made her the daughter of Zeus by Demeter, and the wife of Pluto, the ruler of the world of the dead. But this "descent into hell" is the main point of interest for us.

The finished legend, as we find it in the seventh century B.C., says that Pluto fell in love with Persephone (also called Kore, or Cora, "the maid"). Zeus, always good-natured and very human, advised the god of the under world to carry off the divine maid by force, as Demeter would never consent to her going below. So one day, as Persephone was gathering flowers in the celestial meadows, Pluto bore her away. Demeter searched the whole earth, in tears, for her daughter-as Isis had sought Osiris, as Ishtar had sought Tammuz, as the women sought Christ-and discovering where she was, nagged Zeus until he had to tell Pluto to give her up. Pluto agreed, but the desperate lover first induced Persephone to eat a pomegranate; and this, in Greek legend, made her a permanent citizen of the underworld. There was the usual compromise. Zeus said that she must pass one-third-later legend said one-half-of the year underground, and two-thirds with Demeter.

Mother and daughter, the spirit of love and vegetation and the queen of the dead, were honored with great and popular celebrations twice a year, at the time of sowing and the time of reaping. Out of or round these popular spring and harvest festivals -the two primeval festivals of the human calendar-developed the famous Greek "mysteries." But a mother alone, or even mother and daughter, cannot satisfy the heart. A son of god must sooner or later appear. Feminist writers might remind me that the development means that the primitive women-rule (matriarchate) of the world was at last invaded and superseded by the male; and, although it is now clear that there never was a universal matriarchate, there is, perhaps, a great deal of truth in the theory.

The divine son in Greece was Dionysus: known to the later Greeks and Romans as "Bacchus," which means "the noisy one" or "the rowdy one," the god of wine. Scholars believe that he was an old vegetation or fertility god in the barbarous country north of Greece, and was adopted by the Greeks. In their legends, however, they made him thoroughly Greek. He was the son of Zeus and the virgin Semele; and the physiology of these divine amours in Greek legend is such as to leave the mother a real virgin, so that Dionysus had a virgin birth. Hera, wife of Zeus, was angry, and the mother had to give birth in secret, in a cave, on a journey; and even then the child had to be sent far away to escape the vengeance of Herod-I mean Hera.

The goddess, however, had her revenge by visiting him in his early manhood with a kind of frenzy or insanity, and he wandered over the earth. He crossed rivers and lakes dry-foot, and he had other miraculous adventures. His character was twofold. On the one hand he introduced civilization everywhere: on the other, he introduced the wine and the frenzy of intoxication everywhere. There were two versions of his end. In one legend he descended into Hades, brought out his mother Semele, and with her ascended

to heaven. In another he was cut to bits by the Titans, but was restored by Demeter, and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. At his birth-festival he was figured as a sweet divine babe in a basket-cradle, with the virgin mother Semele. Usually statues represented him as a handsome young god.

The "Dionysiac Mysteries," held in his honor, seem to have been wild meetings in commemoration of him as the god of wine and love, and do not concern us here. Respectable folk dismissed them as mere "orgies." The truth is that, as I have previously said, an ascetic and spiritual philosophy of life spread in Greece as well as Egypt and Babylonia before the time of Christ, and there were those who reacted upon it by having a candid celebration of "the flesh" and its delirious impulses.

The ascetics seem to have had a purified version of this celebration in their "Orphic Mysteries." Orpheus does not interest us, but in the pageant there was a representation of the death and resurrection of Zagreus (a variant of Dionysus). He was torn to bits by the Titans, and at the prayer of his mother Persephone-whom some regarded as the mother of Dionysus-Zeus built a new Zagreus round the heart of the dead god which she brought to him.

But the "Eleusinian Mysteries" were the most famous, as Eleusis, where they were held, was only a few miles from Athens. In her wandering in search of her daughter, Demeter had sat by a well at Eleusis (as the woman of Samaria did) and had, unrecognized, been taken on at the royal court as a nurse, until it was found that she was turning the babe into an immortal. It is, of course, the same myth as that of Isis, and, as it is found in Greek literature in the seventh century, we cannot say which borrowed this detail from the other. We may conclude that Eleusis was one of the chief centers of the pre-Hellenic cult of the divine mother and daughter, and the Eleusinian Mysteries were in their honor. There were solemn processions from Athens, fasts to purify the worshipers, and long nocturnal ceremonies which included pageants of the birth of Iacchus (another variant of Dionysus) from Persephone, the mourning of the earth and Demeter when the young goddess descended into hell, and a rejoicing at her rise again into the world of the living.

These legends and celebrations, amongst the most famous and popular of the religious life of the time, made virgin births and resurrections as familiar as the day's events to every child of Hellas. And this was not all. More popular still was Heracles (or Hercules), the patron of hundreds of trade unions, the hero who rolled into one all the adventures of all the strong men, so that we still speak of a mighty task as "herculean."

Heracles had a virgin birth. His mother Alcmene was married, but, on account of a vow, still a virgin when Zeus visited her, or

the power of the Almighty overshadowed her. There was the usual threatening of the babe's life, and he had to be born in secret and hidden away. But the jealous Hera promised Zeus that she would lay aside her anger if the young demi-god would achieve twelve great works. These "labors of Hercules" do not interest us, but the end does. The wife of Heracles poisoned him, and he made a vat funeral pyre and got a shepherd to fire it. A cloud came down from heaven, and from the summit of the pyre Heracles was seen by his disciples to rise physically in the cloud to heaven; just as, hundreds of years later, it would be written of the virgin-born prophet of Nazareth that, from the summit of a hill, "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." (Acts, i, 9).

Finally, in southern Greece there was another annual celebration, the Hyacinthia. Hyacinthus, youngest son of King Amyclas of Sparta, was so handsome that Apollo came down to play with him. And one day the god accidentally killed him as they played quoits. The hyacinth (a flower of the Greek spring, a small purple iris, not our hyacinth) sprang up out of his blood, and Apollo mourned bitterly. But we see from a bas-relief on his tomb at Amyclae that he ascended into heaven accompanied by a choir of divine nymphs. The annual celebration occupied three days. The first was given to mourning, the second to great joy, the third remains obscure. But it is the usual story. Some ancient god who was slain and rose again in the spring was adopted by the Greeks when they settled in Sparta. Resurrection was to the Greeks as familiar an idea as awakening in the morning. The Christian legend was not a piece of folly to them because it was impossible, but because it was banal. Aesculapius had raised so many from the dead that Zeus slew him lest the whole race of mortals should escape death; or, as others said, because Pluto found his lower world' defrauded of crowds of its citizens. And Zeus had then raised Aesculapius himself from the dead and taken him into the company of the immortals. The Greeks, by the end of the old era, had come to realize that these were legends. And just then Paul of Tarsus came along to tell them that a god, a virgin-god, had really been slain recently in Judea and has risen from the dead! They laughed.

The Meaning of the Myth

In dealing with the myth of the virgin birth, we are apt to lose our judgment in this wonderful world of legends and religious fairy tales. If we find, as we do, a new religion appearing in the first century with a story of a slain and resurrected god, and we see clearly that such a story was current all over the world for ages before the first century, we are very prone to conclude at once that the new religion borrowed its story from the old ones.

That is not strictly logical. If, as we saw, the legend could grow up independently in four or five parts of the earth, it could appear independently in a sixth part. We say grow up, but we must

remember that legends are not like plants. They do not necessarily require a germ from a previous plant to engender them. The Greek (or pre-Greek), Phrygian, Persian, Egyptian, and Babylonian legends of death (or at least descent into the lower world) and resurrection arose independently. Why not the Christian? We rule out of court the Christian's claim that his story was quite independent because it is based upon a fact. The analysis of the evidence for it in the New Testament, which I made in the second chapter, demolishes that belief. There is only evidence that the belief existed amongst the followers of Jesus some years after his death. But we must reflect before we say that the followers of Jesus merely borrowed what was said of other gods. The story of the resurrection as we have it in the Gospels seems very plainly to have been built up in part out of the older legends. We must, it is true, not strain the parallels and mythical interpretations. Conybeare, the chief rationalist critic of the mythologists, seems to me justified in many of his criticisms. Jesus, they point out, was buried in a cave or rock-tomb. So was Mithra, therefore. . .

Conybeare rightly points out that in stony Judea a man was generally buried in a rock-tomb. Again, it is said that Jesus walked on the water, and that he commandeered two asses on one occasion; and there is a legend that Dionysus once, to cross a river, commandeered one of two asses, and it walked on the water bearing him. It seems very doubtful [that] the ignorant writers of the Gospels knew that not very common legend; and the parallel is, in any case, very imperfect.

But the finished Christian story of the resurrection does seem to have been borrowed. The two days in the tomb are suspicious. The descent into hell is quite plainly pagan. The weeping women are very suggestive of borrowing. The ascent into heaven in a cloud is obviously borrowed from Heracles. And so on. As these things do not appear in the Christian story until after or about the end of the first century, there was plenty of time for the legend to pick up these bits of earlier stories. The early Christian who knew, for instance, that Heracles had risen to heaven in a cloud from the top of a high pyre before his disciples would not mind. "The devil has his Christs," he would say. It was an intelligent anticipation.

How far is it likely that the bald primitive story of the execution and resurrection of Jesus was borrowed? To me it seems that the crucifixion is probably historical: unless we reject the whole of Paul's Epistles. Paul, a few years after the event, living first among the Jews at Jerusalem—who never denied the crucifixion—could hardly be misled on such a point. The actual account of the "passion" is clearly a legendary expansion, but the death itself seems to be part of the human story of Jesus which the Jews, in their early conflict with the Christians, never questioned.

The question whether the early followers of Jesus then, within a few years of his death, borrowed the myth of the resurrection from other religions and applied it to him is not simple as some of the mythologists seem to suppose. Wherever Paul was "converted," he was won by the arguments of Jewish followers of Jesus in Judea; and, if we proceed on patient psychological and historical lines of inquiry, instead of bluntly rejecting the whole story, we have to ask how much the immediate and ignorant followers of Jesus knew about other slain and resurrected gods, and how far, if this knowledge were current in Judea, they would venture to appropriate and apply it. On the whole it seems more scientific and reasonable to suppose that, since the contemporary world was saturated with a resurrection myth, even Galilean fisherman knew some thing about it, and that the Messianic school held that the Messiah would rise from the dead. On the other hand, since the Gospels unanimously represent the disciples as dejected and scattered after the execution of their leader, and quite unwilling to believe in his resurrection—a point in favor of the historicity of the narrative, since later glorifiers of Jesus would hardly concoct such things—it seems clear that they did not then regard him as God.

Working on sober and patient lines, therefore, one is disposed to think that the disciples, or some of them, had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, without forming any theory of his divine nature, and that his execution shattered their belief for a time. Then there was the rally which we are accustomed to find in such circumstances. Possibly some of the women thought that they had, like Paul, subjective visions of Jesus; and such things could easily in a few years take objective form. I have traced modern miracles, both Catholic miracles at Lourdes and Spiritualist miracles, through five or six successive writers and copiers to the original documents, and it is curious to see how each amplifies or alters one word and omits others until the story looks quite different. Oral transmission of a story in the imaginative East, in a period of extreme nervous exaltation, would account for the simple story of the resurrection as it first appears in Paul. We have, as I said, no witnesses to the resurrection, so that the truth of the Christian belief is hardly worth discussing; but we have in some way to account for the belief itself. Later writers or Greek Christians could add mythical details, but it seems true neither to human nature nor to history to imagine the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus recalling that Mithra or Osiris had risen again and so saying that Jesus had done the same.

In sum, I should say that the universal belief in a slain and resurrected god throws light upon the Christian belief by showing us a universal frame of mind which quite easily, in many places, made a resurrection myth. We do not know how many of the obscure "Messiahs" who figure in Jewish history may have had the same or similar stories told of them. But none of them except

Jesus had a Saul of Tarsus to spread his cult. But for that fiery and indomitable little man history would probably never have had to record the story of Christianity.

And Paul gave the new gospel its characteristic features: its ascetic and theological features. Jesus, an embodiment of God, died to save men from sin. The modern preacher stresses this aspect, and asks us to smile at all the stories of Osiris and the other slain and resurrected gods. The Christian story is a spiritual story, he says. Is it? In point of fact, the very bases of it are repugnant to the modern mind. If Jesus died to save men from sin, it was, as Paul says, from Adam's sin. On Christian principles the death of Christ does not atone for a man's personal sins. But only the less educated Christians now see anything "spiritual" in the idea that God condemned billions of human beings to eternal torment for the sin of one man. It is not spiritual, but sordid.

That was a mistake, of course, says the Modernist. Paul and everybody else were wrong-until the end of the nineteenth century. The real spiritual significance of the Christian story, its immense distinction from all other death and resurrection myths, is its moral inspiration. And the Modernist is in no better position than the Ancientists. As I have shown, the cult of Isis and Osiris in its latest form, the Greek Mysteries, and the cult of Mithra had exactly the same moral message. The celebration was a rebuke to sin, an exhortation to purity, a promise of personal resurrection. There is nothing unique in the Christian story. What is unique is the fact that of all the struggling cults of that wonderful age Christianity alone survived and conquered the world. I am now devoting a series of books to that. There is, we shall see, no more miracle or mystery in it than in all that we have yet surveyed.

But we are at the same time making a broad study of religious evolution, and a word must be said about the meaning of the general myth of a slain and resurrected god. It used to be thought that it was a fanciful allegory of the annual death (in winter) and restoration to life (in spring) of the sun. It is now more generally thought, with Sir I. G. Frazer, that the phenomenon on which the myth is based is the annual death and spring resurrection of the spirit of vegetation.

We have a natural tendency to make a single theory fit a large number of related facts, but in some cases it is a mistake. Here, in particular, we have two great facts- the decay and restoration of the sun and the decay and restoration of vegetation-in the actual order of nature, and some nations were more impressed by one than the other. The death and resurrection of Mithra, for instance, seems clearly a solar myth. The story of Demeter (mother earth) and her daughter just as clearly refers to vegetation; and the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz, Cybele and Attis, is equally clear. The myth

of Isis and Osiris was a sun- god; but the evidence in Frazer and the time of the celebration (November) are against them.

The phenomena of nature's annual pageant are very different in different countries. To the northerner or the dweller on an elevated and temperate region the annual "slaying," or at least mortal illness, of the sun, which leads to the rigors of winter, is much more striking than the slow dying and slow rebirth of nature. To the southerner the waning of the sun in winter is rather a relief; while most of the vegetation is dead during the greater part of the year, and it is the sudden and glorious burst of flowers and corn that impresses. So we get both solar and vegetation myths, and combinations of the two, and, as the season of rain and growth varies considerably, we find the celebration at different times of the year.

But what a consummation! Man in his childhood speculates on the annual pageant of nature. What does it mean? Mother-earth and father-sky never die. They are always there. But the spirit of the sun and the spirit of the corn and tree die or sicken every year, and rise again. Or perhaps they merely pass for a season to the underworld? Man weaves his fairy tales about the great pageant. The son of God or the daughter or lover of earth is slain, or dies, or is dragged to the underworld every year. We mourn with mother-earth; we rejoice in the restoration.

Then the ideas of sin and virtue enter. They come to be regarded as conditions of one's immortal lot. The life beyond had at first been conceived merely as an eternal duplicate of this. The death and resurrection festivals were more or less in the nature of religious magic. They were to promote fertility; and love and feasting promote fertility. Now the drama becomes ethical. The next world is purely spiritual, and you must not go into it with sin on your soul. The robust and wicked old celebrations become "mysteries." At last, by a curious chain of historical accidents, an old Sumerian myth of a fall of man enters the story. The god really dies to atone for the race; and for two thousand years nearly the whole race pretends to shudder in the shadow of the cross. It is fast fading from the earth, in spite of a hundred thousand priests. The pageant of nature has a new interpreter: science. The pageant of religions has a new interpreter: history. We discard myths and legends. We chart our way in the light of new knowledge and the strength of a new consciousness.

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