

JUDAISM CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM .

THE 3 HUMAN IMPOSTURES * WHICH DECEIVED THE WORLD.

(Notes on Moses Jesus and Muhammad.)

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PART TWO: CHRISTIANITY. Volume I

"Our purpose here is absolutely not to demolish Christianity ... but to give back to it its true meaning"
(Rene Bouchet. Druidism and Christianity. Aurora Publishing. Liege 1979).

ODE FOR THE HIGH-KNOWERS.

Half of Mankind's woe comes from the fact that, several thousand years ago, somewhere in the Middle East, peoples through their language conceived spirituality OR MYSTICISM....

-Not as a quest for meaning, hope or liberation with the concepts that go with it (distinction opposition or difference between matter and spirit, ethics, personal discipline, philanthropy, life after life, meditation, quest for the grail, practices...).

-But as a gigantic and protean law (DIN) that should govern the daily life of men with all that it implies. Obligations or prohibitions that everyone must respect day and night.

Violations or contraventions of this multitude of prohibitions when they are not followed literally.

Judgments when one or more of these laws are violated.

Convictions for the guilty.

Dismissals or acquittals for the innocent. CALLED RIGHTEOUS PERSONS.

THIS CONFUSION BETWEEN THE NUMINOUS AND THE RELIGIOUS, THEN BETWEEN THE SACREDNESS AND THE SECULAR, MAKES OUR LIFE A MISERY FOR 4000 YEARS VIA ISRAEL AND ESPECIALLY THE NEW ISRAEL THAT CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM WANT TO BE.

The principle of our Ollotouta was given us, long time ago already, by our master to all in the domain; the great Gaelic bard, founder of the modern Free-thought, who is usually evoked under the anglicized name of John Toland. There cannot be, by definition, things contrary to Reason in Holy Scriptures really emanating from the divine one.

If there are, then it is, either error, or lies!

Either there is no mystery, or then it is in any way a divine revelation!

There is no happy medium...

We do not admit other orthodoxy that only the one of Truth because, wherever it can be in the world, must also stand, we are completely convinced of it, God's Church, and not that one of such or such a human faction ... We are consequently for showing no mercy to the error on any pretext that can be, each time we will have the possibility or occasion to expound it in its true colors.

1696. Christianity not mysterious.

1702. Vindicius Liberus. Response of John Toland to the detractors of his "Christianity not mysterious."

1704. Letters to Serena containing the origin of idolatry and reasons of heathenism, the history of the soul's immortality doctrine among the heathens, etc. (Version Baron d'Holbach, a German philosopher).

1705. The true Socinianism * as an example of fair debate on matters of theology *.To which is prefixed Indifference in disputes, recommended by a pantheist to an orthodox friend.

1709. Adeisdaemon or the man without superstition. Jewish origins.

1712. Letter against popery, and particularly against admitting the authority of the Fathers or Councils in religious controversies, by Sophia Charlotte of Prussia.

1714. Defense of the Jews, victims of the anti-Semite prejudices, and a plea for their naturalization.

1718. The destiny of Rome, of the popes, and the famous prophecy of St Malachy, archbishop of Armagh, in the thirteenth century.

Nazarenus or the Jewish, gentile, and Mahometan Christianity (version Baron d'Holbach), containing:

I. The history of the ancient gospel of Barnabas, and the modern apocryphal gospel of the Mahometans, attributed to the same apostle.

II. The original plan of Christianity occasionally explained in the history of the Nazarenes, solving at the same time various controversies about this divine (but so highly perverted) institution.

III. The relation of an Irish manuscript of the four gospels as likewise a summary of the ancient Irish Christianity and what the realty of the keldees (an order half-lay, half-religious) was, against the last two bishops of Worcester.

1720. Pantheisticon, sive formula celebrandae sodalitatis socraticae.

Tetradymus.

I. Hodegus. The pillar of cloud and fire that guided the Israelites in the wilderness was not miraculous but, as faithfully related in Exodus, a practice equally known by other nations, and in those countries, not only useful, but even necessary.

II. Clidophorus.

III. Hypatia or the history of the most beautiful, most virtuous, and most accomplished lady, who was stoned to death by the clergy of Alexandria, to gratify the pride, the emulation and even the cruelty, of Archbishop Cyril, commonly, but very undeservedly, styled Saint Cyril.

1726. Critical history of the Celtic religion, containing an account of the druids, or the priests and judges, of the vates, or the diviners and physicians, and finally of the bards, or the poets; of the ancient Britons, Irish or Scots. In plus with the story of Abaris the Hyperborean, priest of the sun. A specimen of the Armorican language (Breton, Irish, Latin, dictionary).

1726. An account of Jordano Bruno's book, about the infinity of the universe and the innumerable worlds, translated from the Italian editing.

1751. The Pantheisticon or the form of celebrating the Socratic-society. London S. Paterson. Translation of the book published in 1720.

"Druidism" is an independent review (independent of any religious or political association) and which has only one purpose: theoretical or fundamental research about what is neo-paganism. The double question, to which this review of theoretical studies tries to answer, could be summarized as follows: "What could be or what should be a current neo-druidism, modern and contemporary?"

"Druidism" is a neo-pagan review, strictly neo-pagan, and heir to all genuine (that is to say non-Christian) movements which have succeeded one another for 2000 years, the indirect heir, but the heir, nevertheless!

Regarding our reference tradition or our intellectual connection, let us underline that if the "poets" of Domnall mac Muirchertach Ua Néill still had imbas forosnai, teimn laegda and dichetal do chennaib, in their repertory (cf. the conclusion of the tale of the plunder of the castle of Maelmilsothach, of Urard Mac Coise, a poet who died in the 11th century), they may have been Christians for several generations. It is true that these practices (imbas forosnai, teimn ...) were formally forbidden by the Church, but who knows, there may have been accommodations similar to those of astrologers or alchemists in the Middle Ages.

Anyway our "Druidism" is also a will; the will to get closer, at the maximum, to ancient druidism, such as it was (scientifically speaking). The will also to modernize this druidism, a total return to ancient druidism being excluded (it would be anyway impossible).

Examples of modernization of this pagan druidism.

— Giving up to lay associations of the cultural side (medicine, poetry, mathematics, etc.). Principle of separation of Church and State.

— Specialization on the contrary, in Celtic, or pagan in general, spirituality history of religion, philosophy and metapsychics (known today as parapsychology).

— Use in some cases of the current vocabulary (Church, religion, baptism, and so on).

A golden mean, of course, is to be found between a total return to ancient druidism (fundamentalism) and a too revolutionary radical modernization (no longer sagum).

The Celtic PAA (pantheistic agnostic atheist) having agreed to be the defense lawyer of ancient Celtic paganism and to sign jointly this small library *, of which he is only the collector, druid Hesunertus (Peter DeLaCrau), does not consider himself as the author of this collective work. But as the spokesperson for the team which composed it. For other sources of this essay on druidism, see the thanks in the bibliography.

* Socinians, since that's how they were named later, wished more than all to restore the true Christianity that teaches the Bible. They considered that the Reformation had made disappear only a part of corruption and formalism, present in the Churches, while leaving intact the bad substance: non-biblical teachings (that is very questionable in fact).

.** This little camminus is nevertheless important for young people ... from 7 to 77 years old! Mantalon siron esi.

1) Do ratath tra do Mael Milsothach iartain cech ni dobrethaigsid suide sin etir ecnaide 7 fileda 7 brithemna la taeb ogaisic a crech 7 is amlaidsin ro ordaigset do tabairt a cach ollamain ina einech 7 ina sa[ru]gad acht cotissad de imus forosnad [di]chetal do chollaib cend 7 tenm laida .i. comenclainn fri rig Temrach do acht co ti de intreide sin FINIT.

SOME OTHER SPECIFICATIONS TO BEGIN FOR THOSE WHOSE NIHILISM IS NOT GOING TO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF THIS "-ism."

We will apply here in this brief essay the method of analysis implemented until now in our study of Irish legends and developed in our many counter-lays (no jealous!)

The purpose of this opuscle being to stigmatize the dangers for Mankind of the religious ideology commonly known under the name of Christianity that is the whole series of ideas or conditioned reflexes handed down from generation to generation in the name of a man named Jesus; What is, first of all, a religious ideology ?

"Under certain given circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it. The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtless transitory, but presenting very clearly defined characteristics. The gathering has thus become what, in the absence of a better expression, I will call an organized crowd, or, if the term is considered preferable, a psychological crowd. It forms a single being, and is subjected to the LAW OF THE MENTAL UNITY OF CROWDS.

The disappearance of conscious personality and the turning of feelings and thoughts in a definite direction, which are the primary characteristics of a crowd about to become organized, do not always involve the simultaneous presence of a number of individuals on one spot. Thousands of isolated individuals may acquire at certain moments, and under the influence of certain violent emotions--such, for example, as a great national event--the characteristics of a psychological crowd...

The sect represents the first step in the process of organization of homogeneous crowds. A sect includes individuals differing greatly as to their education, their professions, and the class of society to which they belong, and with their common beliefs as the connecting link.

Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian--that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images--which would be entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd--and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best-known habits. An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will.

It is for these reasons that juries are seen to deliver verdicts of which each individual juror would disapprove that parliamentary assemblies adopt laws and measures of which each of their members would disapprove in his own person. Taken separately, the men of the Convention were enlightened citizens of peaceful habits. United in a crowd, they did not hesitate to give their adhesion to the most savage proposals, to guillotine individuals most clearly innocent, and, contrary to their interests, to renounce their inviolability and to decimate themselves.

It is not only by his acts that the individual in a crowd differs essentially from himself. Even before he has entirely lost his independence, his ideas and feelings have undergone a transformation, and the transformation is so profound as to change the miser into a spendthrift, the skeptic into a believer, the honest man into a criminal, and the coward into a hero...(Gustave Le Bon. The crowd, a study of the popular mind).

SURE FIRST TRACES OF CHRISTIANITY.

We do not believe the traditions of the kind of those reported by Virgil in the year 40 before our era. "Now is come the last age of the Cumaean prophecy: the great cycle of periods is born anew. Now returns the Maid, returns the reign of Saturn: now from high heaven a new generation comes down. Yet do thou at that boy's birth, in whom the iron race shall begin to cease, and the golden to arise over all the world, holy Lucina, be gracious; now your own Apollo reigns. And in your consulate, in your, O Pollio, shall this glorious age enter, and the great months begin their march: under thy rule what traces of our guilt yet remain, vanishing shall free earth for ever from alarm. He shall grow in the life of gods, and shall see gods and heroes mingled, and himself be seen by them, and shall rule the world that his fathers' virtues have set at peace".

The author of *Philosophumena* (Hippolyte) speaking of this second creation which is that of Jesus after that of Adam, also gives to the constellation of the dragon the own name of the Word and identifies it with Christ. The same tall story concerning Hercules is told in another way, what proves that we should not be attached to the literal meaning of these stories, but seek the interpretation of them.

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA.

" Our Heracles is known among the Celts of the Continent under the local name of Ogmios; and the appearance he presents in their pictures is truly grotesque. You would take him for some infernal deity, for Charon or Iapetus,—any one rather than Heracles.For a long time I stood staring at this in amazement, I did not know what to make of it, and was beginning to feel somewhat nettled, when I was addressed in admirable Greek by a Celt who stood at my side, and who besides possessing a scholarly acquaintance with their national science, proved to be not unfamiliar with our own. He said me, Noble stranger; I see this fresco puzzles you: let me solve the riddle. We Celts connect eloquence [Editor's note: *labarum*] not with Hermes, as you do, but with the mightier Heracles. Nor need it surprise you to see him represented as an old man. It is the prerogative of eloquence that it reaches perfection in old age; at least if we may believe your poets, who tell us that..."Youth has a wandering wit Whereas old age has wiser words to say than youth."

Thus we find that from Nestor's lips honey is distilled; and that the words of the Trojan counselors are compared to the lily, which, if I have not forgotten my Greek, is the name of a flower. Hence, if you consider the relation that exists between tongue and ear, you will find nothing more natural than the way in which our Heracles, who is eloquence personified, draws men along with their ears tied to his tongue. Nor is any slight intended by the hole bored through that member because I recollect verses in one of your comic poets in which we are told that..."There is a hole in every glib tongue's tip."

Indeed, we refer the achievements of the original Heracles, from first to last, to his wisdom and persuasive eloquence. His shafts, as I take it, are no other than his words: swift, keen-pointed, true-aimed to do deadly execution on the soul. And, in conclusion, he reminded me of our own phrase: 'winged words.'

We cannot be sure the Greek has well understood and repeated everything, but the old witness statements are too rare so that we can neglect one of them. It is also possible this high-knower moderated his interpretation in order to calm down the irritation of his interlocutor. But the form of the explanation, which shows a large keenness of intelligence, was at the very least to come from a good expert in theology.

To designate his interlocutor, Lucian indeed wrote *verbatim philosophos*. *Philosophos* is used in the sentence as an adjective; but as a noun it is the word used generally and specifically by Greek writers to refer to the druids.

N.B. It is important to note the presence in this country that we believe barbarian and uncultured, of personalities able to discuss as equals in his language with Lucian.

Nothing says to us that this Celtic scholar able at the same time to quote Greek verses and to develop a brilliant comparative mythology between Ogmios and Hercules is a druid but the presumption is strong enough. Finally, it is to be noted that if the Celt outperforms the Greek, it does not take advantage from that to try to convert him, and perhaps is this the most important lesson of this text.

In summary: acceptance of differences and national identities, but exchange and dialogue by openness to other cultures (we, Celts, we connect ... any slight is intended, etc.).

The great strength of the opened secularism of the high-knower of today is that it recognizes the element of truth in any religion, however small it may be. This willingness to recognize the truth, whatever the sources from which it comes, is one of its characteristics.

We therefore apply in this short essay the analysis method applied up to now in our study of Irish legends and developed in our many counter-lays (nobody will be jealous!)

THE FACTS.

Many works have been written about the Judeo-Christian religious phenomenon, its meaning, its interests, its influence on Mankind. In the West particularly, whole libraries have been composed on the personality and the historicity of its main figure, the great Nazorene high rabbi Jesus, known as Messiah or Christ. Nevertheless there is virtually no written account about this character, outside the New Testament, which is overflowing with contradictions. Not only did this man write nothing himself, but in addition there is nothing written about him at the time. With one exception, no writer of his time mentioned him clearly and directly in a well-identifiable writing.

No mention in Philo of Alexandria (-13 + 54), Hellenistic Jewish historian and philosopher, who wrote over fifty treatises, including an Embassy to Gaius, and whose Logos philosophy resembles, strangely, that of early Christians.

The authors of the 1st century, contemporaries of this Jesus, are little more talkative. Pliny the Elder (23-79) said nothing about Jesus nor about a Christian community in Jerusalem, although he visited Palestine thirty years after the supposed events, and is careful to note the presence of Essenes.

Same silence in Persius (34-62) in Martial (40-104) in Seneca (-4 + 65) although a correspondence between this philosopher and St. Paul was fabricated completely.

Nothing in the history of the Jews of Justus of Tiberias, who evokes nevertheless his native Galilee, where he lived and fought the Romans. Lac all the more surprising that Jesus must have lived among them and that in principle he is one of his.

The forty historians who have succeeded in the first two centuries of our era didn't mention him more. But there is enough writings of these authors ... to form a library. Yet in this mass of Jewish and Pagan literature, except two forged passages in the writings of a Jewish writer named Josephus, plus two controversial passages in the works of Roman writers (Pliny and Suetonius); there is no mention of Jesus. We have no official act of the Roman authorities relating to Jesus. Eusebius of Caesarea himself gave the lie to the alleged Acts of Pilate, which Tertullian boasts.

There are in reality only four or five testimonies of the second century undoubtedly objective about him. Here they are!

SUETONIUS (69-125). The life of the Twelve Caesars.

Life of Claudius XXV.

" Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome".

The problem is that Chrestus and Christus are two different words. The first Chrestus can be translated as "good" and is sometimes used as a proper noun (the prefect of the praetorian guard, Ulpian, for example had an assistant who had that name). Only the second, Christus, means a consecrated person, a person who has been "anointed."

Given the dates and places, the equation Chrestus = Christus = Christ = Jesus, is problematic, although possible. It is perhaps here just the name of one of the leaders of these disorders that occurred in Rome, with a particular frequency in the years 39-40 in the reign of Caligula. Therefore no certainty is taken from such a passage. The name of Chrestus, "good" may just be a nickname.

Life of Nero. XVI.

" The sale of any kind of cooked viands in the taverns was forbidden. Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition. He put an end to the diversions of the chariot drivers".

This excerpt does not speak of Christ but of Christians, what is not completely the same thing. The existence of faithful of worship does not prove that the supposed founder really existed, or we could very well apply the same principle to all other god or demon of this Earth; and the existence of

dagolitoi (believers) of the worship of Lug, or of Taran / Toran / Tuireann, would prove that Lug and Taranis did exist.

TACITUS (55-120). Annals. XV, 44.

" Nero fastened the guilt [of the fire in Rome in + 115] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. A most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular."

Counter-lay No. 1.

These dramatic events (the fire spared only the Jewish District, hence the suspicions against Jews and Christians of course) are traditionally ranked by Christian journalists in the category "Nero's Persecution."

This tragedy struck much the minds of the time (since it was even considered a divine punishment and thus used to justify revolts against the Roman Empire*); it is important to leave no doubt about this subject in the minds of our faithful readers.

Judaism being in Rome and long ago a legal religion (religio licita) Christianity which is equated to it is also so and Christians are not then systematically sued by principle by the authorities, when they are so, it is generally for supposed or alleged common law crimes.

The tortures that Nero inflicted on the Christians in Rome were, in reality, only motivated by the necessity of this emperor to justify himself for the burning of the city; that he was accused of having ordered and who had spared the neighborhood of the Jews and therefore of the Christians.

Remind of the facts.

Around 115, the Roman historian Tacitus (who was less than ten years old at the time) reports that ...

" Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. This most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular" (Annals XV, 44).

And the text of Tacitus states: " Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."

The problem is that historians think that this testimony is an interpolation (the Tacitus of this text speaks for example of the procurator Pilate ... whereas he was only prefect). It would be a fake dating from 1429, written by Poggio, a pontifical secretary, according to a text by Sulpicius Severus. This precision does not appear in translations or copies of this book prior to that date.

Tacitus reports that "an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude (multitudo ingens) was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind."

Suetonius (c. 121) also mentions in the middle of a list of other measures taken by Nero: " Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition."

It is difficult to estimate the number of victims. Christian journalists will amplify the figures (a Christian text of the fifth century speaks of "nine hundred and seventy-seven saints") but some historians estimate it to be fewer than 300 dead.

Serious fires were frequent in the towns, and equally frequently ascribed to minorities. This had been the case in Rome for the Campanians in -211 and the freedmen in -31, and was so in Caesarea in 70 (for the Jews).

Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain why in 64 the Romans attacked specifically the Christians, that is to say a very small minority who was not very well distinguished from the Jews (Tacitus's reproach of "hatred against mankind" is also the very general reproach he expresses to the Jews).

The general assumption is that because of their ritual practices and of the misunderstanding of their language, Christians were regarded as a secret and dangerous or asocial sect, perhaps reminding of the scandal of the Bacchanalia in -176.

A more recent hypothesis is that the Christians of the time, very marked by eschatology, had seen and hailed the fire as the announcement of the last judgment and the end of time, which they saw as a general conflagration and their manifestations of joy would have attracted the hostility of the Roman population. At that time, the Christian sect was not very different from the radical Judaism. She was still very much influenced by the zealot movement.

But today, any impartial judge would acquit the Christians "for the benefit of the doubt."

In short, history has transmitted to us only the names of two Christians martyred in Rome, under Nero, that of Paul, and if we admit the pontifical legend, that of Peter.

In the Christian tradition, the death of the apostles Peter and Paul was indeed connected with this persecution. However, there is no reliable source that links the limited in time and space persecution, of 64, following the fire in Rome, and the condemnation of Paul. As for Peter's, it is only hypothetical.

* Tacitus Histories Book IV, Chapter LIV. ... Rumors equally false were circulated respecting (Great) Britain. Above all, the conflagration of the Capitol had made them believe that the end of the Roman Empire was at hand. The Continental Celts, they remembered, had captured the city in former days, but, as the abode of Jupiter was uninjured, the Empire had survived; whereas now the druids declared, with the prophetic utterances of an idle superstition, that this fatal conflagration was a sign of the anger of heaven, and portended universal empire for the Transalpine nations.

PLINY THE YOUNGER (62 - 114) governor of Bithynia circa 112 - 113. Letters, 10, 96.

This is a report sent to the emperor Trajan and speaking, not of Christ himself, but of a group of Chrestianoï, i.e., of Messianic Jews believe to have found in Jesus the expected messiah. According to some, it would be even more specifically the sect of the Elchasaites, an extension of the original Nazorenism or Ebionism of the Judeo-Christians of James in Jerusalem. The book of Elchasai from which Epiphanius gives us some excerpts ...dictates a whole series of purifications with incantations formulas, next to the earthly Jesus a heavenly Adam as true reveling principle, etc. This book dates perhaps from the first half of the second century. It was probably composed for Christians Baptists knowing the Aramaic language (the fragment No. 9 indeed contains a cryptogram in that language).

These Jewish Christians, to whom is attributed the original text (or the first midrashim *) of the pseudo-Clementine homilies are the source of all the literature extolling the role of the brother of Jesus, James the Just.

* The midrash is a fable with religious purpose, based on two distinct elements.

- The play on words.

- A constant and somewhat forced reference to elements of the Old Testament.

PLINY TO THE EMPEROR TRAJAN THEREFORE.

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians.

I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses¹⁾ associated with the name are to be punished. Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome. Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods and, moreover, cursed Christ—none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do—these I thought should be discharged.

Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshiped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god

[“and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so.” Editor’s note. This sentence is probably an interpolation that is to say a later Christian addition in the original text of Pliny. In other words, a fake!]

When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses²⁾. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition. I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found (Letter from Pliny the younger to the emperor Trajan about 112).

Notes.

1. Implied “proved.”
2. Deaconesses fulfilling a certain number of functions in the communities of the East.

Counter-lay No. 2.

As in the previous case, that of the fire in Rome and Nero, it is important to state what was then the attitude of the Roman state with regard to what Christian journalists like Eusebius of Caesarea called “persecution of Trajan .”

THE ANSWER FROM TRAJAN TO PLINY.

“You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind

of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it--that is, by worshiping our gods--even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age."

We have here, if it was again needed, a clear indication of the fact that early Christianity was not (in the eyes of the imperial power) a religion of love like the actual Islam, but rather a dangerous militant and active sect. Indeed, this correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan can only be explained if the Christianity of this period was considered (rightly wrongly) as a secret association and a militant sect, heir to the Jewish messianic movements of the Zealot type which had spread terror in Judea in the first century.

This behavior, in the spirit of Pliny and Trajan, certainly deserved capital punishment ... Especially since the Emperor had strictly forbidden the secret associations! Besides without there is ever question of repressing a religion, the imperial justice in this case struck only obstinate rebels! And rather curiously it is in the mouth of the non-Christian that the words forgiveness and repentance appear. There is to be punishment only if there is a public nuisance. Trajan's instructions are therefore not inhumane. The Christians did worse later with heretics and witches (the last ones at Salem in 1692).

Before Trajan, no special ordinance having passed against the Christians, they could only be prosecuted on charges of common law: treason, lese-majesty, rebellion against the orders of magistrates, unlawful associations and assemblies, witchcraft, magic. Mommsen places in the year 112 the rescript sent by Trajan to Pliny the Younger, then governor of Bithynia and Pontus.

The rescript of Trajan prohibited nevertheless the general and universal persecution of Christians, since it ordered the magistrates to act, not ex officio, but only when the cause was submitted to them through a signed denunciation (signed and not anonymous); but he did not reply either to the question of Pliny asking whether it was the very name of Christian, even if it was pure of crime, that was to be punished, or the crimes attached to that name. Nor did he indicate the penalties which were to be imposed. But in declaring that in these kinds of cases it was not possible to establish a general and certain rule, he placed the Christians at the mercy of the magistrates.

In fact, we see the magistrates, when they are indulgent, absolve the Christians, and condemn them when they are cruel or pressed by the excitation of the people.

The hatred of the people against Christians was to increase as they became more numerous. It was inspired only for a very small part by religious intolerance, almost foreign to paganism, which admitted very different and even strange deities. Its principal causes were the accusation, first produced against the Jews, then spread against the Christians, of practicing in their night assemblies abominable mysteries, destined to lust, incest, meals where children were eaten; the possession which was attributed to them of the secrets of a powerful and fatal magic; their indifference to the prosperity of the empire, or rather their intimate hatred of Zealot against pagan Rome. In times of war, defeat, pestilence, famine, and earthquakes, the signs of the wrath of the gods angry against those who strove to overthrow their altars were recognized in these calamities.

The only historian of the time who wrote allegedly about the man Jesus (Flavius Josephus) devoted only ten lines of 30 volumes, but these are unsubtle forgeries.

Flavius ??Josephus (37-94) is indeed the author of a work entitled "Jewish Antiquities" written around + 95, in twenty books. It is found in a manuscript of his work from the twelfth century, in the Chapter XVIII, a brief passage about Jesus, known as the Testimonium Flavianum.

This passage about Jesus known as Christ, in the works of Flavius ??Josephus, appears for the first time in the fourth century. It is mentioned in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea and was still not in the

"Jewish Antiquities" in the time of Origen (185-254); since Origen assures in his "Contra Celsum" (1-47) that Flavius Josephus never spoke of a Jesus called Christ. The forgery attributable to Eusebius is therefore so manifest that the Church itself is no longer defending the authenticity of this passage of Flavius Josephus. Since Origen assures that Flavius Josephus never wrote that Jesus was the Christ, it is therefore that the addition was made thereafter. So there is no doubt today this passage is, if not fully, at least partially, an interpolation performed in the fourth century; and due to the pious hand of Eusebius of Caesarea, for whom a lie is hardly important.

The Testimonium Flavianum.

Below is the excerpt in question from the book by Flavius Josephus. The bracketed passages are those which have been likely added.

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man [if it be lawful to call him a man, for] he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Greeks. [He was the Christ]; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, [for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him]; and the tribe of Christians [so named from him] are not extinct to this day."

There is another version that which is in the Universal History of Agapius of Manbij, Melkite bishop of Hierapolis in the tenth century, in Arabic.

" At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; [accordingly], he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders".

Note also, to be complete, the version of Michael the Syrian (Chronicle) but he refers to that by Flavius Josephus.

"In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it is fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth. Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah....".

Since four theories are conflicting.

The thesis of complete authenticity.

The thesis of the interpolation or of the total fake.

The thesis of the interpolation or of the partial fake.

The thesis of the mistakes in the copying or handover of the text.

The thesis of complete authenticity.

The Testimonium Flavianum is normally in a book intended to the Romans, but also, and perhaps above all, to the Jews, and among them to the Christians who at that time still belonged to Judaism, and to whom he is opposed.

He condemns the messianic phenomenon, to which is related Christ, that he describes briefly and rather ironically, as a participant in a period of unrest ending in the war and the final destruction of the Temple. He expounds an archaic Christology (no allusion to the virgin birth, to the salvation, to the end of time, to the Trinity) dating back to the first century.

Regarding the impossibility that Josephus could say of Jesus that he was Christ, one could say as much that a Christian, convinced of his divinity, could not write of Jesus that he was only a "wise man ." A true Christian would not have used the past tense nor used words like " doer of wonderful works."

The word "Christ" is simply a noun, the only known by the Romans besides and that Josephus could not use, it has probably a polemical value. The word christos, "anointed one," but also "coated" was applied then indeed, outside Judeo-Christianity, only to a wall.

The thesis of the total fake. The entire passage is a Christian addition, prior to the early fourth century. An orthodox Jew like Flavius Josephus, who remained faithful to Judaism until his death, which educated his son in this religion; a Jew who considers his greatest pride of being the descendant of a Jewish priestly family; a Jew who writes, as he says himself in the presentation of his book "Jewish Antiquities," to demonstrate the superiority of the Mosaic religion over all others; absolutely cannot have admitted as true the basic concepts of the Christian catechesis. He cannot have affirmed that Jesus was the true Christ that is to say the Messiah of whom himself as a Jew was still expecting the coming.

In his book XX of the Jewish Antiquities, in which is the passage that concerns us, Flavius Josephus speaks of four different Jesus (Jesus known as Christ, Jesus son of Gamla, Jesus son of Damneus and Jesus son of Josedek). Three are located in the same period. In the set of his works and in this book particularly, Josephus names the characters, following the Jewish custom of the time by adding the words "son of" and when it is necessary to the story "brother." A Jesus without the slightest mention of any relationship, of the kind Jesus son of Joseph, and therefore somehow orphan, suggests irresistibly an addition later to the author, performed by a person knowing hardly the Jewish customs in the field.

The thesis of the interpolation or partial fake. The text would be partially reworked: Once removed the expressions with Christian connotation, appears a coherent text, consistent with the style of Josephus, where Jesus is simply considered "a wise man." The groups of words considered as interpolated vary according to the authors, but are most often part of them the following ones "if it be lawful to call him a man" and "He was the Christ!"; less often "[For he appeared to them ...]" and others, according to the authors.

The thesis of the clerical mistake in the handover of the text. The word "man" would have been repeated instead of the word "wise"; the original text would have contained sophos and not andros. On the other hand, the Greek word autos, itself, would have been mixed up with outos, this one. What could have led to a change of meaning of the text, which would have originally contained the following sentence: "Around those times, was born a wise man if it is fitting to call him wise. He performed particularly strange acts and became a teacher for some who accepted him with enthusiasm. And he managed to convince many Jews and Greeks, that he was Christ."

All this is a bit complicated!

There is also another passage in Josephus (book 20 chapter 9) mentioning Jesus, or more precisely, the brother of Jesus.

" This younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had a proper opportunity now. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned".

Again same comment about the word "Christ" allegedly applied to Jesus by Flavius ??Josephus.

The last testimony often quoted is finally the Babylonian Talmud. (Sanhedrin 43a.)

" On the eve of the Passover Jesus was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!"

This text dates back perhaps to the second century, but it is a little vague. What to think anyway of the value of a witness statement from that time? The Babylonian Talmud was written too late so that we give credit to it.

As it can be seen, therefore, these "proofs" are few, very thin, very fragile and very late; for a character who would have done miracles in front of thousands of people, whose fame was known until abroad,

who would be died and would be resurrected ; and anyway, they concern the Messiah or Christ, not the man named Jesus. There is no record of the Nazorene Jesus outside Christian writings themselves.

Outside the New Testament, no author, among those who were contemporaries of Jesus, transmitted the least information about him. On thirty-known authors of the time who could have spoken of him, none says something.

As it could be seen, other writers and historians, of the first or second century of our era, indeed keep totally quiet about him.

Valerius Maximus (florished +14 to + 37), Seneca (-4 to +65), Pliny the Elder (23-79), Persius (34 to 62), Lucan (39-65), Dio Chrysostom (40-120), Statius (40 to 96), Plutarch (45-125), Silius Italicus (25 to 100), Martial (40 to 104), Flaccus (45 to 90), Petronius (+ 14 + 66) Quintilian (35 to 96), Juvenal (50 to 130), Apuleius (125-170), Cassius Dio (155-255), Pausanias (115-180), Justus of Tiberias (50 to ?); and even the manuscripts from the Dead Sea (- 365 to + 68).

But it is especially the silence of Philo of Alexandria about Jesus which is disturbing. Philo, who was 25 or 30 years old when Jesus could be born, and died a few years after the date on which the latter had to be crucified, knows nothing and never says something, of Jesus Christ.

However this was a scholar who specially dealt with religion and philosophy. He would certainly not have neglected to mention Jesus, who was of his country and his people, if he had accomplished such a great "revolution" in the history of the human mind.

A singular circumstance makes even more meaningful the silence of Philo. It is that all his teaching can be said Christian; at this point that some writers and philosophers have not hesitated to call him a "True Father of the Church" (quoth especially Friedrich Engels ...). Philo tried to unite Judaism and Hellenism. He developed a Platonic doctrine of the "Word" or "Logos" which has a great affinity with that of the Gospel known as of John.

Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus, wrote fifty volumes where he quotes all the events, all the great figures of his time and his country. Philo lived at the time when the existence of Christ is placed; he performs with regard to Judaism the same change, the same Hellenization, the same Platonization, as the Gospels. He speaks of the "Logos" or "Word" just like the Fourth Gospel (that of John); and yet he does not name Christ once!

When it is a character like Jesus, the silence of history is inexplicable, incredible, disconcerting. Such silence is a serious presumption against the real historical existence of Jesus known as Christ.

Or it is a man who really existed but lived a life very different but then now really very different, and infinitely more humble and modest, as that the Gospels depict for us. So humble and modest that it can be said in a way that he has nothing to do with the hero that these historical novels or that lawyer pleas made with him.

As for the Bible, not only it cannot provide us the evidence that Christ was a real character ; but it provides us on the contrary many elements going in the opposite direction (too many "facts" matching completely literally the Old Testament – cf. the midrashim - contradictions, mistakes, impossibilities, in the New One, etc.).

THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF JUDAISM IN THE FIRST CENTURY OF OUR ERA.

THE SAMARITANS.

People of the area of Samaria, north of modern Israel.

The problem when we talk about Samaritans is that we very quickly come up against very different and even contradictory notions or images.

The first series is what we could call the Samaritans of the Four Gospels, a series which has its coherence, but coherence perhaps due to the mere fact that they are characters of the New Testament.

The second series are the Samaritans as they appear in the testimonies provided by this micro-religious community (800 people) itself: the last true Hebrews or Israelites descended from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The third way of seeing things is that provided by present-day Judaism, which speaks of them under the name of Shomronim or Cutheans in the Talmud, they are half-breeds of Hebrews and non-Jewish foreigners who settled in Samaria after the fall of the northern kingdom called for all complicate " Israel " and who mixed everything from the religious point of view (paganism Moses, etc.).

Let us now try to see things from above in order to draw a portrait that can explain the appearance of these three different series of testimonies, each with its own problems, and we are thinking here of the Samaritans or she Samaritans besides who appear in the Christian New Testament....

The worship of Anat Yaho, become later Yhw the single, borrowed from the pagans in the country of Midian, was more firmly established in the South, in Judaea, whose temporal and spiritual capital was Jerusalem, that in the regions of the North, Samaria and Galilee. Whereas the nebiim and other visionaries of Judaea exalted the greatness of Yhwh continuously; Samaria, itself, had kept a at the same time single (El) and multiple (Elohim), God, the worship of Astarte, and agrarian deities, even some others; equated with foreign divinities by the Judeans repatriates coming back from their Exile in Babylon in - 538. (Benoth, Nergal and Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Adrammelech and Anammelech, according to 2 kings 17, 30-34.) These Samaritans were the descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh remained on the spot after the deportation of the other Hebrews in Babylon. Their temple, of which that of Jerusalem was the great rival, was located on the Mount Gerizim.

The Judeans come back from Babylon having become very different from those who had left in exile fifty years earlier, their return therefore could not lead to a reunification of the from now on two separate peoples.

Whereas the Jews of Judea, Sadducees and Pharisees, will make their faith in a single God or Demiurge the token of the salvation that he will bring to their people; the Jewish Samaritans, often less hostile to the Hellenization of their country, will attach more significance to the woman, to the individual, and to knowledge (Simon of Samaria and more precisely of Gitta, died in Rome circa 65).

THE OFFICIAL RELIGION (THE STATE RELIGION).

The Sadducees (from the Hebrew Tseduqim. From Zadok last "Aryan" priest of Jerusalem). 2nd century before our era - 1st century after.

The fullest of its privileges group composed by priestly families exerting their functions in the Temple of Jerusalem and descending from the last Hittite pagan priests of Jerusalem (Zadok). The gifts offered to the Temple and the sacrifices of animals whose blood likes to YHWH (the legend on the motives of the murder of Abel by Cain was invented only to justify this practice) had enriched them considerably. This very conservative group was, however, that which was opened the most to the Hellenistic influences.

There does not exist strictly speaking a Sadducean theology apart from a cosmogony fixed by the Genesis.

In their eyes, the regular celebration of the worship in the sanctuary chosen by God, was enough. It was therefore essential that the persons in charge of the Temple and of its management remain in close relationships with the political authorities, so that those respect and protect the pertaining to worship life, including the pilgrimages. The other aspects of the Law were understood especially as

ritual rules intended to preserve the purity of the people for worship. The moral and social interpretation of the commands seemed to them hardly justified. Moreover, the Sadducees accepted only partially the authority of the writings of the prophets, and regarded only the Pentateuch as true Holy Scripture.

For the Sadducees, whose temporal power was exerted thanks to the functioning of the Temple and the sacrifices which were achieved there, the worship was therefore as a government. Let us say that they were civil servant priests, a little as in the Roman Vatican currently.

Literalistic and conservative Jewish theologians, the Sadducees do not accept the oral tradition and the freer or more intellectual interpretation of the Pharisees. They believe neither in the immortality of the soul nor in the resurrection of the dead. The soul survives the death of the body in no way and disappears with it. The notion of individual salvation therefore does not exist. Or more exactly it merges with the salvation of the chosen people that God admits for the Jews as a nation.

But the rules of behavior fixed by the Deuteronomy are often circumvented by the priests of the temple of Jerusalem, as by those who offer sacrifices to YHWH. Many prophets therefore remind of the fact that such failures cause the anger of God. The nature very largely no longer sacred of the Sadducean priests is implied by the charge of Epicureanism that in their connection the Pharisees utter, as by the remarks ascribed to the new Joshua (Jesus).

The role admitted for the woman seems to be more important among the Sadducees than among the Pharisees, the Essene-Baptists, or the proto-Christians.

The Sadduceism does not neglect the care it is licit to have for her pleasure and her freedoms.

Against this Sadducean Epicureanism will rise up the ascetic movements, kinds of fundamentalism for which the only sacrifice pleasant for God is the immolation of the desires in the name of the faith and of religious enthusiasm. This current will be continued in the Essenism and the Baptist doctrines.

The movements of religious piety which revive against the Sadducees a faith in YHWH of which they would have been unworthy (we know very few things about them in reality) will make the Palestine of this time a chosen ground for the religiosity in search of a Messiah having to restore Israel in his obedience to Yhwh.

THE OTHER CURRENTS. GNOSIS AND DUALISM.

The word "gnosis" ("gnosis" in Greek) means "knowledge." But it is not a question here of a simple knowledge. In a rather general way, those who are called "Gnostic" formed groups or Schools which thought they held a revealed knowledge, at the same time saving and secret. Intellectuals having more or less studied philosophy, the Gnostics sought this "knowledge" with obvious mystical or religious concerns. The Gnosticism is a philosophical –religious doctrine whose members sought the most complete knowledge possible of God. For the gnosis the salvation lies initially in this knowledge and then only in a certain morality.

The Gnostics have a place separate in the history of the thought. Very free with the sacred texts, they were neither philosophers nor priests. They did not have less, at their time, a large influence, considering the fierce combat that the future official Christianity will fight against them later, as of the 2nd century.

The Gnosticism is attached to the general movement of syncretism which wanted to melt together the various philosophical or religious systems of paganism. Doctrines of "release" through knowledge, therefore reserved for the only comrunos (initiated), the Gnosticism is connected with the secret "mysteries" of the Greeks or of the Eastern ones. The spiritual world emanates from a primary principle (God) through abstract beings, the aeons, Greek word which means time, eternity or power. As for the matter, as in the Greek philosophers, it remains unintelligible, unexplainable: it is a scandal for the thought. It comes either from a mistake, or from a fall of the last spiritual eon. It is therefore mainly bad, as then the Manicheans will claim it besides. But a redemption, with return to the primary principle, can restore the lost harmony.

The distant origins of Gnosticism are very badly known. It is a phenomenon former to the beginnings of Christianity and which still causes many interrogations. In the 19th century, it was thought that these orientations had their source, either in Greek philosophy, or in the religion of old Iran. Today, although admitting the possible importance of the Greek or Eastern sources, one is more circumspect and more moderate.

It seems that we may speak at the beginning of an Iranian-Babylonian gnosis, but there was also very early an Egyptian , or Alexandrian, gnosis.

The Egyptian group offers more varied and more ambitious doctrines; it finds in Alexandria a favorable background ,with philosophical culture major than in Syria, and a freedom of teaching much larger. Is attached indeed to this gnosis all the hermetic literature, which, to be generally later in Egypt it is believed , should not have had less, in this country, very distant origins.

When the sources of certain speculations are sought, for example the character of the primordial Man, or of the “monogenes” Son, of the Only Son, we notice some analogies with the other systems. There is the trace, in other circles, some philosophical circles for example, particularly in Alexandria, and well before Christianity, of somewhat similar speculations; who could come from Iran or from certain philosophical movements, and of which the goal is to answer the fundamental questions that Theodotus expressed quite before us.

Who are we? What we have become??

Where we have been cast out ??

Where are we hastening to? Of what we have been redeemed??

What are the generation and regeneration??

The answer to these questions is precisely the contents of the gnosis.

The Jewish Gnostic current will defend the idea that there exist two gods, A bad God creator of the missed world which is ours (the demiurge), and a good God, higher, unknowable and inaccessible.

The Gnostic Jews were characterized by their reinterpretation of the Genesis, particularly of the chapters I to IV (the myth of the creation and of the fall). There exist several versions of their cosmogonic concept of emanation, variants in which we find many common elements.

The original uncertainty between El, the shape of God in the singular, and Elohim the form in the plural, could indeed only cause many and many speculations blaming the monolatry of the Jewish orthodoxy, whether it is Sadducean or Pharisaical.

This Jewish Gnosticism is distinguished from the Greek philosophy, and by its starting point, which is not the pure reason, and by its form, which is a symbolic mythology. It also differs from Eastern wisdom...

The creation according to the Sumerian -Babylonian myth, even re-examined and corrected by the Jewish intellectuals in exile at Babylon, does not remain less completely illogical and the demiurge who took the initiative of it is basically in this fable only an odd and cruel being (lead us not into temptation isn't? Still indefatigably repeats the Christian prayer called “Our Father”).

There is nothing to expect from first, and neither the sin, nor its discharge, have a sense, since, cause of the evil, his justice is only a cynical claim.

The dualism, object of horror for every State religion , fatally monolatrous, will develop among Hebrews as a dispute of the social monolithism, starting from two basic reflections.

God is not single since he is, as Elohim, several divinities (Elohim is indeed a plural).

Part of these deities of angel type was led to rise against his authority, and he precipitated them, like Adam, in the state of forfeiture which is the earthly condition.

This current of thought, dualistic in fact, therefore will maintain, as we saw it, that there exist two gods. One of bad nature, the demiurge, created a bad and completely missed world. It is the creating god of the Bible or the deposed archangel called Lucifer, Satan, etc.

The other, of a perfect kindness, is a higher god, foreign to the world, unknowable and inaccessible, located out of every reach and of every knowledge. It is in no case the God mentioned in the Bible as having created this world.

This idea of good God, located out of the world, and of bad God, creator and Master of the universe, encourages, of course, to design a multiplicity of intermediaries. The benevolent angels and the savior Messiahs; kind Seth, Cain, the new Adam, the snake Nahash, Sophia the Wisdom (Greek version of the Jewish Achamoth or chokhmah, i.e., of the spirit, the word ruhah being feminine in Hebrew), or Prunikos, Jesus, Melchizedek, or the God-man of Simon Magus (whereas the true Jews, themselves, will be still hostile to this idea).

It can happen indeed that an emanation of this God of goodness is detached from him, and goes down on Earth in order to bring to men the comforting light of a hereafter they can reach by giving up the bad and cruel world. A Messiah incarnates is then embodied in a human appearance, then, dying to his earthly envelope, ascends back in order to sit at the right-hand side of God. This resembles much obviously, the future ideas of certain Christians on the subject.

THE HEDONIST Gnostics.

thus because they do not reject systematically the pleasures and regard sexuality as natural, what makes them, of course, considered as immoral in the eyes of those who consider on the contrary that the "flesh" is the source of every sin. Contrary to the Gnostic Christians, the Hedonist Gnostics do not preach martyrdom. The philosopher Simon Magus, a contemporary of Jesus, is considered as having been the initiator, but it is undoubtedly inaccurate.

SIMON OF SAMARIA OR MAGUS AND THE SIMONIANS.

A Samaritan philosopher of the first years of our era died in Rome circa 65.

A series of fragments of the 2nd century quoted in the *Philosophumena* by Hippolytus and grouped together under the name of "Apophysis Megale" or "Great Revelation" is attributed to him, but some historians believe that Hippolytus describes here rather a later and more developed version of Simonism. According to them, the original doctrines were simpler, closer to the image given by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.

Let us confine ourselves for the moment to the fragments that Hippolytus (*Philosophumena*) has preserved for us.

His system did not correspond to a religion in a strict sense of the term and was even passably irreligious. The fragments of its work which were preserved suggest that he identifies God with an uncreated flow of life and that becomes similar to God the one who becomes aware of such a presence in him.

This great Samaritan philosopher did not make a literal reading of the Genesis, but interpreted it as a description of the conception of the child in the womb of the mother.

His teaching, without being atheistic, fell more within philosophy than within religion, a kind of Nietzscheism where the will to live would have supplanted the will for power. In Simon the magician, the Faith is indeed only a phenomenon of possession, a feeling of power that we can translate by the Polynesian word "mana" (See his concept of Megale Dynamis, or Great Power, in Greek).

His cosmology, such as it is released from the quoted extracts, to disparage them, by the early Christians, reveals a thinker concerned with rationality; but also concerned to find for Mankind a liberating path based on his design of the descent of the soul/mind in the matter. A gravity of the soul/mind that he equates with love.

When we read the Bible and especially the Genesis, we learn in it that Yahve, Jehovah or Elohim, in short that the God-or-Demon of the Jews, is the creator of this world.

However this God-or-Demon to what does he spend his time? To harass Man and mankind. He creates Adam then Eve, places them in the Garden of Eden, but to prohibit at once to them the main thing: the knowledge of Good and Evil. After what, once the first human couple driven out of this Paradise, he does not cease tracking their descendants, multiplying the prohibitions for them, threatening mankind with his wrath, until the day when, through the Flood, he will destroy it. But that is not enough for him and he will again spread fire, blood and calamities, on the second mankind descending from Noah. It is a "vigilante" god-or-demon, i.e., a god who punishes any violation of the laws, some of which are incomprehensible or scandalous, that he himself has enacted, sometimes punishing them himself, a cosmic tyrant whose intransigent authoritarianism indisposes the angels themselves, and who intervenes on Earth only to thwart human evolution. In reasoning in this way, Simon neither doubts nor questions the reasons for this aggressive behavior; he simply notes that this image of a vengeful God-or-demon, hammering on the human race, is incompatible with that of a good God, a friend of man, creator of the life. He therefore concludes from that - since this world and this Mankind, whose history is inaugurated in crime and blood, are the obvious work of the god-or-demon of the Jews -; that the latter is not the true God of Mankind, but a false god, or a demiurge, a sadistic and wicked demiurge; that the Bible describes well besides as a vindictive, bad-tempered, easily offended and malicious, being.

Simon of Samaria was in his time a prophet as famous as Jesus. He drew crowds he was listened to and he was followed.

We have of his end two versions, quite as false and untrue one than the other.

In one of these versions St. Peter, jealous to see him succeeding in flying, assassinates him by making him crash on the ground through his prayers.

In the second one, challenged to rise from the dead like Jesus at the end of three days, he makes himself buried alive at the foot of a tree, but does not come out from it. We can doubt the veracity of this heinous Christian propaganda (the prayer of St. Peter to make this great competing philosopher die can be equated only with difficulty to love); because many people continued to ponder or follow his teaching (the Simonians).

ADAMITES OR ADAMIANS.

As we saw it, there always existed in the Judaism a Gnostic current refusing to recognize, in the creation of this world of sound and fury, the work of a good and judicious God. A world so bad that it could only cause the revolt of the snake of the Genesis, which will come then helping Adam and Eve, but will also undergo the anger of the divine tyrant.

There existed therefore in the Palestine of this time a current of thought for which the savior was to be a reincarnation of Adam returning voluntarily on Earth in order to save the souls of his descendants, and to lead them towards the light.

This idea will be recovered by the Pauline Christian current, or at the very least by its disciple Marcion: they consider indeed both Jesus as a second Adam, bringing salvation by his exemplary atonement.

SETHIANS OR ONOLATERS.

For the Sethians the Messiah son of Man was to be a reincarnation, not of Adam, but of the son of Adam and Eve, named Seth, voluntarily gone down again on Earth in order to save the souls and to lead them towards the light. Their main figure was an ass-headed god, the donkey symbol of wisdom. From where the famous Alexamenos graffito (it represents a man in prayer in front of an ass headed crucified).

This graffito discovered in the imperial palace of Rome and dating from the 2nd century was therefore not particularly insulting. The cult of the ass or onolatry was indeed practiced at that time and even before Christianity. In Ancient Egypt, the animal was represented under the features of the god Seth and ass is called "Yahu" in Egyptian... Hence the pun with Seth son of Adam...

Tacitus attributes to the Jews a cult of the ass and gives the reason for it according to him (Histories Book V chapter 3). From the Jews this reproach, of course, passed on the heads of Christians since the first Christians were Jews...

CAINITES OR NICOLAITES ACCORDING TO TERTULLIAN.

They are known to us only through Christian sources, which obviously attribute to them as a sacred text an apocryphal gospel of Judas, dating from the second century, and which is unquestionably Gnostic.

They attributed an important role to a Celestial Mother, creator of the demiurge himself.

For the Cainites, the Redeemer Son of Man was to be a reincarnation of the son of Adam and Eve named Cain, which made them appear depraved.

If we consider them Nicolaite then we have more information about them, but are they the same men?

The imposing and fascinating sum not by Thomas Aquinas but by Raoul Vaneigem our favorite Belgian author (Resistance, etc.) says little more.

THE NAASSENES also called Ophites or Perates).

More extreme still, and for whom the expected savior was to be therefore, neither Adam nor one of the sons of the first man (Seth or Cain), but straightforwardly the snake of the Genesis (Hebrew nahash) are the Naassenians Ophites or Perates. Hippolytus preserved us a fragment of their doctrines, based on the concept of incarnation and of triad (water-fire-earth).

This sect, probably of Samaritan origin (for them indeed the Jews are a people which was chosen not by the true good god, but by the bad one, called by them Ialdabaoth Yaldabaoth Jaldabaoth); and which remained under the name of Ophites until the 4th century; attribute to the snake, avatar of the Mother Goddess-or-Demoness, a function of creation and redemption.

The creation of a bad world revolted the snake of the Genesis. By coming in the assistance of Adam and Eve, he also underwent the anger of the God-or-Demon responsible for all this waste. The Naassenes therefore refuse to regard as good the God-or-Demon who drove out Eve and Adam from the Garden of Eden because the snake revealed to them the knowledge OF GOOD AND EVIL. These Gnostics consequently regard on the contrary the snake as the true redeemer of Mankind; since he wanted, by an initiative of really Promethean type, to reveal to men the link between the knowledge (the gnosis) and the blossoming, particularly sexual, which form, in their unity, the paradisiacal condition.

The Ophites or Naassenes went as far as paying a true worship to the snake. One of their branches, Christianized, will identify the crucified snake with Jesus Christ, from where the representation, sometimes, of a crucified snake, in their documents. For the record, among the Sethians it was an ass, an ass-headed man.

For them, the god-or-demon of the Jews, Ialdabaoth (Son of chaos ??) is a being limited as much as selfish, father of Ophiomorphos (the serpent-shaped demon of all that is basest in matter). He orders six other evil angels... The matter gets in touch with the light through Achamoth or Chokhmah, i.-e. the spirit, the word Ruah being feminine in Hebrew, Achamoth, mother of Ialdabaoth therefore. When Achamoth went down into the chaos, the snake raised her, through disobedience, up to freedom and science. The theory of eons becomes a little more complicated among them, because they form then, with the Eternal father, a holy quaternity or holy tetrad ($1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 1$).

The Naassenes or Perates or Ophites become Christian, seem to have had kinship with the writers of the Gospel according to John.

CHRISTIANITY BEFORE JESUS.

From what right Christian churches invoke a Christ or Messiah named Jesus, also Son of God and Son of Man who perhaps never existed; doctrines he has not taught, an omnipotence that he never granted and a divine filiation that he has not himself considered as possible, or that he has not claimed? These questions will be important for us as long as churches will aim to intervene in the name of a superhuman authority in matters of human life. Divorce, contraception, abortion, death penalty, euthanasia, nuclear war, ecology, renewable energy, global warming ...

THE ESSENES.

Greek Name of the "Men of the Community" or "sons" of Zadok, Baptist and Messianist. A certain number of priests (perhaps Hassideans) seceded as of the 2nd century before our era, in circumstances which are badly known for us, but undoubtedly in reaction to the evolution of the Maccabean high priest of the time: Jonathan.

Scandalized by the abuses they noted in the life of the Temple, by the compromises of the high clergy with the most various political authorities, by the concessions made to the spirit of the times, as regards liturgical calendar particularly; these monks had withdrawn in the desert of Judea, not far from the Dead Sea, and led here an ascetic life; of which the discoveries of Qumran give us an idea much more precise than that we knew up to that point. Organized in a true monastic order with a rigorous discipline, obsessed by the need for preserving their ritual purity, the Essenes refused to join the worship of the Temple become illegitimate in their eyes. They devoted all their efforts to the meditation of the Scriptures, in which they included the writings of the prophets. Even if an Essenian movement seems to have existed in the main cities of Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem; such a movement was basically sectarian and was isolated from the mass of the Jewish population that its eschatological and Messianic speculations overtook or that its austerity discouraged. However, its abundant literary production guaranteed to it an influence extended as far as in the Diaspora. The Essenes had probably a little everywhere various communities. There were some of them in Judea, in Samaria, in Galilee, in Syria (Damascus was perhaps one of their hotspots), in Egypt (Philo described them there under the name of Therapeutae) and perhaps also in the whole Diaspora.

Certain Samaritan beliefs influenced perhaps the Essenian doctrines.

In any case the discovery of the Essenian manuscripts in Qumran known as "Dead Sea Scrolls" in 1947, gives us of it an enough good idea. These manuscripts had crossed two thousand years of History in earthenware jars, themselves hidden in caves. In spite of the time which had devoured the contours of the scrolls, specialists succeeded in reconstituting texts and fragments of text.

To note: these manuscripts which go back roughly speaking from - 200 to + 63 of our era, and which were discovered four or five km away of the supposed place of the baptism of Jesus, never mention him.

The Essenes attached great significance to the comments and interpretations of the biblical text from where probably the spreading in their communities of many midrashim, i.e., in Hebrew, some kinds of typical profile of the Messiah to come.

We find for example in the Servant Songs (which appear in the Book of Isaiah and inspired the qumranian hymns) the following sentence: "The servant was pierced for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities....yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah, 53,5-12). For the Essenes their Teacher of Righteousness will be therefore the Servant in question, persecuted by the impious priest, brutalized, executed, betrayed by his. Even if it is not completely thus that the things actually occurred.

The personal works due to the Essenes or at the very least very read in their community can be classified in two different categories.

In the first category, we find texts expressing a very orthodox thought, requiring the compliance with the rules going to the least detail. The scroll of the temple states the sacrifices (13, 9), the requirements, and claims from the monks a very rigorous respect of the law. This same rule involves, in the event of non-observance, very strict punishments, ranging from the prohibition of speaking during a certain period of time, to the banishment during several years.

In the second category, there are, on the other hand, manuscripts supporting a more astonishing thought, focusing on the essential points of the religion. They are original compositions. We find there the principal ideas founding Christianity: the preached circumcision is for example that of the heart and not of the body (Community rule 5.5, Commentary on Habakkuk 11.13), what will be a leitmotif of Saint Paul. These manuscripts also conceal other so typical sentences of the Christianity that it seems that they are drafts of epistles or of Gospels.

The scroll 4Q521 mentions for example the resurrection.

Others mention the crucifixion, the "poor in spirit." The Essenes expect the coming of a Messiah, the Redemption and the happening of the "Kingdom." The end of time is close when will come a perfect world. They call themselves "sons of light" and believe in the "Holy Spirit." The Gospels therefore borrowed much from the writings of the Essenes: "He will honor the pious upon the throne of His eternal kingdom, release the captives, open the eyes of the blind ... He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall raise the dead, He shall bring good news to the poor." Such are some of the topics found in their texts.

In the same way for the Beatitudes the scroll 4Q525, written around - 150 (an example among others) presents striking resemblances with the Gospel of Matthew 5,3-12 which reports the history of Jesus, however, theoretically born much later!!

Let us also quote the scroll 4Qbeat:

Blessed is the man who has attained Wisdom -and walks in the Law of the Most High- Blessed is the man who tells truth with a pure heart -and does not slander with his tongue....Blessed are those who seek her [wisdom] with pure hands-and do not pursue her with a treacherous heart..."

Such examples show that the later message that we will find in the Gospels is the result of an elaborate continuous midrashic reflection in Essenian circles or at least in a circle made receptive to their preferred topics.

In the texts of Qumran, indeed the Messiah according to Essenes must be "He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent... And the Lord will accomplish glorious things which have never been for He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor." (4Q521 fragment 2: Messianic Apocalypse).

The "Good News," it is what is called Gospel in Greek language. As for the new "covenant" about which certain texts speak otherwise, it is nothing else only the concept of New Testament, which will also be that of the Christian Marcion later. And the common points do not stop with these simple philosophical resemblances.

The Christians think that Jesus must return at the time of the Apocalypse and in the Gospel according to John the intervention of Christ is again announced: he will be the last Pastor of Mankind. However such a character is also mentioned by the Essenes in the manuscript 4Q534-536.

Four manuscripts, the Damascus Document, Habakkuk's Peshier, the Peshier of the Psalms, and Micah's Peshier,

evoke a central character, but that it is difficult to identify given the state of the texts and who is referred to as Moreh ha-tsedeq. This master seems to have been a historical figure who really lived and came to a tragic end at a date that is there also difficult to determine, especially if there are

several masters of justice and not only one. Certain texts discovered in Qumran therefore contain a "Christology" before the word is invented referring to the Teacher or Righteousness, this Christ of the Essenes crucified by the impious priest, and whose return is to coincide with the end of time. As the Essenes consider, moreover, that the soul is immortal, for the author of these texts, there will be therefore also resurrection of all the righteous persons, who will then be rewarded for their virtue, in the New Jerusalem.

The Hymns in the glory of the Essenic teacher of Righteousness do not present his sufferings explicitly as what will redeem the sin of the other men, but it is incontestably a fundamental doctrine in the sect. Their Christ to them was executed circa - ? before our era, but the Essenes expect his return, "and times are closed."

The Essenes also believe in the concept before the word is invented of Antichrist or Anti-Christ. Their doctrines seem - and that in absolute opposition with the Jewish orthodoxy of Judea - marked by a certain dualism, let us say a mitigated dualism, that which we guess in the Gospels and the Epistles from James and John. The Essenes consequently will postulate the existence of a good God, mandator of a savior bearing the Good News (Gospel) and of an evil God, demiurge, creator of the universe.

Material organization.

The Teacher of Righteousness was a great founder of Churches. "And you will set the foundation [of my qahal, Hebrew word for Greek ekklesia therefore for church] on a rock" says the Hymn 14 of Qumran (1QH14). Expression that will take over the team of Christians of the second generation having worked out the Gospel ascribed to Matthew (16.18) through a play on words with the baldness of Simon-Peter - his head was bald like a stone -; wrongfully ascribed, afterwards, to Jesus himself (you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Qahal = Church).

The Essenes assemblies gather the faithful ones under the authority of an overseer, assisted by the old ones, presbuteroi, or presbyters =priests therefore, in Greek language.

As among the Pharisees, the first places among them are indeed reserved for the elderly people. One of them is "Supervisor." He has to behave like a shepherd. It is besides the title which the Judeo-Christian text ascribed to Hermas uses, the "Shepherd," written around 150. The supervisor or Shepherd is also designated by the words of Greek origin: archon or episcopus (bishop). "Wherever there be ten men who have formally enrolled in the community, we also read in the Manual of discipline or Rule of the community, of the Essenes, one who is a priest is not to depart from them. When they sit in his presence, they are to take their places according to their respective ranks."

The Essenes also attached great significance to the sacred banquet, during which bread and water (or wine) were offered in division, or as a token of commensality, to the members of the assembly. A meal in honor of the Teacher of Righteousness of whom they expected the return. The Christian symbolic system will make it the Last Supper.

It could not be a question, for the Essenes, to revoke the rituals of circumcision and of Sabbath, of the Jewish religiosity, but they rejected nevertheless the traditional sacrifices offered to the temple of Jerusalem by the established priestly caste; they thought that the only sacrifice pleasing to God was that the individual agrees, following the example of their Master crucified around - ?.

The baptism is not specifically Christian. Jewish orthodoxy always had recourse to baptism. The converts were circumcised then were immersed in a bath which purified them.

But among the Essenes the baptism was already a true rite of passage, a conversion to another life, turned towards the renouncement. Archeologists discovered in Qumran a large number of swimming pools for the neophytes choosing to rejoin the community.

Johanaan known as John the Baptist, had to be one as of them (at least in the beginning).

The Essenes, on the other hand, excommunicated the persons guilty of serious errors according to them (blasphemes, heresy), the thing is mentioned quite plainly in the Manual of Discipline or Rule of the community, i.e., concretely drove them out of their community.

For the Essenes, the bad likings, the predisposition to sin, is in each man, it is the "flesh." They grant to the pleasure of the senses only the rudimentary exercise of the nutritive and reproductive function.

With the Essenism (and the Baptist doctrines which will follow), the fear of the woman and of the physical love will reach this height which is often found in the fundamentalist movements. The Essenic current makes abstinence and continence, or prohibition of any sexual intercourse, the condition through which the impure man reaches holiness. Society without money nor loves, the Essenes require an absolute chastity, and tolerate the coupling only with an aim of procreating, to perpetuate the group. Christianity will remember it.

Come in the area of the Dead Sea (in Qumran) in the 2nd century before our era, as we saw it; the Essenes were dislodged from it by the Romans between 66 and 70 of our era, during the crushing of the revolt of Judeans against the Roman Empire.

Some of them, called in Hebrew out of mockery the ebyonim or ebionites ("the beggars" John Toland writes excellently in his Nazarenus of 1710) were in favor of a voluntary poverty, just like the Nazarenes (whose Johanaan known as John the Baptist was one of the most outstanding figures, but the apostles James and Simon-Peter were also members of them).

This radical current of the Essenism (we find indeed in the Dead Sea Scrolls very clear allusions to the ebyonim); is therefore the source, through the Baptist, one of their dissidents, of the Christian movements also called and just like them, later, Ebionites or Nazarenes.

Preaching asceticism, chastity and voluntary poverty, the Essenes formed a dissidence of Judaism, hostile to the Pharisees, stigmatized by them for their laxism, and to the Sadducees, to whom they reproached their wealth.

The idea to organize oneself in a community made of faithful giving up the possession of the tangible properties goes back to the Essenes who were the first inspirers of it.

The Essenism of the first half of the 1st century was undoubtedly divided into several branches. There were the pacifists, but also the members, or at the very least the sympathizers, of the Zealot guerilla, fighting against the Romans and the Jews collaborating with them (Essenes scrolls were found in Masada).

The Essenes lived as a community, they observed chastity, they did not have wives. They practiced the blessing of bread and wine (Manual of discipline or Rule of the community); they were baptized; they prohibited any animal food except fish.

All that resembles extremely the Christian practices of Antiquity.

There is therefore already in this end of the first century before our era a forking towards the almost - Christianity. Between the end of the Essenism and the beginning of Christianity, there is such a disconcerting coincidence that certain people think that some Essenes, since they ceased being officially called "Essenes, were regarded as "Christians."

Some deny or minimize the resemblance and coincidences completely, and want to see in them only ultra-orthodox Jews, having relationship with the early Christians.

Others like the great Irish bard John Toland want to see in these Essenes the early Christians, and to make purely and solely the Jesus of the Gospels an ultimate echo of the "teacher of Righteousness" of this sect, executed around...B.C. in any event.

Others finally think that this identification with the Essenian "Teacher of Righteousness" would be better appropriate to the first pope of the Judeo-Christian Church: James, the brother of Jesus.

The barbarian druids of the West that we are, have in no way to enter these Byzantine bickering. It is up to each one to form an opinion for himself in this quest for the Grail.

What is certain, it is that many aspects of Essenism strike particularly by their resemblance with Christianity, and that you cannot claim decently that it is due to the simple chance. There was at least influence of the Essenism on the first founders of the Christianity and particularly on Johanaan, known as John the Baptist.

Most plausible indeed is that this John was a dissident of Essenism, and that it is therefore the Essenism which would explain the passage from Judaism to Christianity.

THE EBIONITES.

We find in the Dead Sea Scrolls allusions to the ebbionim or the poor, in Hebrew. "Beggars" John Toland says excellently in his Nazarenus of 1710. It is perhaps a particular sect of Essenism, or halfway between the Essenes and the proto-Christians, practicing the voluntary poverty.

It seems indeed, as we saw it, that there existed within the Essenism a radical current attached to this kind of life.

The great Gaelic bard makes the Ebionites or Nazarenes some Judeo-Christians (some Christians from the Jews John Toland writes textually) but considering the plan adopted for our work we will speak again of all this in our opusculé about or more exactly against, Christianity).

THE NAZORENES.

To avoid mixing up with the city of Nazareth which did not exist as such in the time of Jesus, we will not repeat here the word Nazarenes used by Toland in his edition of 1710, but we will use instead that of Nazorenes which seems to us more judicious.

In reality, contrary to what John Toland affirms, nazir (or Nazirite or Nazarite) simply means "consecrated" or "separated." This is the name given to the Jews who took a vow of asceticism, according to Numbers (6.1 to 21). The most representative figure of the Nazirship in the Bible is Samson. At the beginning of our era, among Jews, those requirements, although seeming (numerically) little followed are still in force and those who follow them, do it with zeal.

In all pious families (and many were so), one of the children had to be a nazir. Was nazir usually the first-born child (girl or boy). He was so for a longer or shorter period, to tell the truth as he had not revoked this vow. If the elder refused or could not, the following child took over and so on. Because this vow involved many obligations: to be white dressed, to absorb no wine nor meat, to wear no leather, to have hair or nails never cut, not to fornicate, not to commit violence through acts nor in words, etc. This particularly binding requirement for young or even for mature people (especially over time); seems, over the centuries, to have gone backwards, to a mere custom, more or less neglected over time (to take one example, a little like religious processions today). John the Baptist was undoubtedly one of them.

The Hebrew word nazir produces "naziraios" in Greek then "Nazorene" then "Nazarene." The sect is evidenced by a writing of Pliny the Elder as of the years - 50 (Book V, Natural History). It was perhaps also a movement close to the Essenes.

Around - 100 before our era, the Nazorenes work on the Hebrew Bible and get to extract a proto-Christian midrash i.e., a profile of the savior or messiah who is to come and save Israel (even Mankind?) Their production of texts is abundant and spread everywhere. They are the primitive proto-Christians (out of Christianity). These wordings will be used in the writing of the Gospels. The original Christianity will sometimes be designated by the (Sadducees) Orthodox Jews or the Pharisees, as the heresy of the Nazorenes. When the word Nazorean, applied to the first Christians (John 19,19) will cease to be understood in the fourth century, it will be written Nazarene, and sensed as meaning "from a town called Nazareth," what changes everything.

The Greek form Nazoraios is explicitly applied to Christians in the person of the first of them in some texts. Noticeably in John 18,7; 19,19: Jesus the Nazorene, King of the Jews. Nazorene is also used by Peter himself about Jesus in Acts of the Apostles (2, 22; 3, 6; 4,10). It also appears in Matthew (2, 23; 26, 71); Luke (18, 37) as well as in Acts 6,14; 26, 9; 24, 5. In the plural this time: the sect of the Nazorenes.

St. Paul in Acts 24, 5, is indeed considered as one of the leaders of this movement by the Jewish high priest of Jerusalem-Caesarea, Ananias.

This episode is one of those most overshadowed by later Christian generations, starting from the very term nazOraios (NazOrene) who was quickly distorted in NazArene.

One of their Judeo-Christian branches (Christians from the Jews writes John Toland in the 1710 version of his Nazarene) lasted until the fourth century of our era under the name of Elcesaites, while continuing to claim to be the followers of James and Peter.

THE MOVEMENT OF JOHANAAN KNOWN AS JOHN THE BAPTIST.

A major figure of the Nazorene movement is the enigmatic John the Baptist, a historically attested character, in non-Christian literature (a passage of the Antiquities of Jews by the historian Flavius Josephus, work completed around 93-94 of our era) but also in several passages of the New Testament.

If he enjoyed the admiration of the "common people" (he was considered a reincarnation of Elijah), he was also feared by the spiritual and political authorities. In addition to the canonical Gospels, the Jewish literature (Josephus) confirms the danger that the "Baptist" represented for the priestly caste that ruled over the temple at the time.

The origins of the Baptist are disputed. The Gospels present him as a son of the priest Zachariah officiating in the Temple (therefore member of the Sadducean class) and of Elizabeth, aunt of Mary, mother of Jesus. Thus, according to Christians, Jesus and the Baptist would be parents, "cousins" in some way. If the Baptist is of aristocratic ancestry through his father Zachariah (priesthood attested in a text mentioning him as a member of the clergy of the Temple), it is likely then that he was at odds with his social and religious original environment.

Johanaan was born a few years before our era and withdrew in the desert around the year 25 to answer atop-down call and to lead in it an ascetic life.

In circumstances that we don't know, he got an extraordinary reputation and drew in the Judean Desert large crowds, to which he began to announce the impending visit of God to Israel. John called his hearers to an immediate repentance and offered them as a token of the forgiveness that God guaranteed them in return, a purifying bath in the Jordan. This "baptism" was to be followed by a reformation of the behavior of those who had received it.

The baptism does not mean for Johanaan the remission of sins, but an act of faith, a commitment to a life of penance, responsible for preparing the reign of God.

As we have seen it, Johanaan has certainly been a member of the Ebionite tendency of "Community of the Pure" i.-e. the Essenes, and joined their design of a clergy "dissident" of the Temple, illegitimate in their eyes. John has largely used their baptismal practices in almost identical scenes, but in a more universal vision of the baptism, since he invited all the people of Israel to the repentance and the "turnaround" of their life in order to welcome the coming Messiah. In this, the chances are high that the Baptist was at odds with the Community, and that he had been expelled from it for refusing to share the "elitist" beliefs of the Essene movement ...

Less sectarian than the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, or the Essenes, John issued to the Jewish people of Palestine a call to repentance and baptism, making everyone to benefit from the divine forgiveness. In short, he gathered all the people in front of God. But it is not a conflict between a new religion and the Judaism. A popular awakening in the Palestinian Judaism tackles vigorously the sectarian claims of the Jewish leadership groups. That is all !

There was around him a whole restlessness that endemic revolts kindled.

Around John had indeed gathered a lot of people, when hearing him speaking, were seized by the largest excitation (FLAVIUS Josephus. Antiquities of the Jews. XVIII, 116-118).

The idea reiterated by John the Baptist, as later the millenarians, that the end of time was imminent, united in the same dereliction the taste for the penance, the martyrdom and the purification at the very least moment.

Johanaan baptized in the ford of Bethabara (Aenon according to John) on the Jordan River, a few kilometers away from Qumran.

On the death of the Baptist - executed in the early thirties at the instigation of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee - his body was buried by his disciples in Machaerus, and his movement will break. Some remained independent. Though ignored by the Talmudic tradition, John the Baptist has a place in the Quran which reveres him as a great prophet whose the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus claims to house the grave. (There would have been in this case then transfer of the body from Machaerus to Damascus.)

DIFFERENT BAPTIST MOVEMENTS.

In the 1st century before our era existed for instance in Samaria a Baptist movement that the prophet Dosion, Dosthion or Dostan (Greek Dositheus) claimed to be a disciple of John the Baptist, whom he regarded as the true Messiah. They ate only products from the ground and lived in caves or caverns. Dositheus denied the resurrection of the body, the future destruction of the world, the last judgment, the existence of angels.

There are few years still, Mandaean (who call themselves Nasoraye, i.e., Nazoreans) and who regard John the Baptist, known by traditions which do not come from the New Testament as their founding prophet; performed still baptisms in the Euphrates River, in Iraq and Syria.

There remain of them, scattered in southern Iraq, in the marshy areas of the Shatt al-Arab, encroaching on Iran (Khuzestan Province), three or four hundred. Mandaean speak an archaic Eastern Aramaic dialect which is peculiar to them.

Mandaean had, even today, a hereditary priesthood with three levels: acolytes (or deacons), priests and high priests. The baptism is their essential rite that can be renewed and that is always given in running water, or white water points as did John (the Baptist) and the disciples who followed him. After the consecration of the water, the catechumen is immersed three times. The priest then shakes the hands of the baptized person as a sign of communion then marks him with an anointing of consecrated oil, before making him receive communion with a piece of consecrated bread and a cup of water. The Mandaean baptize the dying and the dead to protect their souls in their ascent towards the light.

They are not Christians and are even hostile because they regard Jesus as a false disciple and Christians as heretical dissidents from the movement initiated by John.

The sacred book of this Mandaism, that the tradition relates to St. John the Baptist, is yet very Gnostic, and this is rather amazing, but reflects a general evolution of the ideas in this part of the world.

THE HELLENISTS AND THE SEPTUAGINT.

When they study the Jewish culture of the first two centuries before our era, and particularly the attitude of the Jews with regard to the Bible, the historians used to distinguish two main tendencies. The Jews more or less recently emigrated of their original homeland, and filled with Greek influence, and the Jews remained in Palestine, whose civilization had been, for this reason, more preserved from Western influences. All and sundry looked into the Bible with as much zeal and veneration, but their interpretation showed important differences, especially in the use of allegorical interpretation. Indeed, the second ones did not practice or practiced little allegorical interpretation. It is that rabbinical mentality is little prone to allegory: the rabbis by no means seek to release from the Bible a system of wisdom which remains unfamiliar to it; they only study it to get the science of the divine word and to deduce from it all the legal regulations that it conceals. However the legal spirit routs the poetic spirit inherent and necessary to the allegory. The same does not apply to Alexandrian Judaism where an often wild allegory was the norm. This one could be as well moral as physical.

A Greek influence seems to be at the base of this mode of interpretation. Several clues show it: the fact that only the Jews become in touch with the Hellenic civilization practice this allegorical interpretation, the presence, among the Jewish allegorists, of a noticeable knowledge of the Greek thought... But there is, of this determining influence of the Greek allegory on the Jewish allegory, more eloquent and more positive clues. Indeed, several Alexandrian Jews took themselves care to note the relationship which connects the figurative interpretation that they give of their sacred texts, with the allegorical treatment that the Greeks applied to their first poets. Two nuances then are noted. Certain Hellenized Jews compare their own mysteries to the Greek myths, their allegory to the Greek allegory, to conclude that it is to themselves that the glory of the discovery comes down and to the Greeks the shame of the plagiarism. Other authors keep comparison between their own allegorical interpretation of the Bible, and the Greek interpretation of Homer and Hesiod, without claiming to have been the initiators of the Greece. To tell the truth, they do not profess more to have been the initiates of it. But their familiarity with the traditional Greek myths, the spontaneous approach through which they evoke them each time the Scripture presents with them some analogy; in a word the feeling that they give to believe in the existence of an old common mythical collection which would have received a double formulation, Homeric-Hesiodic and biblical; all these reasons result in thinking that their allegorical interpretation was influenced, not to say caused, by the Greek literary process, of which they could not be unaware. The goal that these authors pursued by amalgamating the biblical account with episodes drawn from the Homeric and Hesiodic poems was naturally to reconcile the Greek readers; by showing them that the Genesis is not the history of an imaginary people, nor even of a separate world; but that the most incredible chapters, such those of the flood and of the tower of Babel, are overlapped by the mythical data of the Greece. To complete to capture the benevolent attention of the Greeks, the surest thing, of course, was to transpose to the Bible the allegorical method that they took such an amount of pleasure to see applied to their poets.

Another form of reading is that which is attached to the signs, not initially in their relation with a signified, but in their very materiality, as signifiers. We will classify under this heading various processes. Oldest, and which does not rely only on the signifying besides, is the etymology, which will seek "the true" meaning of a word in the depths of the origin or in another language seen as original. It is a question with this process of proving by the language, categorical evidence if ever there were one. We can also consider the words as agents of a knowledge which appears only after transposition of the letters in their numerical value. The Greek Heliodorus, who lived in the 3rd century of our era, informs us in this way that if we replace each letter of the name of the Nile by the corresponding figure (the Greeks noted the figures by means of letters of the alphabet); we find 365, which is the number of days of a year. The gematria can therefore reveal the hidden meaning of a text. The gematria can therefore reveal the hidden meaning of a text. This research of luminous coincidences will appear all the more justified since it will be applied to sacred texts to which a divine coherence is supposed, coherence able to include all the dimensions of the text. It will form one of the important aspects of the interpretation of the Writing in the Talmudic tradition or among the Fathers of the Church, later.

The Septuagint. Translation of the Jewish Bible in Greek language, which would have been carried out, according to the tradition, by 70 (or 72) Jewish well-read men in Alexandria.

Many Jewish immigrants knew no longer the Hebrew language, and wished to read their sacred texts in the language of their commercial transactions, the Aramaic remaining their daily language. A unified translation therefore was probably made at the request of the Lagid sovereign Ptolemy, anxious to know the rules of the various people which were subjected to him, as part of a reorganization of his kingdom.

The translation of the Septuagint in the 3rd century before our era was therefore marked by the passage from a Semitic language, with its shifts in meaning through alliteration and its tense particularities (Hebrew does not know the past, present or future times, but knows aspects, that is to say the difference between what is called "completed," sometimes "perfect" and "uncompleted sometimes "imperfect"; the completed can correspond to a present which keeps the memory of a past and which has enough to last...), the uncompleted can refer to something that has begun, something that is beginning, something that is in the process of happening or finishing, and therefore it can be translated as well by a past as by an imperfect, a present or a future) by the passage therefore to a language of the Indo-European type, more based on a rational logic than on the analogical virtue of sounds, images, or kabbalistic processes.

Behind the questions of semantics, there are the differences of structures of the thought or of its expression among Hebrews and Greeks. The same word pronounced in these two cultural universes can have a radically different meaning. From where sometimes irreducible divergences.

The Septuagint enters a vision initially stripped of its nature of sacred Jewish writing and sometimes meeting the Greek mythology, with which certain syncretisms equate it, then sanctified again when the Judeo-Christianity will undergo a Hellenization which will lead to Christianity. The Latin Translation or Vulgate will move it still more away from its origin, but will keep to its nature of revealed and intangible truth.

However it contains very many mistranslations, having serious consequences.

The West, and it is almost comic because of that, has the extreme characteristic to be based, as far as its mentalities, its modes of feeling, thinking, judging, and acting but, perhaps also especially imagining; on a language to which it never had access, if not marginally, through translations: the Hebrew. And Christianity, core and center of this discomfort, takes on and develops almost with pleasure all the aspects of this paradox. Resulting from two corpses not belonging to it, the Jewish one initially, then the one that Byzantium collects, it replaces them by a third one, Latin that one: no longer Hebraic, Judaic, bible, no longer a Septuagint, but a translation adaptation of both. And we witness then the incredible: the establishment of a whole ideological and fantasmatic building whose foundations were acquired on a market for used concepts or a second-hand market (by the means of a translation or of a translation of translation as regards the New Testament).

Some examples of mistranslations made by the Septuagint.

Genesis 14.13.

The Hebrew text calls Abraham a Hebrew.

But the translation of the Septuagint makes him "a migrant."

It is not at all the same thing, but the Fathers of the Church and the modern bishops built on this word all kinds of speculations.

Isaiah 28,9-11.

The Hebrew text is a succession of syllables, perhaps some apocopes, that most modern exegetes prefer not to translate: "sav lasav sav lasav / kav lakav kav lakav ze' er sham, ze' er sham."

Those who try to translate propose generally something like this: "Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there."

In the Septuagint that gives:

"Expect you affliction on affliction, hope upon hope: yet a little, and yet a little!!" Origen based on that a whole theory in connection with martyrs.

In Judges 15,16-19, Samson kills his enemies with the "jaw" of an ass. The name of "jaw" was given thereafter to the place of this victory: Lehi.

Normally one should not have to translate this noun, become a proper noun, it is, however, what the Seventy did and that gave us, instead of "Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi and water came out of it." "And God broke open a hollow place in the jaw, and there came thence water."

The allegorical interpretation, with spiritual value, that the Fathers will give of that (the jaw prefigures the bones of the saints, etc.) therefore is getting to be a bit ridiculous.

The equating of Jesus with the sun which rises comes from the translation of the Hebrew word tsemah (literally what comes up, the germ) by the Greek term Anatole, which means "rising" but in the meaning of "place where the sun rises = East."

In Isaiah 45.23b, whereas the Hebrew text is (intellectually) punctuated as follows:

"...every tongue will swear.

In YHWH alone etc.etc."

The necessary to comprehension period, having been omitted by the Seventy that becomes for them "... and every tongue shall acknowledge YHWH alone..." .

Editor's note. With regard to the various names of God - and, therefore, the various designs about him - the translation of the Septuagint completed the unification and, therefore, the mixing up ; by translating by a single Greek word, theos (deus then in the Latin Vulgate) these various levels of the divine reality. And all that followed about it (theology, etc.) was therefore based on this double or triple or quadruple misunderstanding.

Idem with the Hebrew term malach which means messenger.

But there is messenger... and messenger: the messengers of God who more or less take part of his nature, and the messengers of the simple world ruler.

However in both cases, the Septuagint translated by "aggelos" from where a certain mixing up between the true "angels" and the simple ambassadors from the world rulers.

It is impossible to appreciate very precisely the role that all this could play in the formation of Christianity, but it had to be considerable.

The Alexandrian Jews, with the intent of sustaining and strengthening their propaganda, gave themselves especially to adapting [to forging BERNARD Lazare says] all texts which were capable of lending support to their cause. The verses of Aeschylus, of Sophocles, of Euripides, the pretended oracles of Orpheus, preserved in Aristobulus and the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria were thus made to glorify the one God and the Sabbath much to the Pagans' total amazement. Historians were falsified or credited with the authorship of books they had never written. It is thus that a History of the Jews was published under the name of Hecataeus of Abdera. The most important of these inventions was the Sibylline oracles, a fabrication of the Alexandrian Jews, which prophesied the future advent of the reign of the one God..... The Jews would appropriate to themselves even the Greek literature and philosophy. In a commentary on the Pentateuch, which has been preserved for us by Eusebius, Aristobulus attempted to show that Plato and Aristotle had found their metaphysical and ethical ideas in an old Greek translation of the Pentateuch.

Philo of Alexandria, about contemporary of the Christian era, practiced on a large scale the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament; either that he produced new interpretations, or that he simply took over and amplified those which were already in force in the Judeo-Hellenistic circles. According to Philo, the recourse to the allegory is essential when the literal meaning of the sacred text alone presents an insoluble difficulty, an ineptitude, a contradiction and especially an assertion unworthy of God (that is not missing in the Bible indeed). One can notice that this Philonian rule is only the transposition of a stoical principle whose best expression is due to the pseudo-Heraclitus, according to which the allegory is the indispensable antidote of the Homeric texts which, without it, would be only impiety. It should besides be noticed to what extent Philo knows the allegorical exegesis that the Greeks gave of their principal myths, either that generally, he agrees to it and takes it over, or that he rejects it. Moreover, he produces, of passages of Homer and Hesiod, various allegorical interpretations of which he seems well to be the inventor. He vows to the poets of the first centuries the greatest admiration, he defends them against the charge of impiety, he thinks that the surest means of justifying this admiration, like of ensuring this defense; is to emphasize, through allegory, the teaching hidden in their poems. But Philo does not limit himself to interpret these Greek myths according to traditional stoical patterns, nor even to propose new uses of them. He mixes them with the biblical accounts. The intimacy of Philo with the Greek culture is so deep and his desire to give of the Jewish message a presentation suitable to allure the Hellenistic reader, so powerful, that he almost comes from there to dissolve the specificity of the mosaic revelation. To merge it with the legendary data of Homer, in a single universal mythical collection, that only allegorical interpretation can save.

THE PHARISEES.

Direct ancestors of today's Judaism given the subsequent disappearance of the Temple. As we could see it, they also expect the Messiah (Christos/Chrestos in Greek language) who must free them from the Roman Empire.

Appeared in Palestine as of before the end of the 2nd century before our era, the Pharisees had given up only little by little to impose the Law of Moses on all the Palestinian society. We know little about their history and their ideas of before the destruction of the Temple, in 70. But it is clear that, for lack of being able to give back to the mosaic Law its eminent place in the organization of the society; the Pharisees had undertaken to make the Torah a moral law suggested to each Jew anxious to obey the divine will. They gathered therefore in a fraternity the people eager to conform to it their life. In this double intention, they made of the commands an interpretation applicable to the daily life of each one. This large effort of moral and ritual seriousness brought to them a certain admiration from the mass of the Jewish population in Palestine. But it comprised a very visible scorn with regard to the people of the country, considered by the Pharisees as neglecting its religious and moral duties. People of cities, like the puritans of the 18th century, the Pharisees scorned the farmers readily, whom they considered locked up in superstition and moral laxity. In Short, themselves too adopted a sectarian attitude. The Pharisaism, with its angelology and its heavenly or hellish hereafter, does not go beyond a rudimentary theological stage, with an exception.

Whereas the Sadducean party, formed by the priestly civil servant, attached to preserve their privileges, under some regime in which Israel falls, is hardly concerned about resurrection or salvation, the rival party, that of the Pharisees, itself professes a new idea. Each one, after a last judgment, will recover one's carnal envelope in the hereafter. On this point, Christians are therefore perfect Pharisees.

The Pharisees are indeed the only, in the Judaism of the time, to imagine at the same time a survival of the soul and a resurrection of the bodies; in a heavenly place, where the Righteous people are rewarded for their zeal and their sufferings on Earth (or will go to hell of course).

The Pharisaism in Palestine and in the Diaspora is not the first religion to democratize the joint reincarnation of the bodies and of the souls, the righteous persons and the unrighteous persons, whatever their social status; since the druidism in the other end of the Roman Empire also professed these doctrines. "One of the precepts they teach—obviously to make them better for war—has leaked into common knowledge, namely, that souls/minds are immortal and that there exists another life at the Manes." (Pomponius Mela. In his book entitled in Latin *De chorographia* 3.2).

"But the same soul/mind governs the limbs in another world." (Lucan. In his book entitled in Latin "Pharsalia" or "Bellum civile," I, 450-458).

The Pharisaism is only the first religion to have placed behind all this a frightening alternative, that of the heavenly salvation or of the eternal damnation, and to have attached an essential significance to the final retribution of actions.

The Pharisees indeed chose the change of an impracticable social Law into a moral Law suggested to each member of the people.

They believe in a hereafter where each man, summoned after his death to a last Judgment, is judged according to his merits and is intended to heaven or to hell. Idea completely absent from the other beliefs in the reincarnation of the souls after death. This belief implies that the Pharisean Churches (called synagogues), at the same time pertaining to worship and social places, will carry on as far as beyond the death of the faithful their role of protection and control.

By multiplying in the Diaspora the synagogues where their doctrines imposed themselves, the Pharisees will build in a way a stateless religion and soon, after the crushing of the Jews by Hadrian in 135, a nationless religion.

THE ZEALOTS.

The Zealots, fighting against the Roman occupier, compare Rome to a capital of the vice, "the Great Prostitute" about which the apocalypse ascribed to John speaks.

They had with the rest of the Jewish population in Palestine the relations that any terrorist organization supports with the background in which it is immersed. These men who, following the example of the priest Phinehas (Numbers 25.6 to 13), replaced the inadequate authorities, to eliminate by violence the violators of the Law; tried to impose to the people a more complete observance of the commands, by making themselves popular by their acts of Anti Roman resistance. We can compare them with the groups which, in land of Islam, endeavor to impose the "sharia" as the basis of the law. Inevitably devoted to the secrecy like to a rigorous discipline, to escape repression, they thought of acting for the

benefit of all, but lived necessarily separately, in restricted circles whose contacts with the mass of the people were rare.

CONCLUSION.

The idea of a savior sent by God to help men (the Messiah, Greek Christos) entered very early the Judaism, especially the Samaritanism, probably from Egypt or Iran but two theses will clash as of the beginning about him.

For the ones this savior should be only an ordinary human being, although guided inspired and helped by God to assist his people. Orthodox Jewish design of the Messiah.

For the others this savior should have only the appearance of a man, because he will be in reality a being of purely spiritual nature, an angel. Gnostic design of the *aggelos christos*.

We find a very good example of fit in Origen but about John the Baptist.

"24. John the Baptist Was Sent. From Where? His Soul Was Sent from a Higher Region. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." He who is sent is sent from somewhere to somewhere; and the careful student will, therefore, enquire from what quarter John was sent, and whither" (Commentary on John chapter 24).

This idea, which will appear before the Christian era, besides will dominate all the thought of the incipient Christianity until the appearance, in the 3rd century, of a resolutely hostile current (Irenaeus and Tertullian).

While are multiplied, as we saw it, the quarrels on the personality of the Savior who must come or return, the various Messianic currents - Adamian, Sethian, Naassene, kainite, Essene, Nazorene, Hellenist, Pharisean, etc. form rival *Ekklesiai* or Churches (Hebrew *Qahal* assembly). Each one tries to be legitimated by establishing its derivation from "the true" Messiah to come, the Lord's anointed, that the Greek translated by *Chrestos* or *Christos*.

Each one of these prophets or visionaries wants to be the man chosen by God, chosen by him to reveal to the ignoramuses the true meaning of texts of which the profundity had up to that point escaped the previous exegeses.

We witness thus successive transpositions of formulas and expressions re-examined and corrected in the light of the time.

Following the example of Hosea, of Ezekiel, of Jeremiah, which equipped with new forms the objurgations and lamentations of the past, the Adamians, Sethians, Cainites, Naassenes, Nazorenes, Hellenists, Pharisees and Essenes (just like the Judeo-Christians after them); adapt to their Messianic concern the texts of the Bible where they perceive literally (if necessary by rewriting them: *midrashim*) the first steps of what they announce.

THE VARIOUS ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NAZORENE JESUS THEREFORE.

On the existence of Jesus, these are currently divided into five major trends.

- The traditionalist thesis for the conservative fringe and fundamentalists, whatever is recorded in the Gospels is absolutely authentic. These accounts are perfect historical documents, written by eyewitnesses, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The contradictions that we discover in them are only apparent.
- The secularist thesis: the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels resembles closely the Jesus who existed in the 1st century of our era, but some more or less legendary details were added: virgin birth, some parables, miracles, etc. (according to the perspective of the authors, Resurrection is or is not part of these details). This is the prevailing view today. It is contained in textbooks.
- The cryptic thesis; Jesus existed, but he was not at all the man represented by the evangelists. According to the interpretations, he was a revolutionary, a millenarian Jew, a sicarian, a zealot and so on.
- The minimalist thesis: Jesus existed, but we cannot reliably depict him as he was, or describe what he has accomplished, because the myth has completely covered the character.
- The theory of myth: Jesus did not exist. No documentary evidence attests to his existence. The various interpretations of the historicists, adding the conjectures, only complicate the problem. Many clues suggest that Jesus is only a myth just like Mithra or Apollo. That he is the result of a late theological development.

The last three currents share the idea that the Gospels were written late and that their authors have altered history. Their disagreement concerns only the fact that some suggest that Jesus is a deified man, while others esteem he is a humanized god-or-demon.

Rejecting bluntly the traditionalist, outrageous and unscientific, thesis, the barbarians that we are, do not claim to solve here in a definitive way among the other options nor to establish a new historical dogma; moreover about one of the major religions today competing in the world.

The Barbarian druids of the West that we are, claim the public's right to a strict equality of treatment of the great religious myths. They believe it is harmful that the study of Christian origins remains a reserved field in which texts and documents escape the method that is applied to the other. Our only religion is the religion of truth.

The portrait of the founder of Christianity and of his first disciples as it is now outlined for us today through school history books or Hollywood movies; is only the result of the rewriting of history made by the current became dominant in the fourth century. It is a Jesus or first apostles who never existed like this, because idealized according to this new ideology. The central problem of Christianity in the fourth century was its own past. Christianity as we know it today has made for itself a past when it came to power through a rewriting of Judeo-Christianity in the true mold that are fictionalized stories about Jesus, called Gospels.

The existence of gospels ascribed to Luke, Mark, Matthew and John, is attested only at the end of the second century. The first to be formalized, the Evangelion of Luke (with its part Acts of the Apostles) having been so besides by Marcion, son of a bishop of Sinope in the 1st century, regarded as heretical later despite his fundamental role in the spread of Christianity. Such a fundamental role especially by his "discovery" of the letters of Saint Paul, that it was probably to counter his influence that the other currents of nascent Christianity of all persuasions put forward other gospels, those of Mark and Matthew.

The Gospels were never or are not only accounts reported by eyewitness apostles then transmitted orally until they are written down. The most obvious example is the Gospel ascribed to John and its striking account of the imaginary trial of Jesus (it triggered, it seems, the fury of the Irish king Conchobar).

The figure of Jesus has been completely forged by rumor and corresponds in no way to any historically proven existence.

Luke's account of the death of Judas in the Acts of the Apostles 1.18 to 19 is irreconcilable with that of Matthew 27: 3-10. Incidentally: what is very, very strange it is that St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 seems still count Judas among the disciples, since he mentions twelve, of them (although theoretically he has not yet been replaced and will be only after these apparitions. See the random draw of Matthias in the Acts of the Apostles; 1-26). They are therefore also perhaps only midrash (im) that is to say a Bible reading mode connecting passages and different verses to develop new stories, stories

that have never been written as is, but nevertheless containing only authentic elements drawn from the old ones and especially from the prophecies speaking of the Messiah.

Let's be more Tolandian than John Toland in his "Christianity not mysterious" Section II, Chapter III, paragraph 19; let's be Mongolian and let's state clearly following Porphyry:

1. That Jesus corresponded almost in nothing to the theoretical composite drawing of the Messiah expected by the Jews (was it ever heard of a crucified Messiah in Judaism?)
2. That the majority of his countrymen then have besides refused to follow him.
3. That the conformity of his life and his work with the prophecies of the Old Testament is mainly due to various manipulations of texts made by the earliest Christians.
4. Like his miracles besides.
5. What John Toland almost admitted in the second edition of his book (paragraph 21).
6. That the doctrine of Jesus, finally, was not originally made for the pagans. In Mark 12, 29, the first of the commandments given by Jesus or remembered is still simply the Jewish prayer called "Shema." "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

The tip of the iceberg (the Christian intelligentsia, including at the highest level) admits now that all is not true in the Bible (the proportion of mistakes is varying according to the authors); but do not insist much to do it also admitted by the mass of its basic believers. The Catechism teaches still to the children through images and repetition the simplistic belief in its god or demiurge.

However a catechism is not an explanation but an affirmation; make one learned by children is a practice that in fact amounts to establish the primacy of the blind faith over reason and to break their critical judgment in this field. Since religion is made for rational creatures, it is the conviction and not the authority that should be used with human beings. This is at least what Toland thought about it. Then to offer the children grew up, a more rational explanation is not enough to repair the damage of the violation of their consciences.

There is also still among us a fundamentalist current hostile to transformism and which sticks, as for the creation of the universe, to the text of Genesis. The Bible transmits a certain number of ideas, but this is reason, not faith, which can determine if they can be accepted. The for adults reasoning, frequently used by Christians about the truthfulness and historicity of the Gospels or of the Bible in general, is the following one: it is overall historical, though, of course, some details are not (secularist thesis). But what is a detail? Can we call "detail" an element of the narrative...

1. Result of the work of reflection of a believing community over several years.
2. Having as purpose to involve adherence in an as important field as that of the Belief.
3. Having actually helped that in the beginnings of Christianity.
4. Continuing to play this role with many today Christians, let us say "basic."
5. In short narrative elements of which the absence would affect significantly the belief of Christians, both quantitatively and qualitatively. (There would still be Christians, but less, and with different ideas.)

The great Catholic exegete that is Raymond E. Brown admits this explicitly. Although the evangelist used sets of written and oral material yet existing oral, he has not made a single "collage" of his sources. Working also according to a Christology an eschatology and a precise ecclesiology, he composed a highly effective narrative about Jesus, which combined all what he had received. This narrative won to Christ much of the ancient world.
WE CANNOT SAY IT BETTER !

In the case of these about the new Joshua (Jesus), there are three levels of historicity to distinguish. The first level is the facts concerning him, but as a man. They are therefore either rather banal (he was born, he had a mother, he died, etc.), or a little too good (a little too adapted to the profile of the Messiah according to the old Testament = midrash?) to be true. Second level ... [this part of the file is unreadable]. The third level is that of the facts concerning him, but as a god.

But what is noteworthy is that the accounts in question appear genuine and plausible especially as regards the first level of the facts; that of the banality, and not at all in regard to the second level, or to the one which is regarding his divinity.

"The fatality of being conceived by a virgin is dictated, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as a messiah. What removes any real value to the story which cannot be regarded as stating a fact, but arranged for the purpose in hand " (Henry Lizeray. *The Secret Doctrine*).

The attitude of Christians in this field is clearly schizoid or schizophrenic.

They admit that there has been in this field...- Additions of words, sentences or entire paragraphs (interpolations).

- Deletion of words, phrases, or whole paragraphs;

- Or change in the account of certain events (following a new interpretation of the facts, for example.

The most obvious case is the depoliticization of the action of the new Joshua = Jesus.

Why in these conditions do not talk squarely of rewriting of texts?

These are the first words that come to mind in such cases. See for example the reaction of Celsus in the 1st century. He was right when he wrote of Judeo-Christianity, " The Christians, like persons who in a fit of drunkenness lay violent hands upon themselves, have corrupted the Gospel from its original integrity, to a threefold, and fourfold, and many-fold degree, and have remodeled it, so that they might be able to answer objections" (Celsus. *Alethes Logos*).

One of the greatest apologists of the Church, Origen besides has admitted it in full. "Nowadays, as is evident, there is a great diversity between the various manuscripts, either through the negligence of certain copyists, or the perverse audacity shown by some in correcting the text, or through the fault of those who, playing the part of corrector, lengthen or shorten it as they please."

The process in question is well known, it was used by Philostratus in the third century when he wrote his book on Apollonius of Tyana.

Isn't it yet the part of a witness to tell the truth, all the truth, of course, and nothing but the truth (people swear still on the Bible in many countries for that, right?)

What is added and which is not a factual reality is only opinion not (eye or other) witness.

The second question coming immediately to mind is, can we (globally) call historical a narrative; of which the only level of historicity proved with certainty is that which falls within the banalities of the life (he was born, he had a mother, he died and so on ...)?

What is missing in all this finally is the opening (of mind) or the knowledge (e.g., that of other religions).

John Toland was the first to condemn the intellectual dishonesty of those who, though showing the utmost respect for the writings of the Church Fathers ostensibly; never fail to ignore their opinion when it is not conform to their mood or their interest. As well as that of the ill-disposed persons who twist, as they frequently do, learning, reason, scripture, and the best things in the world.

What would be the intellectual honesty in this case?

The relevance, i.e., the harmony between words and things.

Without the help of an infallible rule to distinguish them, we can take a very questionable proposition for an axiom, some grandmother tales for moral certainty, or the recipe book of my grandmother cook at the castle of Cirey-upon-Blaise for a symbolic and allegorical divine revelation. The infallible rule to be used to convince us of something must be the Evidence (Descartes). The evidence is the conformity of our ideas or thoughts with their objects or with the things we think. What to say indeed, of the minds admitting the little historicity of the events or facts proving the divinity of such and such a historical figure (his resurrection, for example), but nevertheless being based on it to support their argument?

The accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb reported by the four Gospels are often considered as later.

The main reason is that Paul, who preaches Jesus resurrected, not only never tells this episode, but even doesn't allude to the burial place.

Another factor suggesting to specialists a later date for these narratives is that the details are discordant. An angel or two, sitting or standing, already open tomb or stone rolled away by an angel who goes down, the words of the angel which differ ...

But according to Father Brown, what matters is the authenticity of this tradition, and not the more or less early date of the divergent narratives that contain it. The very fact that the Gospels mention Mary Magdalene (she is the key witness for the discovery of the tomb) confirms the thesis that there is a genuine Christian memory.

In other words, the texts referring to the discovery of the empty tomb are late, divergent, etc., but they prove nevertheless the existence of a rumor about the resurrection from the start.

Raymond E. Brown doesn't go nevertheless as far as suggesting that the disciples took several decades before beginning to believe in the resurrection of the new Joshua/Jesus. His argument comes down to this in fact.

I believe in the resurrection of Christ (not because this or that genuine and period text vouches it, but) because the f Christians of the fifties of our era who wrote down these rumors believed in them. (And the miracle indeed is that men could believe such a story, because one wonders well on what unimpeachable syllogism, they could base their conviction. Some visions of the kind that happened to St. Paul ?)

If it is faith and not simply some form of mental illness; it is well necessary to admit in any case that it is a phenomenon in which reason has no place (it was rather conspicuously absent).

There were incessant reworking made on the texts and these incessant reworking combined with just as much relentless censorship, constitute as many falsifications of factual truth.

THE ONE THAT IS OBJECTIVELY MEASURABLE OR QUANTIFIABLE.

The truths of a higher order, independent of the facts, places, and timelines, often put forward by those who believe in the divine providence to support these impostures, are in the order of the unprovable one.

There was no resurrection, and the only thing that happened is that the body of the new Nazorene Joshua was not found. It is to each one to imagine why. What is certain is that the disciples themselves, have come to believe that it was because their master was resurrected; but we are not bound to believe them, given the inconsistencies in the accounts of this period of the life of the most famous of the dissidents from Essene-baptism.

Like the Jews, Christians are generally people totally lacking of critical mind. Some are so enamored with mysteries (they seem to find their groove in them) that they are ready to do anything rather than to do without. In doing so, they are aware or not, they do nothing less bringing their religion into play every time; because it is never a good sign to admit that what you believe is above any examination by reason, and that you will accept in no way that this is questioned. This shows that deep down they do not trust their own cause ... what we dare not submit to the examination of reason must be, in effect, contrary to this one...

Blinkered or narrow-minded is the word that comes spontaneously to my mind in order to speak of those who are touched by no rational argument when it goes against the judgment of the early Church. Church Fathers (as they like to call them) are for them the sole interpreters of the message of the Scriptures ... What these men, as a great philosopher said, cannot defend by using sufficient reasons, they prove it by being based on their authority.

If the Church Fathers have already spoken about that, then they are not to be blamed if they save themselves the difficult task of thinking more carefully than they did (Toland says).

There was no resurrection as we have said, and the only thing that happened is that the body of the new Nazorene Joshua was not found. It is to each one to imagine why.

Hence the difficulty of the evangelists to tell without contradiction the apparitions of the risen Christ: he is recognized and he is not recognized. He is touched and he is not touched. Everything happens like if the early Christians had testified of an experiment that had occurred to them in spite of their doubts; that evangelists besides often evoke.

Only the disciples saw the resurrected Christ after his death, and yet, in a way difficult to transmit, in any case unusual because, generally, in their reports, they point out that it's suddenly they realize his presence or his absence.

Only the disciples see. It is already necessary to believe in order to see. Christ is first never recognized by the disciples. As Mark says, he appears "in a different form" (Mark 16:12). Mary Magdalene saw him, spoke to him, but she did not recognize him, she who loved him: she takes him for the gardener (John 20, 11 to 18). In Luke's Gospel, the risen Christ eats a piece of broiled fish (Luke 24.42). On the face of things, it is unclear to what is useful to eat for a body like that of the risen Christ. We eat to avoid dying, but after? In short, Jesus makes himself recognized only through gestures such as breaking bread or calling people by name.

GENERAL BACKGROUND.

As we have had the opportunity to see, in addition to false messiahs, the Palestine of that time is filled with magicians, astrologers, healers and impostors who make themselves paid to heal. The level of superstition is very high. There are magicians, wizards, priests and seers telling fortunes. All scour the countryside. The time is favorable to those who announce the new times. In front of the gates of Jerusalem, mystic people remain night and day, fasting and praying, watching for omens. Demons are driven out to calm the madmen and the hotheads. There are often exorcisms. People lay hands and pronounce mysterious formulas. This is the medicine of the time. The healing of a deaf or disappearance of fever from someone surprise nobody. Healers sometimes go into a trance and some experiment hypnosis.

This type of healer finds its ideal ground in the inhabited by doubt societies, where landmarks tend to disappear, questioning widely considered ineffective medicines. So appears a strong personality, with a sure charisma, who is able to offer new solutions that integrate the whole man, body, mind, intellect, society. The most famous was Apollonius of Tyana in the 1st century, man of God, inhabited by a divine power. A score of miracles are attributed to him, whose stories have survived, including a (reported in detail) resurrection, five recoveries, four expulsions of demons and also six interventions on inanimate nature (locked doors that open, sea which is calmed). He would also miraculously cured the city of Ephesus from a plague. Flavius ??Philostratus, born about 175 in Lemnos, preserved to us his history.

Eusebius, of course, mocked the miracles of Apollonius he considers as false and impossible. He stressed the gaps in his biography (while admitting nevertheless that he was a great philosopher), and concluded that if the miracles of Apollonius had really happened, so it was with the help of the devil. Lactantius and St. Jerome attributed, too, his miracles, to magic.

The sects expecting the Messiah or claiming he is already come and who practice all more or less the Torah proliferate and will be multiplied in the 1st or second century. The Messianisms inspired from the Jehu anointed by Elisha abound since the Maccabean revolt. Long after the killing of their teacher of Righteousness (- 67), the Essene preaching is already representative of a certain universalization rejecting more or less the Hebrew Law.

The patriotic fundamentalism of the Zealots would not tolerate that the God or Demiurge of the Jews can save other nations; while the dispersion of the Jews throughout the empire and the spread of the Septuagint Bible changed the Jewish religion, like the other Eastern religions besides, in universal religion; what could not fail to exacerbate the opposition between the universalist and particularist tendencies.

The best testimony about the historical Jesus, the real Jesus, are by no means the Gospels. They are...

1. The genuine collection of the letters from St. Paul.
2. The oldest documents concerning the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem gathered around James, the brother of the Lord (Nazorenes, Ebionites, Elchasaites).

Only a combined analysis of these sources can identify what really was his message.

The guiding principle of everything that follows will be the position hereunder, given what relates Josephus about the Christians in Jerusalem and (perhaps, these writings are highly suspect) St. Paul.

First Essene then a follower of John the Baptist, the Nazorean Jesus really existed, but was one of the countless Jewish agitators with messianic pretensions of the time, like Theudas and Judas the Galilean - Acts of the Apostles V, 36-37 - with two differences.

The first: unlike the previous ones, he left no direct trace in the history of his time.

The second: around his name and a few vague memories were formed a certain number of mystical themes (God or the Demiurge loves us, went down on Earth in order to save us we uns the men, etc.)

What made the difference is the existence of the Hellenists.

"So I think too in the existence of a personal historical core although very tenuous at the origin of this modern mythology. There was at the origin of Christianity someone who really existed, who had a birth, an existence, some doing and a death that marked for life certain witnesses "(PdLC).

This Jewish mystic of his time, dissident from the movement of John the Baptist had likely a public life such as a traveling preacher and healer; the whole in connection with the political situation of his time (the expectation of a restoration of the Jewish kingdom of the period of independence); but to the rumors about him, all kinds of various elements were amalgamated over time. Or were deleted (see for example the various fakings of the first great historian of Christianity become state religion - it began well - Eusebius of Caesarea).

There has been well collection of events or words, but these historical type of materials or at least authentic (genuine words or actions of this pretender to the role of the messiah) have been reworked so; the result of all these rewritings ended in being completely away from the historical reality of the real Jesus, the historical reality of the man Jesus.

That said, here's what we can venture of the biography of the man in question.

Somewhere in the universe the planet Earth Middle East region Palestinian sector first century in the Gregorian calendar.

Jesus was Jewish, and this is within Judaism that he exercised his ministry, which hardly exceeded the limits of Jewish Palestine then.

Palestinian Judaism was only about a fifth of the total number of Jews then. Mesopotamian Jews, those of Egypt also outnumbered those of Palestine. There were Jewish settlements all over Asia Minor and tens of thousands of Jews living in Rome. This large people, deprived of political unity was very divided culturally, some speaking Aramaic, the other Greek. Even in Palestine, where Aramaic dominated the Jews were scattered in very divergent groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes, supporters of John - and many others.

CONTRADICTIONS AND NEW TESTAMENT QUIRKS.

John Toland once wrote about Jesus and his apostles; that sifting severely details, if not only the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles be considered, but also their lives, predictions, miracles, and deaths; surely all this labor would be in vain, might we upon any account dispense with contradictions. O! blessed and commodious system, which discharges at one stroke those troublesome remarks about history, language, figurative and literal senses, scope of the writer, circumstances, and other helps of interpretation!

Let us be a little mongarian, what the devil, or rather decidedly iconoclastic and nonconformist, and still try to point out some of these famous contradictions. The will of the Gospel writers to follow Jewish prophecies (midrash) has indeed led them to constantly contradict themselves. These contradictions, by any means that we take them, are insurmountable. They can agree in no way.

REGARDING THE PROLOGUE OF THE BEN-HUR BY WILLIAM WYLER AND THE "BIOLOGICAL" PARENTS OF JESUS.

Let us note first that the idea of ??incarnation (the fact that a god-or-demon takes a human appearance) is deeply foreign to the Jewish monotheism of the 1st century, when it was customary among the pagan nations for thousands of years . Then, if Matthew, Luke, and John designate well Joseph as the father of Jesus, the fact is not the same for Mark, who does not say a word about that.

According to Matthew and Luke, Joseph is a descendant of King David, what is quite in line with the messianic beliefs of the time, but he is a descendant from him through Jacob for Matthew and through Heli for Luke. Going up the genealogy back to Abraham, one counts 40 degrees, the other 56; from David to Jesus, 26 names are listed by the first, 42 for the second. This is annoying, especially for the absent ones: some 16 generations. But did not was the main thing that Zechariah announced that the Messiah would be from "the house of Joseph?"

Note that it is difficult to understand the interest of Davidic genealogies if Joseph is only the foster father of Jesus as taught. This contradiction can be explained only if the dogma about the virginity of Mary came only later, in a second step, to be integrated into the stories of the Nativity of William Wyler. Marc also remains silent on this anatomical exception, seized by Mariology. And doesn't St. Paul write that Christ was "born of a woman" - not of a virgin? By cons, what is certain is that those virginity stories are typically pagan, typical of the Greco-Roman environment where the Gospels are written, and in which then it was sought to spread the "good news." In pagan mythology for instance, Perseus is born of Danae fertilized by a shower of gold, Apis is the result of a heifer impregnated by a sunbeam, Attis was born of Nana just after she ate a pomegranate ... Miraculous births were also attributed to the wise and great philosophers such as Pythagoras, born of Apollo and of the virgin Pythais, or Plato, son of Perictione and of the same Apollo. By this narrative process, the ancients wanted to express the uniqueness of the revered being.

The Hellenists used it with all the more eagerness than in their mission countries, it brought further evidence of the messianity of Jesus; (They believed to find a justification of it in the Bible of the Septuagint, which appeared to refer to a virgin who was to come. Problem nevertheless: the Septuagint had incorrectly translated the Hebrew word *halma*, which does not mean a virgin, but a "young woman") .

Other pagan myths have influenced the early Christians in their portrayal of Jesus's parents. The resignation of Joseph to his plight, for example, is identical to that of Amphitryon whose wife Alcmene shares her bed with Zeus - Alcmene, who has right, like Mary, to her Annunciation, in the person of the prophet Teiresias; whose words remind strangely of that of the angel Gabriel: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you... The Holy Spirit will come on you..... So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Here below the draft (or not), found by the heirs to Peter DeLaCrau with empty envelopes.

None of the twelve of the disciples, of course, has witnessed the birth of the new Joshua/Jesus. People are interested in the birth of great men only after their exploits or their death. The Gospels have been written as it happens beginning with the end and therefore enlightened by this end. Their authors have constantly projected in the past their subsequent conclusions. Of this approach, we have multiple traces.

John 12, 16 " At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him" .

The stories about the birth, which are in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke are not historical, or at least contain a number of unhistorical (details?) elements. For St. Paul Jesus is become the son of God or of the Demiurge for example only after his death and resurrection, and in no way before. Romans chapter 1, 3-4: " who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead" .

The Gospels of early childhood are stories of midrash kind that is to say stories having only very little to do with historical reality in the usual meaning of the word (factual truth). Many elements of the biography of the new Joshua/Jesus are indeed both old and late, what is the very mark of the midrash, that is to say match much older texts closely (Old Testament); but attested with certainty only much later (e.g., in the fourth century in manuscripts called in Latin language codex Sinaiticus or codex Vaticanus) as elements also characterizing Jesus.

The midrash is a fable with religious purpose , based on two distinct elements.

- The play on words.

- A constant and somewhat forced reference to elements of the Old Testament.

The chapter 1 of Matthew for instance puts forward the patriarch Judah, son of Jacob / Israel, because he is the ancestor of David. The chapter 2 expands further this Old Testament background. Now it is the patriarch Joseph, another son of Jacob / Israel, who comes to the foreground because Joseph, supposed father of Jesus, is modeled on his image: both interpret dreams and save their families by leaving for Egypt .

The story of Moses is also part of the picture, with a cruel ruler (Pharaoh, Herod) who seeks to destroy all the male children (Hebrews, Bethlehemites); but one (Moses, Jesus) escapes the massacre and becomes the savior of his people. The mages contribute to the parallelism with Moses.

The childhood narrative in Luke is not only as a whole different from that of Matthew, because in detail both are also practically irreconcilable. Whether it is the home of Joseph and Mary (Bethlehem in Matthew 2 11 [house] Nazareth in Luke 2, 4-7, without home in Bethlehem) or their movements after the birth of Jesus (to Egypt in Matthew 2, 14; to Jerusalem and Nazareth in Luke 2: 22-39).

The reference to Nazareth gives an idea of ??the appearance date in the text of the final details and therefore of the time in which were written or rewritten, for the last time, all these romanticized stories about Jesus. The name of Nazareth is indeed an etymological approximation starting from the Greek adjective nazoraïos, when this ceased to be understood. Since Jesus was called Nazorene or Nazorean, this would simply mean that it was from a town or from a village corresponding to this adjective.

In the Annunciation, an angel proclaims that Jesus is the son of God or of the Demiurge (Luke 1, 35); when he was twelve-year-old Jesus, who speaks for the first time, shows that God or the Demiurge is his father (Luke 2, 49).

The attitude of the new Joshua in this episode (Luke 2, 49) is an example which should especially not be followed. The boy hero of this tale shows indeed a marked tendency to indulge in his impulses, not counting his impertinence and his inappropriate hubris; as well the contempt he may harbor in respect of his parents, crazy worried about him.

Anyway, there is a contradiction between this self-proclamation when he was twelve years old and the ignorance of his identity shown later by the people in Nazareth (Luke 4.16 to 30).

To add in order to overcome this contradiction that his parents understood nothing of such an incident, though placed there by Luke to enlighten the readers, is to take them for ... some Christians? ?

And even if Joseph was the source of the stories contained in Matthew, Mary that of the stories contained in Luke, it would prove only a thing; they have never met nor spoken themselves since having totally different memories, yet about the same events affecting them directly.

THE BIRTH DATE.

The true birth date of the man Jesus is, of course, unknown, but 25 December or winter solstice is the symbolic birth date of many pagan gods including Attis example. This is why the Evangelion of Marcion, probably the first of the Gospels, begins directly with the public life of Jesus in Capernaum. The Evangelion by Marcion tells us indeed how the Christ or Messiah, having taken the appearance of an adult man, went down on Earth around the thirties at Capernaum. Strange things , his opponents in the second century didn't refute him through arguments of the historical type, by witness statements, but by a prophecy of Isaiah ... Such a way of rewriting history is what is called a midrash in Jewish religious literature.

Therefore it is just before the half of the second century that the faithful will begin to think and try to chronologically locate a fact that would have occurred about one hundred and fifty years ago ... Hence the contradictions met by the exegete in the Gospel accounts known as "of Nativity" and the question expressed since the beginning of the validity of the Hollywoodian movies about the subject.

The calculation of the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century, who made Jesus be born in the year 1 and thus fixed the Christian era, is based on a clever jugglery whose goal was to demonstrate the internal consistency of the four Gospels. Let us add that the specification on 25 December is given up to us by none of these texts. It appears for the first time in the fourth century.

At the time, for easily understandable strategic reasons, the Church of Rome thought it was clever to make the birth of Christ matching that of the god-or-demon Mithra; that was celebrated at the winter solstice on the Vatican Hill (propitious moment when the sun begins to ascend to the heaven , hence its name of Sol Invictus, the "unconquered sun" day); with a slight delay of two days which is still found today. The famous Christmas cake is a living memory of this Indo-European solar tradition. Before

being changed into pastry, this log was really kindled in the fireplace and restored, by analogy, a little of the expected light.

The star which guides the Magi come from the East to the infant Jesus corresponds rather to the prophecy of the pagan Balaam: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel," while their offering corresponds to Isaiah. Note that, in the Gospels, the mages are not three in number, nor even called "kings." These details are the fact of the apocryphal texts. The names which have popularized them will appear only in the eighth century (their arrival at the Epiphany matches the ancient festival of the twelve days -breton gourdeziou- or of the Saturnalia, when a king of the fools was drawn through a bean placed in a cake).

Some Jews didn't content themselves with vaguely expecting the coming of the Messiah, they also thought they knew at what time he was to appear; because there existed prophecies supposed to predict the date of the event (Josephus, writing with caution for the Romans, indicates discreetly that a prophecy is the origin of the revolt of 67. "What did the most elevate them in undertaking this war was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." Jewish Wars. VI-5). The Romans also knew this prophecy, and Suetonius informs us that they tried to divert it in support of Vespasian.

Now the oracle was not at all ambivalent, but very clear; it is the word of Jacob: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh (the envoy?) comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49, 10). Subject to an exact translation of the term "Shiloh" (which gave rise to many comments, but in which everyone agrees to see a designation of the Messiah), the predicted date can be fixed with accuracy. The scepter went out of Judah in - 40, when the usurper Herod (the Great) made himself admitted as king, especially with the support of the Romans, instead of the legitimate descendant. But in the reign of Herod, Palestine still remained independent, there was always a look of "scepter." By cons, even this look was destroyed in + 6, when a Roman prefect was designated in Judea. Neglecting the reign of Herod, during which nothing had occurred, the Messiah had to appear, either on the death of Herod (- 4) or, at the latest, in + 6. The date of the birth of Jesus was therefore not linked to a historical fact, that of his own birth, but to a prophecy.

At first glance, Matthew and Luke are on the same wavelength. In the first, Christ is born "during the time of King Herod." For the second, Mary conceives six months after her cousin, who herself conceives "in the days of Herod, king of Judea." The two evangelists therefore place the birth of Christ at the latest in - 4, since historians admit that Herod the Great died on that date.

But the same Luke (is it really the same Luke, anyway?) complicates everything. He states that Jesus was born during the first "census of Quirinius", governor of Syria. This first census is known: it was ordered by Rome to determine the taxes of Judea in 6 of our era. What makes at least ten years of difference with the previous dating. The incompatibility is total: Jesus is at the threshold of adolescence in Matthew as he is just born in Luke.

Luke tells us further that John the Baptist preaches in "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius" that is in 28, and Jesus begins soon after his public life when he was "about thirty years old." A basic subtraction is enough to show that he is mistaken, since $28-6 = 22$, not "about thirty" ... Another mistake of nearly ten years. These are very approximate estimates. It is absolutely certain that at least one of the two evangelists is mistaken, if not both at once.

BIRTH PLACE.

Nobody knows really where Jesus was born. It is only from his public life that have emerged witnesses or people who were able to speak of the man Jesus. That is to say, basically since his first speaking in Capernaum. Because births and childhoods of common people interest nobody and therefore doesn't hold anyone's attention.

The fixing of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem comes from the will of the early Christians to make it match at all costs to a quote from the prophet Micah (5,1-2). "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." The village is, let us not forget it, that in which David would have been anointed king, a symbol.

BYT-LHM means "house of the massacre" in Hebrew, and the myth of the massacre of the innocents (Matthew 2,16) is only based on this pun. If it had really occurred, this massacre, given its revolting character, would certainly have left traces in Jewish history, for example in Josephus. Such a way of rewriting history is what is called midrash in Jewish religious literature.

Passage found crossed by the heirs to Peter DeLaCrau.

We also know that around Bethlehem, in 386 pagans were still celebrating the birth of the god-or-demon of cereals Tammuz (Adonis) according to St. Jerome in a letter to St. Paulinus of Nola. Empress Helena will build here the basilica of the Nativity. Like Hermes, Dionysus, Mithra or Zeus, indeed, this god or demon was born in a cave.

Another symbol, the mother Earth, the universal matrix. This is so, moreover, that is still represented the nativity scene, of the Ben-Hur in Hollywood, popularized in the thirteenth century by St. Francis of Assisi, to which tradition added, "the ox and the ass"; to confirm another prophecy of Isaiah left out by the evangelists, but retained by the Gnostics. The first Christian communities therefore also took this site over in order to recover an ancient sacred place.

On the other hand, that he was born in Nazareth is a mistranslation of the Greek term nazoraïos (Hebrew nazir or nazara = nazirite or consecrated separated) when it ceased to be understood.

Matthew 2, 23: "He went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazorene."

Since Jesus was to be, was, called Nazorene or Nazarene, that meant that he should be, that he was, from a town or village corresponding to this adjective. A misinterpretation of the word due to the will of the first or second generations of Christians to make coincide at all costs the biography of their master with the Jewish prophecies (here again midrash midrashh still midrash). No writer of the first century, including Jews mentions the name of the village. Its name (we say its name alone) will only appear in the texts at the end of the second century. Later the mother of Emperor Constantine (Helena) during her travel to the Holy Land baptize "Well of Mary" the only water point in the area likely to be suitable for the data gathered by her people and built a church there in 356.

CHILDHOOD.

For the same reasons as stated above (no one is interested in the childhood of a common man and no witness is queuing up to make themselves known and to play a role in speaking of it) we know nothing of the childhood of the man Jesus.

It goes without saying that the so-called infancy gospels have no historical value, are episodes superimposed by Matthew and Luke. Just like the episode from the Gospel of St. Luke (2: 41-52) showing us a 12-year-old Jesus trying to stand up to the doctors of the Law in the temple of Jerusalem.

David Strauss and Rudolf Bultmann see in these narratives simple apologetic and theological projections of the theologoumena category (in short some lies, some deceptions).

"The stories of Jesus' childhood as the Gospels of Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 arouse numerous literary and historical issues, so much their writing appears late, falling rather in the supernatural in the way of the childhood stories in the Judeo-Hellenistic world. " In all probability based on patterns of the Jewish pious literature of haggadah type, but resulting from different backgrounds, they attest besides perhaps to differences within the first communities of disciples.

The expression "hidden life of Jesus" refers to the years of Jesus' life between the end of childhood and the beginning of his preaching. Christian canonical writings are silent on the issue.

This is why Marcion not without reason makes the life of Jesus begin in Capernaum: "In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Jesus descended into Capernaum."

Marcion is pragmatic: he takes into account only the facts retrospectively proved in his time and for which there was real witnesses: during the reign of Emperor Tiberius, a man named Jesus began to get himself talked about in Galilee, preaching in the name of God and apparently working miracles according to etc. ... etc.

But the question is this: What did Jesus do during the— decisive in the life of a man— twenty years that elapsed between when he was 12/13 years old, age of his Bar Mitzvah , and when he was 30/37 years old, the age of his public life?

He was probably to spend several months or years of his life among the Essenes (the movement of well-known religious Jews) and probably even at Qumran to begin before joining the religious reformation movement led by John the Baptist.

Then he will move to Capernaum and perhaps even on his invitation in the house of the future St. Peter in order to start there his actual public life. In any case it will be in this same community of Capernaum that he will choose most of his followers, among the fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James and John) or among the publicans (Matthew).

PERSONALITY.

The Gospels having been written after the death of Christ, the disciples projected the ideas they had on him after Passover (as the rumors having begun to circulate about him from that time); on their description of the period preceding Easter

They do not, by writing the Gospels, do a work of historians but a work of lawyers. It is not easy to get to identify the faults or qualities of Jesus, but let us try anyway.

Jesus spent his youth in Galilee, a name having nothing to do with the Galatians, that is to say, in the north of Palestine, southern Lebanon, Syrian Golan. Its inhabitants were victims of a certain racism from more southern Jews (their accent was laughed at, they were stigmatized as being only half Jews, etc.).

Although the Gospels say nothing about them, the conditions of his education can easily be reconstructed: those of a Jew of Galilee member of a milieu of relatively well-to-do craftsmen. He could read. In addition to his native language, Aramaic, he had notions of Hebrew, the language of the Jewish Bible, and perhaps of Greek language.

Why Jesus left his village as adults fall within the secret of his person.

Authors who send him in India, Tibet, in Upper Egypt, or elsewhere, to explain his knowledge, build here assumptions without any basis. What is on the contrary obvious is that the god Jesus, regarding this world, had knowledge, how to say? At least very limited; or that he shared many of the ignorance or prejudice (of the Jews) of his time. Facing the Canaanite woman who asks the healing of her daughter, he begins besides by having a typically racist anti-non-Jew speech (we must not forget the political climate of the time).

We saw that Jesus probably lived for some time in his young adult life in an Essene community, or at least that he was influenced by the Essenes, and that is there probably that he met John Baptist that he will follow in his dissidence before founding himself his own movement.

The Essenes observed the law, with its ideals of poverty and charity among brothers, strictly. They were very pious and practiced the brotherly meal in common. They were dissidents opposed to the Temple leaders, but claiming to be the chosen people, the true Israel. Persecuted by the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the Essenes fled to Damascus in 130 before our era, then returned to Judea and settle at Qumran, on the shores of the Dead Sea, in 60 before our era, under the protection of the Romans . It is a question in their texts of a Messiah, king and priest, of the "suffering servant" in reference to Isaiah and this is here that Jesus' life interferes. The scrolls also contain comments of the Hebrew Bible, of the prophets, especially that of Habakkuk that Paul used for the justification by belief. We may wonder what was really his road to Damascus!

The similarity between the Essenes and early Christianity is so striking that Eusebius thought the description of them that gave Philo concerned the early Judeo-Christian community. The Essenes considered themselves as the last remnant of Israel, and denounced the corruption and impiety of the priestly aristocracy in charge of the Temple. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls his own followers the poor (Ebionites) or the saints. Exactly the Essenes words!

Christian tradition places the scene of the "temptations" of Jesus on the desert hills of Qumran, what proves well the relationship between the new Joshua/Jesus and the Essenes (memory of a retreat in their community?)

Similarities and coincidences with the Gospels or the Acts of the apostles are innumerable. The similarities between the Essenes and the early Judeo-Christianity are so striking that they enlighten it. John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan accomplished the Essene rite of purification.

Several of the alleged teachings of Jesus are nevertheless in contradiction or at least unknown to the doctrine of the Essenes (the Essenes did not believe in a God or Demiurge made flesh they did not mention the name of Jesus); and it is difficult to equate the "Teacher of Righteousness" mentioned by their writings, to Jesus himself.

The influence of John the Baptist, popular and rebellious preacher of the established worship (a cousin of Jesus?) had to play a role. Jesus joined him on the Jordan and was for a time member of his disciples, up to the point of receiving his baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins that John administered to those who received favorably his message.

Jesus was therefore at the beginning of his public career a disciple and follower of John the Baptist. The latter escaping the sectarian attitude of the groups named above, shouted to the Jewish people of Palestine a call for repentance and baptism, making each one able to benefit from divine forgiveness. John the Baptist's disciples remained active for some time (Acts 18: 24-26; 19: 1-3). Continuity is complete between the two unifiers of the people. Between them and the exclusivist groups, the opposition is absolute. But it is not a conflict between a new religion and Judaism. This is a popular awakening in the Palestinian Judaism, which vigorously attacks the claims of the Jewish leading groups.

This closeness between John the Baptist and Jesus is confirmed by a specification given by St. John. According to him, Jesus would have been for a time engaged in the baptizing: " After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John was also baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized "(John 3: 22-23). Further, the same statement is repeated, contradicted nevertheless by a parenthesis probably introduced later. " Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples " (John 4 , 2).

The evangelist, who has here own information, informs us also that Jesus, threatened by the Jewish authorities, withdraws where John the Baptist began to baptize; what suggests that he had kept constant contact with the Baptist environment from which he came. " Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." And in that place many believed in Jesus"(John 10: 39-42).

The thus gleaned information is precious: it attests that Jesus joined a spiritual movement of renewal, and that for some time he had responsibility in it. Deeply rooted in this group where he stayed, of which he shared the ideals and activities, Jesus then broke away from it at the beginning of his public life ...

Editor's note. The cause of the break-up between John the Baptist and Jesus is perhaps due to the excessive asceticism of the Baptist or to his refusal to get involved more actively in the socio-political reform of the society. In short, Jesus would have realized the inadequacy of mortifications to change the world. A bit like Buddha, he would have discovered too, the failure of the excess of mortification to reach the real world.

The split between the two groups was not made without rancor. The Baptist sent his disciples to the new Joshua in order to ask him: "'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"(Matthew 11: 2-3).

The full with arrogance answer of Jesus (he boasts of performing miracles in quantity a little like Apollonius of Tyana later) had to dismay the prophet of the Jordan River and make him understand that Jesus was not the expected Messiah. Cure deafness or blindness was, in fact, to be done on the spiritual, not physical, level. In doing so Jesus showed to John the Baptist that he had not understood the nature of miracles, he had to perform.

The communities at the origin of the Gospels have much removed, added or changed, we have said ...

For example, they have minimized the part of the Baptist, and done everything to highlight the originality of the new Joshua. These early communities had a very selective memory, it's the least we can say; what made the whole more the advocacy (of a lawyer) or catechesis than an objective narrative regarding the facts. See for example the story of the beheading of John the Baptist, voluntarily brought closer some passages from the book of Esther, and therefore which is also not a purely historical narrative (no one knows if things really happened in that way); but a midrash, that is to say, a synthesis of other texts.

Did John die in suspecting the fate that expected the one who had initially followed him? That's his secret. The fact is that it is with him that Jesus forged his first message and that it is Christianity, and not the opposite, which had to be defined in relation with the baptism, of which it nevertheless kept the central rite, the baptism.

It is therefore in Baptist circles that Jesus recruited his first disciples (the first of whom being Simon known as Peter –Cephas-, because he was bald. His brother Andrew will even be presented as having first followed the Baptist. - John 1, 35-51 -); before leading himself a small group in which were practiced baptisms close to those of John (gospel according to St John 3: 22-26; 4,1-3).

An exchange occurs between them. In the audience of the Baptist, there are "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 3: 7), out-and-out enemies of Jesus, especially the latter. Cursing them (Matthew 12, 34; 23, 33), it is from John the Baptist that Jesus borrows the rude remark "you brood of vipers" (Matthew 3: 7) and parallel verses in Luke 3.7) in order to apply it to his own opponents.

The alliance between the movement of John and that of Jesus is confirmed when we see the disciples of the first pass to the second the news of the martyrdom of their master (Matthew 14:12).

This period regarded by scholars as that of the beginnings can be located around the autumn of the year 27. This traveling form of existence lasted probably about two and a half years. The events can't be easily located in their chronological succession, the evangelists, only writers of a consistent story about Jesus, not having had, never having had this concern ... Some of his followers, disappointed or fearful, ceased to follow him. Around the Passover of the year 29 (a year and a half after the beginning of the adventure), Jesus asked those who accompanied him still. The question takes a form different according to the evangelists.

In the Synoptic ones, it is of the type: "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8, 27 and parallel verses). In John, it has a more dramatic tone: "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (John 6, 67).

The truth therefore is that there was never a messianic entry into Jerusalem around Easter. The context described by the Gospels (palm leaves, etc.) evokes rather the Jewish Festival known as feast of booths or tabernacles (Sukkot in Hebrew) what is not at all the same thing!

And the new Joshua was doubtless a pilgrim among others, recognized by some, ignored by many (the majority likely). The shifting from Sukkot to Easter of this event is one of the many fakes due to the Christians of later generations.

The Last Supper (from the Latin *cena* "dinner") would have been the last Passover meal of Christ. It opens the cycle of the Passion, during which, according to the Christian interpretation, the Son of God or of the Demiurge endured suffering having a redemptive value for mankind. During the Last Supper, Jesus seeing his death coming, would have accomplished the gestures and uttered the words that survive today in the ritual of the Eucharist and give rise to the "devogdonion" commensality meal called "communion" of the faithful in Christianity. Let us leave out the date to focus on the core of the meal, the sacred dishes, the bread and wine taken for the body and blood of Christ; whose consumption is supposed to be the pledge of the new covenant made between God or the Demiurge, and the Men ("Take and eat; this is my body. Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins").

It is obvious that such words could be pronounced only after the event and inserted here by pagan Christians, not by Jewish Christians. By Christians coming from the Gentiles, not by Christians coming from among the Jews John Toland would say.

Neither these dishes, nor their consumption, are the ritual revolution described by the sycophants of Christianity. Such rites are common practices in the 1st century - and long - in the mystery religions. Asian or Egyptian in origin, they had gradually invaded the Greco-Roman world when were formed the first germ of the movement which will produce Christianity (see the works of John Toland).

As their etymology suggests it, these "mysteries" were secret cults in which the initiates or mystai, won their eternal salvation through their participation in the passion of a deity. During the course of the sacred drama, the mystai ate the flesh of the god-or-demon to better identify themselves with his virtues, and access more easily to the divine bliss. In the Greek mysteries of Dionysus, it was a question of eating the raw flesh of a bull or of a goat (omophagia). The absorption of blood was added in the mysteries of the Iranian god-or-demon Mithra. Over time and because of their high cost, these foods were often replaced by ... bread and wine (symbolized flesh and blood).

There what is surprising in the Gospels, it is not so much the presence of this ritual, which existed for centuries, than its supposed intrusion right in the heart of Israel. Because Jewish law is clear: it is absolutely forbidden to give blood to drink. Extremely serious infringement to the requirements of the Torah, this ceremony was inconceivable in the populations of the Jews in Palestine, reluctant to the essentially pagan symbolism of the blood, which upset from top to bottom their customs. The meal of "holy brotherhood" practiced by the Essenes, in which some specialists wanted to see the direct ancestor of the Eucharistic Institution, did not go as far, at most, it was a support for it. The substrate of the Christian communion is obviously foreign to Judaism: we must seek it in the practices of the countries where the Hellenists have recruited their early members. Therefore probably in Asia Minor (Antioch): it is a meal of commensality with the god- or- demons.

THE TRIAL.

Pilate (Latin Pontius Pilatus in) really existed. He was prefect of the Roman province of Judea in the 1st century, that is to say, according to the New Testament, when Jesus was crucified. An inscription found in Caesarea vouches his existence as well as the texts of Josephus (Jewish Wars, Book II, IX. 2-4). These texts by Josephus report that Pilate had suppressed bloodily two Jewish revolts or even three if we admit that Barabbas was arrested during a riot. He could therefore want to avoid a new "tumult."

Concerning the garrisons of properly Roman troops (legions) in the region, here is all we can say. -In normal times the main part of the Roman army of the East was stationed at the time facing the Parthian Empire, therefore very north of Judea in Upper Mesopotamia, a region called Jezira in Arabic, along the Tigris or Euphrates rivers depending on the circumstances. See the garrison towns of Amida in southeastern Turkey or Singara southeast of Nisibis in Iraq.

-The administrative capital of Judea is Caesarea, not Jerusalem. This is where the prefect normally resides.

-This prefect, of course, has the right of life and death. -This prefect has the right of life and death.

-The troops at the prefect's disposal are few in number, a cavalry wing and five cohorts of infantry in which there are no Jews since they are exempt from armed service.

The Romans referred to in the Gospels are therefore more likely to be auxiliary troops, Jewish or non-Jewish, as there were at Caesarea or Capernaum. At that time Capernaum included a customs post and a small Roman garrison commanded by a centurion, which explains the presence of the Apostle Levi, known as Matthew, who must have had an office there from which he collected the maritime tax on fisheries and the border tax on goods.

-On the other hand...

The account of the trial is a web of contradictions, inconsistencies, improbabilities, from writers who know nothing of the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin or of the Roman justice, and led by the only concern to make the opprobrium fall on Jews.

The contradictions between the evangelists abound. In the Synoptic books, these are Jewish troops helped by the crowd which proceed to arrest Jesus on the Mount of Olives. For John, there are the Roman forces.

The trial itself divides them. Mark and Matthew evoke two appearances before the Sanhedrin, Luke limits himself to one, and John knows no one of them. Let us add that, in the dates indicated by the evangelists (the night before the Passover), it was forbidden for a Jewish court to sit.

All in the attitude of Pilate (the prefect of Judea before whom the Sanhedrin would have sent Jesus after having judged him according to its laws) is also unlikely, and contrary to customs.

So why does it send the accused to the Tetrarch of Galilee, Herod Antipas, who has no legal jurisdiction in Judea? How to believe in the scene in which he chooses to release the murderer Barabbas instead of releasing the man he has just publicly found innocent? Pilate was a shameless prefect, that Rome later removed because of his excesses against the Samaritans (Mt. Gerizim massacre in 35).

In addition, the custom of giving the Jews the grace of a prisoner each Passover Eve, is confirmed by no document. Finally, Barabbas in Aramaic means "son of the father." This is clearly a duplicate of Jesus, in the Jewish tradition of the two goats (on the occasion of Yom Kippur, a "scapegoat," drawn and magically loaded with the sins of Israel, was released in the desert ; while another, this one "innocent," was slain instead it outside the city, to atone for the sins committed by its people. The analogy is obvious.

That this scene was designed with the sole goal to exonerate the Romans from the death of Christ, and to overwhelm the Jews in the same time, is the only possible explanation.

The rather bitter reflection of Pontius Pilate "What is truth? " in the eyes of some authors makes him one of the most human characters, by his sincere doubt; (where it is rather belief or indifference which is described in other protagonists of the Gospels).

The minutes of the various trials underwent by Jesus were fabricated.

The day or night sessions of the Sanhedrin are neither plausible nor credible.

The dialogue with Pilate is impossible. Jesus is silent, perhaps even he doesn't know exactly of what he is accused. The teams having made these stories alike (these events had no Christian witness).

In what language besides would have taken place this interrogation? Aramaic? Greek ? Anyway, Pilate usually sat at Caesarea, the then capital of the country, more pleasant, and not in Jerusalem, dusty and old archaic city.

This is a dramatic invention having theological and not historical purpose.

Pilate, or more precisely one of his subordinates in place in Jerusalem (it is unlikely that a prefect as Pilate deigned personally receive an insignificant rebel like Jesus. This is typically the kind of fatigue which is left to a subordinate) received a "terrorist" sent by Caiaphas and had him executed on the spot, without further ado.

THE DEATH.

What is deeply disturbing, when you decide to read the New Testament with a historian's eye is that, when are removed borrowings and improbabilities, it seems nothing remains.

Or what credence can we give to a narrative supposed to be historical, or biographical, but made only of already existing texts (prophecies) put together in reality? Where are the witnesses? Where are the facts?

The death (too) was announced by the prophets of the Old Testament. And even in detail. It was written that he would be scourged, that people would spit in his face, that he would remain stoical in adversity, that he would die between bandits; that his feet and hands would be shredded, but that no bones of him would be broken, that as for any drink, it would be given him only vinegar and gall, that his clothes would be shared; that his soul would not be given up to the underworld (Sheol) and that his body does not know the corruption, that he would live again after three days, etc.

All these prophecies were recorded in collections, to which referred those expecting the next coming of their liberator. These Messianists were Jewish sectarian groups (some of their ideas are in the documents found at Qumran), which had developed a theology centered on the "suffering Messiah or Servant" as Isaiah presents him. Since the 1st century before our era, they lived in the imminent expectation of the return of the "Teacher of Righteousness." It is therefore not surprising to find the tone of their belief in the Gospels.

But if we remove the events that have not been the object of a scriptural reference (those which have been the object of a scriptural reference being justly dubious), what remains then of the narrative of Christ's death reported by the evangelists?

The redemption through the sacrifice of a god-or-demon? It is found in the mystery religions, where it is a question of a god-or-demon who dies and rises from the dead for his faithful at the spring equinox, at a time when the life of nature takes its course over Winter. Each year Tammuz (Adonis), Osiris, Attis died (Attis, hanged in a pine tree) and revived. During their "earthly death," Adonis, Attis, the

goddess-or-demoness, or fairy, Ishtar, Orpheus, descended (as Jesus) into the Underworld ... Most of these god-or-demons were called with the title of "Lord" (which is translated Kyrios in Greek language) a title that the Christian community of Antioch, and later the Church of Rome, will give to Jesus. The characteristic of "Savior" (Soter in Greek) was also attributed to them as it will be done also for Christ. The myth resembling most that of Jesus is undoubtedly that of Mithra. His cult includes a commemorative meal and a baptism of initiation.

What happened in reality therefore it is, once again let's repeat:

1 that Jesus was arrested by the police of the high priest;

2 given up to local collaborators of the Romans (a subordinate of Pilate, who was on duty that day in the Antonia fortress of Jerusalem, Pilate himself being in Caesarea) to be executed for having wanted to be king of the Jews.

All the rest is only literature or theater, not history!

As John Toland remarked it very well, if a prophet spoke in the name of God, and that what he has announced does not occur; then this is where the blatant evidence that he has in this case spoken with arrogance and by his own authority, not by the authority of God. As Messiah of the Jews Jesus therefore failed, what may have said the first Christians. Only the beginning of the mission expected of all Messiah was actually achieved, the rest, his triumph, could not be accomplished.

THE INITIAL MESSAGE.

Or how to make something new out of something old. After the crucifixion of their teacher, the first Christians were confronted with a vast and multifaceted challenge. They were all Jews, and expecting the return of the announced Messiah, but nothing that Jesus had done and especially his end corresponded to the prophecies about this subject. Even worse, in many ways Jesus had departed from the official Judaism. But as Jews they were to be based only on arguments or themes from the strict observance Judaism that is to say from the scriptures. It was therefore possible only by selecting certain particular booming topics in order to combine them if necessary by reinterpreting them to mitigate some initial intrinsic contradictions.

SOME EXAMPLES.

-In addition to the theme of the return of the Messiah, which had become of a difficult use since nothing had happened as planned (there was no mention of a Messiah ending up crucified as a slave or a tramp in complete or almost anonymity, what explains besides why 99% of the Jewish people refused to recognize the Messiah expected in this horror).

- One of the first themes exploited by Christians was therefore that of the Son of Man.

In later Christian theology, the title "Son of Man" was understood as referring to the humanity of Jesus (and "Son of God," to his divinity) but this was not exactly the case initially.

Indeed, Son of Man was an eschatological figure used in Jewish apocalyptic circles from the post-exilic period onwards. The expression itself is a translation of the Aramaic *bar nasha*, some words used in Jesus' time as a linguistic substitute for the meaning of "human being" or "man."

Its earliest attestation appears in the Book of Ezekiel. There is nothing mysterious there, it means "human being" that's all, but it's not the same in the Book of Daniel.

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed » (Daniel 7,13-14).

According to the text, this "Son of Man" thus receives from God eternal and eschatological dominion over Creation.

It seems that we are in the presence of a figure combining features borrowed from the most traditional Judaism: the Messiah, descendant of David, king of Israel, who frees his people and restores their prosperity (a figure known at least since the time of the prophet Isaiah); and from Iran: the "Saoshyant" who will re-establish, according to Zoroastrianism (which influenced the Jews in Babylon), universal justice through an eschatological regeneration of the world.

The first Christians will thus identify the "Son of Man" with the glorious Christ whose Parousia they expect. The most eloquent example of this is found in the book of Acts 7:55-56 (Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin at the time of his martyrdom).

" But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

This first Christology was therefore attributed to the Hellenists: Jesus, the crucified, has been enthroned into Heaven Son of Man and will (soon) manifest himself as such by his eschatological coming (the Parousia).

-Another of the first themes was undoubtedly also that of the Suffering Servant because it was infinitely better suited to the situation of absolute failure that the first Christians lived. There was no longer any question of being satisfied with "The Messiah is coming, the Messiah is coming, he is here, he has been seen at ...".

Concretely it was a question of 4 passages from the Book of Isaiah or more exactly from the Deutero-Isaiah. This Servant, called by YHWH to enlighten the "nations," is indeed to begin with being the object of the contempt of men. But he is also presented in this book as a king and a prophet. This opened the way to all possibilities.

One of the earliest documents of primitive Christianity, the First Epistle to the Corinthians (+55), will soon step into it. Paul in 1 Co 15:3-4 already refers to Is 53 and a few years later (later, not before) the four gospels will do the same.

-The life of souls after death being a rather widespread theme the first Christians ended up developing the archetypal pagan theme but more specialized of the apotheosis of the made immortal and deified heroes in their physical body BUT WITHOUT TAKING OVER THE SPECIFIC GREEK TERM, of course! Only the idea!

- The resurrection of the bodies. The resurrection of the flesh was a marginal belief in Second Temple Judaism, i.e., Judaism at the time of Jesus. The belief in no resurrection of the flesh at all is still even clearly shown in the book of Daniel of the 2nd century before our era, together with a belief in the resurrection of the soul alone.

A few centuries later, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, writing at about the same time as St. Paul and the authors of the Gospels, noted that the Essenes believed that the soul was immortal, so that while the body returned to dust, the soul went to a place appropriate to its moral character, righteous or ungodly. This, according to the Gospels, was the position of Jesus, defended in an exchange with the Sadducees: " Those who are considered worthy of taking part and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels "(Mark 12:24-25, Luke 20:34-36).

But this was not the case for many Pagans who found it natural, logical and obvious that the survival of the soul, with a physical and bodily envelope having a relationship to be determined with the former one. To be determined, but always in the sense of a better or of a plus, of course.

The general movement in the later oral and written literature of the New Testament will therefore insist more and more on the physical nature of the resurrection of the bodies in question, including in the four Gospels.

-The divine nature of Jesus. In Paul and the first three gospels, as well as in Revelation, Jesus is described to us as enjoying the highest status, but the Jews' fidelity to the most absolute monotheism (like Islam) prevents these authors from describing him as one with God.

This step will be taken only within the Christian community that produced Johannine literature: only here does Jesus become God incarnate, the body of the risen Jesus leading Thomas in disbelief to exclaim, "My Lord and my God!" This was also the message of Mark, a Jewish or non-Jewish writer who writes for a church of non-Jewish Christians, for whom Jesus as "Son of God" has become a divine being.

Christianity claims to be a religion of testimony, a religion of witnesses of Christ (or Jehovah) but what is astonishing in this claim is that it is based on historical novels from the hand of Christian lawyers or writers ... of the second generation (or squarely from false witnesses regarding certain passages clearly added).

We have no accurate report written when Jesus was living by those who knew him. And what we know relevant as for his life and his ministry was given to us in a language which is not the one he usually used, nor even in his mother tongue (Aramaic) , it was given to us as a "condensation" of many years of rumors about him.

Christianity is only partly a "religion of the Book." The first disciples who followed Christ and announced Christ, lived about twenty years before one of the New Testament books was written (that is to say around the year 50). At the time of their writing down (circa 50-150), Christian communities existed in areas where no work (come down to us) had been drafted and they certainly had ideas and beliefs that are found in no New Testament book.

To tell the truth, among those who considered themselves as followers of the Christ, some even fed certainly ideas which will be rejected or condemned by the New Testament writers. Moreover, during the last decades of the drafting of the New Testament, Christians produced other writings that have been preserved; for example, the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, the First Epistle of Clement, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of James or protoevangelium.

So what was the overall, genuine and complete, message, of the historical Jesus, that is to say the message received from the words and actions of this dissident of movement of John the Baptist? ?

All we can say is that this message was quite complex and ambivalent to cause very different, even contradictory, reactions; ranging, for example, and to take only that example, from the discrete anti non-Jewish racism of James, Peter and Judas, to the radical anti-Judaism of Stephen or Paul.

There was therefore at the beginning in this field, in the life and work of the new Joshua....

- A certain Jewish nationalism of Messianic type.
- But also a radical criticism of the Jewish society of his time.

What currently remains in the four official gospels is only a small part of it, and probably not the most genuine.

Some of the interpretations of the original complete message have disappeared very early, or while leaving no direct heirs (Stephen died prematurely, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, the Gnostic Christians); Catholics, Reformists and Orthodox (in the person of their spiritual ancestors) having persecuted or censored all others, we will never know more about them.

In Mark 12, 29, the first commandment given or reminded by Jesus is still simply the ancient Jewish prayer called the "Shema": "Hear Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one."

The (unconscious?) racism of Jesus did that he was first concerned only about the fate of the chosen people.

" It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." (Mark 7: 24-30).

"Do not go among the pagans or enter any town of the Samaritans" (Matthew 10:5).

" The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24: 21).

At this point of preaching therefore it is still not question of non-Jews.

Incipient Christianity was not therefore at the beginning a religion with universal aim, but rather a Jewish movement calling for the rejection of social injustice prevailing within the Jewish people and against the globalization of its destiny, therefore opposed to the ideology dominant within the Jewish people of the time. Judas was probably even a sympathizer or a sicarian militant, given his nickname: Iscariot (Mark 3:19).

The fact that this new Joshua was crucified with two others sentenced that day suggests well indeed (if nevertheless this is proved of course); he was considered by the established Jewish and Roman official authorities as close, or at least a sympathizer, of the guerrilla movement of the Zealots, and sentenced as such.

Zealots are sometimes also called "lestoi" in Greek, that is to say, bandits or robbers, of course, but also terrorists of a war of national liberation. The inscription of Pilate reported by John 19,19: "Jesus the Nazorene, the King of the Jews" is a proof of that. See also the allusions to the attacks against the supporters of Herod (Mark 3,6 and 12,13; Matthew 22.16).

What is to be understood is that the communities behind these texts.....

- Developed considerably the themes having caught their attention, if necessary by inventing.
- Outdid or embroidered on them by embellishing or by making the situation seem worse than it was, if necessary.

- Ignored sometimes many things about Jesus or his background (Judaism).

- Left out voluntarily what they did not understand or what seemed to them no longer relevant (for example by erasing the political side of the action of their mentor).

The highly political meaning of words such Messiah or descendant of David was quickly neutralized by the early Christians; who presented the work of their hero like that of the savior god- or- demons as Asclepius, or Mithras, or Hesus in the Far West, and not like that of the Maccabees. The evangelical writings have completely overshadowed the political side of the preaching of this new Joshua, by turning him therefore into a total pacifist ; in order to reassure the Roman power and exonerate a posteriori the Christians of any conspiracy against the state security. The Jesus of the future official Gospels therefore will be able only to invite his followers to be patient in this field (Matthew 13: 24-30; Luke 17, 23; 19,11).

The real Jesus was nevertheless a Galilean claiming to be the Messiah come to liberate the Jews, the leader of a political-religious small group not accepting the Roman rule, and crucified as such. That this man left himself be known as the "Messiah" in the Palestine of that time is not surprising. There existed an era of messiahs from approximately the 1st century before our era to the second century of our era. That there were with him armed Zealots (Simon Peter) and Sicarians (Judas Iscariot); that some hailed him as "king of the Jews" and that he proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God or of the Demiurge on Earth as imminent was well in the spirit of the times. But the Roman Law reigned on Earth then, and his last followers had to resolve to consider for him only a spiritual kingdom in the afterlife, just as in the case of Osiris.

The first witness statements on the new Joshua therefore were rewritten and purged of all that was too political, nationalist, Jewish zealot, and committed in the insurrection against Roman oppression.

THE RESURRECTION.

After the death of John the Baptist, the rumor of his resurrection had circulated in the whole country. Of course there was the same thing after the death of Jesus a few months later.

An extraordinary man was murdered in Palestine, he raised the dead, he was perhaps the Messiah, etc.

This rumor grew despite what the authorities said (the body was stolen ...) and therefore he was signaled a little everywhere. For St. Paul, there are besides more appearances or visions than manifestations of a body that could be touched (as in the case of St. Thomas).

" He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve [Editor's note: therefore also to Judas. Congratulations!]

After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" (1 Corinthians 15: 5 -8).

The truth is here!

1. No one, even among the disciples, attended the resurrection itself, despite the multitude of details subsequently provided by the texts. These were women who, having found the tomb empty, ran maddened in order to inform the disciples.

2. The rumor of his resurrection as John-Baptist few months earlier; was immediately denied by the authorities who, after investigation, came to the conclusion that they were some disciples of Jesus who had fabricated (with numerous added details) this resurrection story; perhaps even by stealing squarely the corpse.

3. In order to give more weight to their history, Christians have had to invent many details each one more spectacular than the last.

Stories of apparitions were therefore released to overcome this initial deficiency (the lack of direct eyes witnesses of the resurrection, what would have simplified things); by multiplying details or witnesses (1 Corinthians 15: 5-8: more than 500 people at a time) of his brief return on Earth after death.

Matthew (27, 66-28, 4) gives unverifiable or questionable, but assuredly spectacular, specifications. The tomb had even been sealed, sentries posted, with the agreement of Pilate, an earthquake occurred, an angel appeared, had broken the seal of the tomb, etc. The Gospel of John too, adds others, also spectacular: Peter and another disciple run to the tomb, each trying to arrive first, but vainly!

The main problem for Christians remains: no direct objective eye witness of the resurrection itself.

The most picturesque of these legends is definitely that which portrays the apostle Thomas putting his fingers in the wounds to verify that it is Jesus.

The first mention of Jesus's apparitions after the resurrection can be found in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians . It indicates, apparently in chronological order, a first apparition to Peter, then to the "Twelve," then to five hundred people at once, then to James (presumably Jesus's brother), then to "all the apostles" and finally to himself.

Paul does not mention any apparition to the women, except for the "sisters" included in the 500. There is near consensus on the fact that the list is pre-Pauline - it is often called the catechism of the early church - but not on the question of knowing which part belongs to the first tradition and which is due to Paul: Most scholars believe that Peter and the Twelve are part of the original list, but not all believe the same thing about the apparition to the 500, James and "all the apostles."

By claiming that Jesus appeared to him in the same way as to Peter, James and others who knew Jesus during his lifetime Paul strengthens his authority.

In 1 Galatians he explains that his experience was both a revelation from Jesus ("that the gospel I preached I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ") and a revelation of Jesus ("But when God, ... was pleased to reveal his Son in me ").

In 2 Corinthians 12, he tells his readers about "a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I

know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell”;

As the man in question is obviously Paul himself, this means that he was likely to live or have visionary ecstasies and THEREFORE THIS CASTS DOUBT ON THE REALITY OF THE APPARITIONS OF THE RISEN FROM THE DEAD IN WHAT CONCERNS HIM PERSONALLY.

Paul in reality is hardly interested in the risen body of Jesus, except to say that it is not an earthly body, and in his second letter to the Philippians he explains how the body of the risen man differs from the one he had before the crucifixion.

Luke does not mention any of the apparitions reported by Matthew and replaces Galilee with Jerusalem as the only location. Jesus appears to Cleophas and an unnamed disciple on the way to Emmaus, to Peter (reported by the other apostles) and the eleven other disciples at a meeting. The apparitions reach their climax with the Ascension of Jesus before the disciples gathered on a mountain outside Jerusalem.

The Gospel of John was written some time after 80 or 90: Jesus appears on the empty tomb to Mary Magdalene (who at first does not recognize him), then to the disciples minus Thomas, then to all the disciples, including Thomas (cf. the episode of the "skeptical Thomas"), and ends with a long apparition in Galilee to Peter and six of the disciples...This chapter 21, the apparition in Galilee, is generally regarded as a later addition to the original Gospel.

EPILOGUE.

Convinced that Christ or Messiah, with whom they identified their Master, would soon return to the holy place, that is to say, the Temple of Jerusalem; Jesus's disciples settled in this city, where, however, their activity was likely to face serious difficulties. They frequented assiduously the Temple, preached in it the good news (the gospel) and formed a more or less united and fervent community. Although the picture that the chapters 1-5 of the Acts give to us is somewhat idealized, nothing allows us to doubt the close ties between members of the first church in Jerusalem. In some ways, this group of believers besides will look like the Essenes at Qumran, and will obey, like them, to stringent disciplinary rules (Acts 5: 1-11).

THE APOSTLES.

The apostles according to the Acts: Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

The apostles according to Mark: Simon known as Peter, James son of Zebedee, John James's brother, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot.

The apostles according to Matthew: Simon-Peter, James son of Zebedee, John, the brother of James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot.

The Apostles according to Luke: Simon-Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Judas son of James, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot.

The apostles according to John: Simon known as Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, Nathanael of Cana and the beloved disciple. The son of Zebedee, James and John, are missing in the original list and are only found in the last chapter, the Chapter XXI, which was added later, perhaps from seventy to eighty years later.

They are characters resulting from a complicated story where the symbolic connotations that conveyed the previous midrashim come into a whole series of relationships modeled on each another. These figures are mutually used as contrasts, foils, models, symbols, speakers, counselors, traitors (Judas), etc.

The result is a work of fiction, forming the backdrop of the romanticized story of Jesus that Christians then will dare present as historical. Let us try to unravel the truth from falsehood in this.

The initial core of the apostles seems to have been made by Galileans of the area of Capernaum, supporters of the movement of John the Baptist, disappointed by his refusal of any socio-political action, the Boanerges (sons of thunder). The first thing we know about the apostles indeed is that James and John were Boanerges, that is to say, "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3, 17) name that looks anything but nonviolent.

Simon the Zealot said the Canaanite. On the Zealotic sympathies of this apostle, there can be no doubt. Among the disciples there was one named Simon, "called the Zealot" (Luke 6, 15). "Among the disciples who were present there was Simon the Zealot" (Acts 1-13).

Canaanites? Many have claimed that this nickname evoked his birthplace: Cana. Cananus is most likely the Greek translation of the Hebrew "qana = zealous," and it seems that St. Luke gives the true meaning of this nickname when he calls Simon (placed by him in the tenth place of the apostles) a Zealot.

Simon known as Peter, son of Jonas.

Perhaps the same as the previous one, but it is not sure. This Simon has two nicknames in the New Testament, son of Jonas (Bar Jona) and Cephas = stone because of his baldness.

Son of Jonah is the Greek translation of the word bar iona which in Aramaic (a language spoken in Palestine during the Roman occupation), meant "resistance fighter, fugitive or outlaw."

As for the nickname Cephas, it was given to him because of his baldness, or because of his strength (which made him resemble a rock).

To note. He will tear off with a sword the ear of a Temple guard in the Garden of Olives (John 18, 10). He will kill Ananias and Sapphira because they had not paid back to the community the outcome from the sale of their land (Acts 5). He will quarrel violently with Paul because he was opposed to his racist policy of non-admission of pagans in the early Christian communities.

He will slay his rival the great Samaritan philosopher Simon (black magic??? In any case, certainly not excess of love).

Andrew. The brother of this Simon known as Peter.

James the greater son of Zebedee. On the Zealotic sympathies of this apostle, there can be no doubt either being given his membership in the band of the Boanerges " James son of Zebedee and his brother John, to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder," (Mark 3-17). He is associated by Gamaliel, with the revolutionist Theudas, who was beheaded by Cuspius Fadus in 44, as a Messianistic Jewish agitator, and with Judas the Galilean, leader of the Census War (Acts 5, 34). John son of Zebedee. That this John also is a Boanerges is confirmed to us by Mark who calls him so explicitly (Mark 3-1). He is not the author of the Gospel bearing his name.

James son of Alphaeus known as the younger or the less. See Mark 15, 40.

As there were two James in the group of apostles, so it has always been necessary to distinguish them. The name of James the less can, of course, refer to a simple question of size (by contrast with a taller James), but it also reminds strangely enough of the notion of youngest.

James the younger would have been the youngest brother of the family of Jesus, the younger brother of the Lord, even the youngest, perhaps. Editor's note . The word adelphos means brother in Greek language.

Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot is certainly the most interesting and most complex of all these characters. By resorting again to geography, as they had done with the city of Nazareth, to change Nazorene into Nazarene; the Christians of the second or third generation made the word Iscariot derive from the name of a town invented by them for the purposes of the case, and named Kariot. The name of Iscariot (from Hebrew ekariot, meaning sicarian) was given to the most extremist zealots who carried out terrorist actions in an individual way.

About these, Josephus Flavius ??could write what follows.

"There sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the day time, and in the midst of the city; this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them; by which means they appeared persons of such reputation that they could by no means be discovered "(the war of the Jews II - 13).

The named Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas said Didymus (Twin), Matthew (formerly Levi), Jude known as Thaddeus, are virtually unknown elsewhere.

In John there are no longer twelve apostles, but nine and with somewhat different names.

Are missing James son of Alphaeus, Judas brother or James or Thaddeus, Bartholomew, Matthew and Simon the Zealot. By cons, we find new ones that are not named by the other evangelists, Nathanael and an anonymous disciple known as the "favorite."

To note. All these apostles are called Galilean, except Judas Iscariot that who is said coming from Judea.

So there is a discrepancy between the words of Jesus; "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel "(Matthew 19, 28); and the reality of facts that will reduce the number of apostles to much less (11??? 9? 5 ???)

Second comment.

There is a difference between the names reported by the gospels of Mark and Matthew, which give us a Thaddeus ignored by the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Which themselves by cons, know in his place a Judas of James ignored by the two firsts.

A surprising difference since the three authors in question are supposed to have known very well the group of the twelve.

Third remark.

Incidentally, what is very strange, it is that St. Paul in the text of 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8, seems always to count Judas among the 12 (since he still speaks of twelve apostles whereas Judas was only replaced after these apparitions, see the drawing lots of Matthias in Acts 1:26).

The death of Judas in Acts 1, 18, differs completely from that attributed to him by the Gospels, despite having been composed after. He did not commit suicide by hanging himself, but dies accidentally, of a disembowelment.

LIFE AND DEATH OF THE BROTHERS OF JESUS ?? (Jesus's brothers: James, Joses, Jude, and Simon) or THE LITTLE CHURCH (circa + 35 to circa + 140).

In other words, 99.9% of the first Christians, the Jews or the relatives of Judaism admitting that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Christos) announced by the prophecies. The "Great" Church, on the other hand, will be the NON-GNOSTIC NON MARCIONITE Christian movement opens to pagans.

N.B. We will apply here in this short essay the analysis method used previously in our study of Irish Legends and developed in our many counter-lays (no jealous!)

THAT OF THE WAVES.....OF THE NON-CONCENTRIC WAVES.

Because if we're talking about waves in this essay...

-It is not only to differentiate them by their respective dates of beginning and of end various dynamics of evangelization BECAUSE THEY ARE SO CLOSE FROM THE CHRONOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW that they actually form an almost continuum.

-But to underline their difference in nature, which will become so accentuated that the first will end up dying and disappearing, overwhelmed by the second. At the end of the second century, this trend was indeed clearly losing momentum, even if it still kept solid strongholds in the Diaspora outside Palestine; (from where it has just disappeared, following the destruction/reconstruction of Jerusalem by Adrian's legions in 130).

This late phase of Essenism can hardly be called "Christian" in the strictest sense of the word, since is missing the main characteristic of Christianity; that is, the belief in the divinity of Jesus, who is considered by them only as a man, even if he is exceptional: a kind of super-prophet.

The belief in the divinity of Jesus will only be the culmination of a second wave, launched shortly afterwards, but towards completely different milieus, non-Jewish to tell the truth, by Paul.

Returning to our first wave, all that can be said at this stage of our study is that, although this tendency of original Christianity was very early marginalized by the action of Marcion, and thus remained without any real posterity other than Islam; in view of its extreme importance since it served as a kind of midwife of Christianity, we will nevertheless include it in this talk. By making it the first wave of evangelization. N. D. A. The Christians of whom Suetonius, Pliny, etc. spoke, undoubtedly were members of this current besides.

In Jerusalem, the 1st Christian expansion was made by the apostolate of the disciples in the Jewish settlement; and in Damascus, where there had been many Essenes (as the book of the covenant of Damascus proves it justly)

the Christian faith also apparently penetrated very early because Ananias, discoverer of Paul, was obviously one of those converted from the 1st hour.

In his Acts of the Apostles, Luke presents the view of Paul. But James's party is the one with which Paul didn't cease to be in conflict (Galatians 2, 12).

James is the very type of the Judeo-Christian, of an early church deeply rooted in Judaism, not conscious of founding a new religion. His posterity will be therefore Judeo-Christianity, a movement that continues the observance of the Law, which keeps its Jewish identity.

As it finally disappeared after 130, his history was obscured or overshadowed by the early Christians, and this erasure distorts the idea that we have of the true original Christianity. A community never really separate from Judaism, which targets only the Jewish horizon of the lost sheep of Israel and not the whole mankind, and which, finally, was led by a character out of the tradition of the apostles: James.

The brothers of Jesus.

Mark 3: 31-32: "Your mother and your brothers are outside." 6, 3: "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"

Matthew 12, 46: "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside."

John 2, 12: "After this (the wedding at Cana) he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples." 7, 3-5-10: "His brothers themselves do not believe in him ...".

Luke and Acts 1, 14: "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers".

Epistle to the Galatians 1: 18-19 (Paul says that three years after his conversion, he came to Jerusalem where he met James and Peter). " I stayed with him (Cephas) fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother.

1 Corinthians 9: 5: "Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? "

The early Christians thought; of course, that the birth of Jesus was exceptional, but that he had then "normal" brothers and sisters, as in any family of the time. This was the oldest opinion (see the numerous references in the Gospels), and is still currently that of many researchers. Mary after the "miraculous" birth of Jesus would normally have had other children.

The New Testament texts were written in Greek; and in that language, there are two distinct words for Brother (adelphos) and cousin (anepsios). But it is always the word adelphos which is used, so these are well brothers, because if it was a cousin, there was the possibility to say it precisely.

When Paul uses the word adelphos (Galatians 1: 18-19), it is well to mean "brother."

In John 20, 17 Jesus said, "Go instead to my brothers" the word brother means brother in the strictest sense, we can't suspect the Greek language of John to reek of translation, there is no Aramaic expression behind.

The Church Fathers of the first two centuries do not mention the virginity "after birth" of Mary. Saint Justin (died 165) envisages the virginity of Mary only before the birth of Jesus.

With Irenaeus of Lyons (died 202) who installs Mariology (he sees in Mary like the antithesis of Eve), there is nothing yet on the virginity after the birth of Jesus.

This position is found in many ancient authors. Hegesippus around 180 in his five books of memoirs, even uses the word "Jude ... brother of the Savior according to the flesh."

"Of the family of the Lord there were still living the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh. Information was given that they were members of the family of David" (Eusebius of Caesarea. III, 20, 1).

Tertullian too (died 225) is convinced of these assertions and claims to report the "true tradition" about it.

The Protoevangelium of James shows us nevertheless how could appear the theme of the perpetual virginity. The perpetual virginity of Mary is indeed the central thesis of this apocryphal gospel. Anna, the mother dedicates her child Mary to the Temple, and Mary is entrusted to an elderly widower, Joseph ... the birth of Jesus is told in detail, there is even the witness statement of the midwives. The brothers and sisters of Jesus are his cousins ??and in any case other children of Mary. However it is this text that Origen used in his commentary on the account of the childhood by Matthew.

The divine filiation of Jesus, originally designed by the early Christians as an adoption during the baptism of Jesus by John, moves in time and now goes back in some authors to his very birth.

In the fourth century, Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin - Vulgate – draws from that all the implications. For him Jesus's brothers will be therefore simply some cousins. The demonstration of Jerome is complex, acrobatic, it plays on the different characters called James (Jacob) and Mary (Miriam) in the New Testament.

There are seven James and three or four Mary according to his interpretation of certain texts (Mark XV, 40; John XIX, 25): Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary his sister, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas.

Jacques brother of the Lord is identified with James the less or the younger, and the mother of this James with Mary of Cleophas, the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus; and therefore, this James and Jesus are cousins. At the end of his life, Jerome will be less categorical, but in any case for him, the mother of this James is still another Mary, and this is not the mother of Jesus, so they are not brothers.

The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's writings recount to us some episodes of the life of the first "Christian" communities led at first by Peter apparently and according to this text. Peter was indeed one of the oldest Jesus's fellow traveler and perhaps even his discoverer at Capernaum.

In everyday life, the life of the group has two characteristics: they are little people practicing the common life, with breaking of bread and prayers, very similar to what Josephus says of the Essenes; they perform, on the other hand, many cures, what earned them a considerable reputation ... Various groups of men and women join them; they claim that Jesus is still alive, from where major controversies about the resurrection. All that remains strictly Jewish. It is the same with the stoning of Stephen about the year 35 of our era, and with the persecutions from adverse movements in which campaigns the future St. Paul.

Strangely enough it was not Father Brown, but the French historian Gerard Walter, who best summed up what this first Christian community was, in his essay about communism.

The first Christian group regularly formed appears in Jerusalem between the years 35 and 37 of our era. It is made at the beginning of a hundred people. The members begin by putting their property in common. A committee of twelve members directs the domestic functioning of the community ... It is like this, apart from its spiritual ideal, that appears the first Christian community in Jerusalem, according to the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles. The two texts of the Acts which show these tendencies of the early Christians 2, 44-45 and 4, 34-35, do not agree very well together nevertheless. Those who work for preaching and teaching were in fact entitled to a double honor, what means that in each opportunity : distribution of relief, common meals, etc. A double share was reserved for them. Thus, from the very beginning, a favored corporation was formed within the primitive Christian society, a favored corporation which increased numerically; and which became by its very existence, the living negation of the egalitarian principle proclaimed by the founders of the doctrine.

The Acts of the Apostles underscore the fact that the first pagan baptized, the centurion Cornelius, is baptized by Peter himself. The latter had to force oneself for that, because an uncircumcised pagan remains an impure being in the eyes of a Jew. The insistence on this baptism is perhaps due to a reworking of the original text by Christians of the Pauline orientation based in Antioch.

Apart from the isolated cases of the eunuch of Queen Candace, converted by Philip, and the centurion Cornelius converted by Peter, there is no trace of converted pagans in Jerusalem nor in Judea. Nor do we see "Christians" in the strictest sense of the term. The Christianity of before 70 is neither Judeo-Christian nor Pagano-Christian, for it is simply Jewish, and that both for the Jewish religious authorities and the Roman political authorities. Peter, John and others among the twelve, regularly go to the Temple in order to pray. (Acts of the Apostles, 3,1, 5,12.)

Around these Christian Jews gravitate proselytes and sympathizers who, themselves, are of pagan origin. The proselytistic spirit of the Jews is attested by Bernard Lazare ; and Philo was right to say: "Our laws lead after them and influence barbarians and Greeks, the inhabitants of continents and islands, the eastern nations and the western, Europe and Asia; in short, the whole habitable world from one extremity to the other".

Many of the poor were also attracted by the privileges granted to the Jews. These proselytes were divided into two great categories; The proselytes of the law, who even accepted circumcision, and the proselytes of the gate, who, without submitting to the practices necessary to enter the community, nevertheless lived around it.

In other words, until then, the pagans, like the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia, rallied by Stephen and his heirs (Philip, Paul, etc.) to the belief in the Messianity of Jesus; will be still only proselytes and sympathizers of Judaism and not yet some Christians in the sense that this denomination will take in the latter part of the first century. The term Christian has never been used in Judea (we do not speak here of Antioch) to designate disciples of Jesus. Before 70 - and to some extent until around 135 - it is therefore possible to consider that there are among others Christian Jews, as there are Sadducee Jews, Pharisee Jews, Essene Jews.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

The Gospel according to Matthew traditionally opens the New Testament, even though it is not the first written document of Christianity (the oldest written document of Christianity is the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians); even though it is not the oldest of the 4 Gospels (it seems to have been written in the late 80s while the Gospel according to Mark may have been written in the late 60s).

This gospel nevertheless seems to have been intended for those Jews who could be described as JESUS TENDENCY CHRISTIANISM.

A trend in Judaism which Professor Anthony J. Saldarini of Boston University, a specialist in rabbinic Judaism, studied particularly well in 1994 (Matthew's Christian-Jewish community).

This first tendency in Christianity, the Jesus tendency, having disappeared very early, one can only get an idea of it by analyzing Matthew's gospel. What this specialist in rabbinic Judaism did.

I: Matthew within First-Century Judaism

II: Matthew's People: Israel

III: Matthew's Opponents: Israel's Leaders

IV: Matthew's Horizon: The Nations

V: Matthew's Group of Jewish Believers-in-Jesus

VI: Matthew's Torah

VII: Jesus, Messiah and Son of God

VIII: Conclusions. Matthew's Gospel is paradoxical: it is at the same time the most Jewish of the apostles' writings, but also the one that presents the most virulent polemics against Judaism. As a result, it is generally associated with the break between nascent Christianity and the Judaism from which it originated. It is this general interpretation, taken up by generations of readers that Saldarini questions here, in scholarly pages of great clarity. According to him, the Gospel of Matthew does not in any way seek to announce the replacement of Israel by the Christian Church: it resembles much more a text intended for and offered to a Jewish audience. Far from being an anti-Semitic polemicist, Matthew is a Jewish teacher striving for a new vision of Judaism rooted in a belief in Jesus after the trauma of the destruction of the Temple.

It is difficult, however, to situate the place of the apostle Peter in all this.

The only thing that seems obvious about him is that it is not him historically speaking that we find at the head of the Jerusalem community.

THE ELIMINATION OF PETER FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY IN JERUSALEM.

Peter was undoubtedly one of the oldest fellow travelers of Jesus, from Capernaum in any case. As we have had the opportunity to say, several passages in the New Testament mention the Lord's "brothers" by using the usual Greek word to evoke such a situation, adelphos. The most famous of them is a man named James.

In Jerusalem, the disciples of Jesus are therefore only Jews (as we have seen, the term "Christian" will appear only later, in Antioch, it seems) among whom one of the brothers of Jesus, James, plays a paramount part.

Who is this James, brother of the Lord? Why even Peter owes him explanations? James exercised supreme authority over the community in the 40s and 50s. In what capacity did he perform this function, did he frequent Jesus in his lifetime, what were his theological positions? Let us now try to answer these questions.

The first real crisis that shook the incipient Church of Jerusalem in the early forties was by far more important for the life of the community than the split from the Hellenists; which had noticeable consequences only much later.

The group of twelve gave way to James, the brother of the Lord, in obscure conditions that the account of Acts 12 reflects only partially.

There existed perhaps within the biological family of Jesus a tradition making them being descendants from King David. And Jesus has perhaps built on these pretensions to let himself known as the messiah, but his great problem then would have been to be admitted as such by John the Baptist. For only a prophet could recognize a messiah, declare him "anointed" by God or the Demiurge, and give him the Spirit or take it away from him. (Cf. the episode of the relationship between the prophet Samuel and King Saul: 1 Samuel, 15, 1-23.)

John the Baptist, like his family in general, does not recognize the Messianity of Jesus. "He has lost his mind," they say. The family and John have another idea of ??what the messiah should be.

Did the brothers of Jesus participate in his activities during his lifetime? Only John seems to suggest it. Above all, the family and brothers are seen in Jerusalem among the first disciples after the Ascension. The oldest text of the New Testament (1 Cor 15: 3-8) affirms that James would have benefited from an apparition of Jesus. This text, written about 50, if it is studied closely, indicates above all on that date, a compromise between "parties" in the community of Jerusalem, a kind of equality between the groups of Peter and James. There is no evidence that this apparition led to a conversion. Some researchers think besides that James was never "Christian" (in the sense of Paul), but always Jew.

When he directs the community in Jerusalem, James never mentions Jesus. The very brother of Jesus himself therefore does not believe that he is Christ and that the Messiah has already come personally with him. He is a Jew who, like many at this time, is convinced of the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God or of the Demiurge, of the fulfillment of prophecies like that of Amos concerning the raising again of the Tent of David (Amos 9:11) but not with his brother Jesus. James is still in the hope of an imminent coming of the Messiah, the ultimate Davidic kingship in Israel (Acts 1, 6).

James as Jesus is Jew, and the qualifier they share, Nazorene, is difficult to understand. The Nazorenes are a sect, an orientation inside Judaism, which will very early designate the movement using Jesus's name. Elsewhere, from Antioch, people will say Christians. This last term will remain, Nazorene will disappear. Jesus, like Jacques, therefore was never conscious of founding a new religion; their activities remained totally within Judaism.

Hegesippus, a Christian certainly of Jewish origin, in the second half of the second century. " James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Savior to the present day; for there were many that had the name of James. He was holy from his mother's womb " (Eusebius of Caesarea . Hist. Eccl.II, 23, 4).

The rise of James at the head of the community of Jerusalem instead of Peter is easily located from the point of view of chronology: middle of the thirties, sometime after the death of Jesus.

Galatians 1,18-19. Paul declares that three years after his conversion, he goes to Jerusalem where he meets Peter and James, James is already there, and associated with Peter, at the head of the community.

End of the thirties. Paul lists the groups that benefited from the apparitions of Jesus.

This text (1 Cor. 15: 7) reflects a situation in which the pre-eminence of Peter is still admitted, but conveys a claim to equality between the two men - see the parallelism of the verses 5 and 7; The losing group is that of women, in Jewish law, their testimony does not mean.

At that date therefore, there is competition between the group of Peter and that of James.

Fourteen years later (around the year 50), Paul returns to Jerusalem and meets James firstly, as well as Peter and John. It is James who conducts the debate.

In about fifteen years, James passed therefore from the status of an associate to that of the sole ruler. How can we explain the rise of James at the head of the Jerusalem community? And therefore, at the head of the whole movement. Two types of explanations are combined.

The wear of the moral ascendancy of Pierre. Peter was never the official head of the group. The group was without clear hierarchy and Peter was only one of the older fellows of Jesus, the one who had accommodated him in Capernaum. But this form of self-organization will fail. The expectation of the imminent Parousia resulted in a withdrawal, but nothing came!

Economic and financial problems of the group (the pooling of resources is affected by the departure of the richest, the Hellenists persecuted ... It will even be necessary to organize a collection for the people of Jerusalem).

At the beginning too, no one plans to organize missions. It is the outside activity of the Hellenists of Stephen and Philip that forces the group of Jerusalem to change its horizons, to reflect on the unpredicted case of the pagans who wish to join them.

Against all that, Peter will try to cope, but his at the least chaotic behavior shows that he is a little disoriented, that he can't succeed. Moreover, this first group will suffer. Around 44, James son of Zebedee is executed (he will be the first of the 12 to die a martyr since Stephen was not one of them). In the reign of Agrippa I, Peter is arrested, there is a beginning of public persecution. The "system" of Peter no longer works.

The fact that on leaving Jerusalem Peter, at least according to the Acts of the Apostles, sent somebody to inform James (the brother of Jesus, but not one of the twelve); shows that he then gave up all his powers over the Church (and even the primacy) to this brother of Jesus. James therefore becomes thus the leader of the Christians in Jerusalem, in other words, one of the most important men of the early Church, even the first true pope.

By fleeing from Jerusalem (Acts 12:17), Peter leaves a free hand to James, who already for several years enjoyed a certain authority (cf. Galatians 1:19) and that his Pharisees' leanings made more acceptable to the religious leaders of Jerusalem. This change of leadership also meant, for the Church of that time, a deep reorientation: dereliction of the community of goods, relaxation of discipline, return to a more individual observance of the commandments and thus closer to that of the Pharisees.

James has many assets.

Having not been a disciple, he is not as sensitive as others to the expectation of the Parousia. He benefited from an apparition ("The Savior appeared unto James, who was one of the men known as brothers of the Savior"). Eusebius of Caesarea (Hist. Eccl. I, 12, 4). This compensates for his lack of companionship with Jesus? And last but not least, he is a member of the family. This dynastic criterion is essential, he is therefore trusted: the action of Jesus being perceived as being part of that of a (Davidic?) clan.

In addition James is a regular templegoer, he is a pious Jew recognized as such. This secures everyone, behind him you are sheltered from persecution (no member of the group will help the Hellenists or Paul when they are worried). Indeed, from 44 and for a certain time, there will be no persecution, the "Nazorene" or "Christian" group if one prefers, lives in peace. But at the price of a great religious conformism (what does not please Paul). James beware of innovations.

When we read certain passages of the New Testament, we are surprised by the number of visions of one and the other, particularly to the benefit of Peter. A vision has as its function a new revelation, the affirmation of a novelty. But only the Law means for James, he prefers to stick to its dictates rather than to listen to Peter speaking of his vision in Joppa; (Vision that allows him to eat everything, even

with pagans, and where there is no longer a notion of impurity.) James beware of visions. The only revelation is the Torah therefore, whereas for Peter it is also what the "risen" says (of course with fear, even reticence). All the reflection of James falls within the Jewish traditions, nothing comes from the novelties supported by Paul.

So in these conditions what to do with the pagan-Christians? Must they become full-fledged Jews to be Christians, since "Christians" does not yet mean new religion, but branch within Judaism, as there existed many of them, before the destruction of the Temple.

This question arises concretely in the various Christian communities around the year 50. Our sources on this subject are difficult to interpret and have long given rise to lively discussions. The answer to this problem seems to pass through three points.

(A) The meeting in Jerusalem, improperly called the Council of Jerusalem.

B) The Apostolic Decree.

C) The conflict in Antioch.

The order is given here as an indication, but may very well be reversed, we do not know too well what is a cause and what is a consequence.

A problem arises therefore in Antioch: is circumcision indispensable to salvation? Some Christians of Judea (the entourage of James?) Answer yes, Barnabas and Paul answer no! An arbitration is necessary, it will be the meeting in Jerusalem (perhaps around 48-50). Of this famous "Council of Jerusalem," we have two versions: Acts 15, 2 - many additions are attributable to Luke - and Galatians 2,1-10. Overall, Paul's text seems to be more authentic.

What was exactly decided in Jerusalem?

Pierre has such a Pauline speech that one wonders if it is well himself who is the true author of it; a speech in which he affirms that the Law is not necessary, that only the belief in Jesus saves, and that circumcision is not necessary for the Pagan-Christians.

James speaks lastly, quotes Amos 9, 11-12 according to the Septuagint: "When David's tent shall be restored" it will be the entry into the messianic era, the pagans will recognize our Lord. It is sufficient for them to respect four prohibitions arising from the Law. (Acts 15,29.) " Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality".

In other words, it is a reminder of the Noahide laws, James does not intend to found a new religion.

The Jews remain Jews and the pagans some non-Jews.

But was it decided here? (Luke's thesis) or decided later by James, to resolve another conflict at Antioch, in the absence of Paul?

No one requires the circumcision from Titus, Paul's friend (is this an exception or a principle?)

Paul also indicates that the principle of the division of missions was then adopted: to Peter the mission to the Jews, to Paul the one that concerns the goyim (pagans).

This conflict of Antioch therefore underlined the differences of views between James and Paul. Let us return briefly to it, for this will be decisive for the future of Christianity.

In 49 some envoys from Jerusalem (companions of the brother of Jesus?) reject the commensality practiced in Antioch (that is to say, taking meals in common) and implicitly assert that Pagan-Christians can't be saved if they do not first comply with the requirements of Jewish Law. During a stay of Peter at Antioch, the latter will cease even to eat with Pagan-Christians, in order to stay only with Judeo-Christians; That is to say with Christians of Jewish origin (following the arrival of people from the entourage of James?)

But such a decision was extremely serious, for it concerned the very principle of the meal of commensality with the god-or-demons called "Eucharist." A little as if Christianity today validates racial discrimination; by having masses or places of worship reserved for blacks, masses or places of worship reserved for mulattoes, masses or places of worship reserved for whites. Yet everybody understands and obeys, and Peter keeps such discrimination (fear of other Jews, maybe of zealots, of being accused of laxity?) So much that Paul had to severely criticize publicly such anti non-Jew racism from Peter, who, it is true, was conversant with cowardice.

Paul therefore sermonizes roundly the first pope, finds himself in a minority, and breaks with everybody or almost. At least with the Judeo-Christians.

We do not know exactly the reasons of the envoys of James, but they must be those of the Jewish designs of the time. Even if some pagans are led to recognize the Messiah, this does not give them the right to be considered as members of the Jewish people, of the people of God. Only Jews who have admitted Jesus as Messiah form the true Israel, and they must keep their distance.

The incident of Antioch in 49 therefore will give the first Christians the opportunity to renew the original racist and xenophobic position of their teacher. Matthew 15: 24-26: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.... It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

The answer of the Church of Jerusalem to that of Antioch is therefore steeped with an incredible nationalist spirit and reaffirms for the Jews the need to follow the Jewish Law: kosher food, etc. Acts 15:29: " Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality".

For James therefore a two-tier community is better (apartheid). There is no new religion, no new community. There was to be.....

- Nazorenes or Christians, some Jews who follow the Path (admit Jesus), and who form the truly eschatological Israel (that of the end of time).
- The baptized pagans, who are not Nazorenes, but only some fearers of Israel's God (phoboumenos ton theon), and who will be saved, but without being integrated in this true Israel. Only associated to him (a major opposition to Paul for whom only belief saves, and who wants to abolish every difference of nationality).

James does not connect these pagans who are converted neither to Abraham nor to Moses. Pagan nations are admitting the God of Israel or the Demiurge (it is a novelty, a sign of the times), but they are not subject to the law of Moses and must not be integrated into Israel.

James accuses Peter of having transgressed this taboo by entering the home of the centurion Cornelius.

For James also, and to make it clearer, these pagans turning towards the God or Demiurge of Israel (there is not already question of Jesus Christ) are only fulfilling the prophecy of Amos 9, 11. The only link with Jesus is the reappearance in the text of the idea of ??Davidic lineage (God or the Demiurge restores the tent of David).

James is called the Just by his contemporaries. This means that this decision from him seemed normal at the time. It denotes an idea of Jesus's message consisting mainly of obedience to Jewish law.

It was thus that the message of Jesus was received in the Jewish-Christian background (on the design of a better justice, see Matthew 5-20).

Design of the mission of Jesus: an intercession for the eschatological forgiveness of the sins of the Jewish people. "Father, forgive them." A bit like the Muhammad of the end of times. For this intercession has no meaning as for pagans, but only for "the lost sheep of Israel."

The compromise did not put an end to the conflict between the two tendencies that of the Judaizers who adhered strictly to the Law of Moses and the tendency embodied by Paul who more or less departed from it.

Professor Simon Claude Mimouni thinks that other skirmishes took place, notably in the Christian community of Ephesus around 53-54, then in Galatia (see Paul's letter) and then in Philippi around 60. The epistle to the Romans would be Paul's final attempt to avoid the split.

"Some historians believe that the conflict at Antioch, the meeting at Jerusalem, the incident at Ephesus and the crises in Greece and Galatia were the stages of an organic development, that is, a systematic campaign of Judaization inspired and organized by James and directed by Peter. The main argument for this thesis would be Peter's journey to Corinth and Galatia - a journey which in fact has no real basis in fact-. On the other hand, the importance that the Antioch conflict and the meeting in Jerusalem had on the future relations between Judeo-Christians and Pagano- Christians should be emphasized, not only because it revealed that, despite the concessions made by some of its leaders, the Jerusalem community did not renounce the idea that observance of the Torah is necessary for the salvation of the faithful who recognize in Jesus the Messiah, but also because the cutting attitude taken by Paul must have provided those who were not satisfied by the agreement of 49 with a reason to consider it broken by him.

The Epistle to the Romans must be seen as a document, at least indirectly, of the relations between Paul and his Jewish-Christian opponents. In writing it to the community of Rome - both in its components of Jewish and Pagan origin - one has the feeling that Paul wanted, in a certain way, to prevent the influence that those who fought against him in Greece and Galatia might have. In expounding his doctrine of justification by faithfulness to the Messiah alone, preached to the Gentiles, Paul seems to have sought to avoid erroneous and tendentious interpretations of it by its detractors. The writing of the Epistle to the Romans proves, in any case, that at the time Paul wrote it, he did not consider the struggle to be over. It should be noted, however, that it is precisely in this letter that Paul shows his deepest and most passionate attachment to the Jewish nation. In the picture of Israel's destiny, outlined in chapters 9 to 11, we can first note a protest about Paul's attachment to his people - an obvious response to the serious accusation against him of being an apostate and a renegade.... We may wonder whether or not Paul was successful in this conflict. In 58, when Paul goes up to Jerusalem to report the collection, he is certainly welcomed by James and the elders, but not by the community. James, in fact, did not dare to bring him before the community until he had given a public sign of his attachment to Judaism - which he would have consented to by associating himself with a few brothers, who had to fulfill a vow and, in order to do so, had to submit to purification and offer a sacrifice. Paul is in the Temple when, spontaneously or not, a popular movement occurs, in which he would probably have been massacred if the commanding officer, who from the citadel Antonia watches over what is going on inside the Temple, had not intervened in time with his soldiers to seize his person. A long trial then begins, which will not end until Rome, at least five years later. He remained a prisoner in Caesarea for two years, during which time the Jerusalem community took no steps to help him in any way. He then arrived as a prisoner in Rome in 60, three years after having written the Epistle to the Romans. He seems to have been greeted there with marked indifference. He lived there in great isolation, receiving neither assistance nor comfort from the community during his captivity and his trial, which the Christians of the city did not seem to have bothered to defend him (cf. Acts 28:16-31).

Thus, since the incident at Antioch and the assembly in Jerusalem, Paul's position in the Christian communities seems to have deteriorated significantly. He has found himself more and more isolated and misunderstood, even in the communities he founded: everywhere, in fact, he has come up against opposition fomented from outside. After a long captivity, during which the communities in Jerusalem and Rome lost interest in him, he apparently died in total solitude. It can therefore be said that during his lifetime Paul was not understood mainly because he professed that the salvation of the Pagans was no longer based on the Torah and the Messiah but rather on the Messiah alone.....Paul will lose this fight - at least during his lifetime" (Simon Claude Mimouni).

James, the brother of the Lord, will prove soon therefore to be a cumbersome figure for Christianity (from the second century), and it will be therefore necessary to remove all this (Judeo-Christian) tradition. Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, does not mention it.

A Church essentially of pagan origin could no longer accept this James who was for a separation of Mankind into two communities, apartheid between two types of Christians. James did not go the way of the world. His death is not reported in the Acts, but by a Jew in the service of the Romans, Flavius Josephus, in one of his works: Jewish Antiquities XX 9. Text written around 90, at a time when the Temple is destroyed, where Christians stand out from other Jews.

" The king (Agrippa 1) deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christus [this " called Christus" is perhaps an interpolation] , whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were

the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king, desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them also went to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him when he had ruled but three months“.

How to interpret this text? It is difficult to find an answer, for three reasons. Our sources are also here little talkative, the tensions and alliances of the time are complex and changing, and we do not know exactly how James was perceived by both.

Died stoned. A death decided and executed by the Jews.

What is therefore the crime that could deserve such a penalty in Jewish law? There were only two types of it: the rebellious son denounced by his parents (Deuteronomy) and the one who curses the name of God or of the Demiurge, who blasphemes (Leviticus 24, 15-17). Here we can only keep the second case.

But what could have been the gesture or attitude of James, considered blasphemous by the High Priest and by the Sanhedrin, that is to say, the public figures of Jerusalem?

This High Priest is described in another work by Flavius ??Josephus entitled "The Jewish War" where he praises him by highlighting his action at the approach of the war of 70.

He endeavors then to avoid war, he organizes an armed resistance of the people against the warmongers, the zealots and the sicarians.

This Ananus who loves peace so much and who has not succeeded in avoiding war, why does he make therefore James executed?

The idea that James is a pious and righteous man corresponds to what Hegesippus says (lost source, but common to Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and perhaps Clement of Alexandria). For them, James is a Nazirite like Samuel or John the Baptist (but never has a ritual bath). He had the right to enter the Temple and to wear linen garments (priestly clothes were made of linen, in the reign of King Agrippa, the Levites had this right, like the priests). In the Temple, James on his knees apologizes for the people to God or the Demiurge: this is a posture reserved for the High Priest on the day of Atonement . This would be therefore the blasphemy committed in the Temple (where the "first Christians" go on).

It is known by Flavius ??Josephus that Herod Agrippa, king of all Palestine from 41 to 44, relied on the Sadducean party. Stephen's execution, Peters's arrest, and James's elimination, met perhaps requests from this circle that the consolidation of this heresy in the immediate vicinity of the Temple bothered (Acts 12: 3) . The evident links which persisted between the Christian group and the Essenes (many borrowings in the field of the interpretation of the texts, institutional kinship, same reservation with regard to sacrificial worship, etc.); must have seemed dangerous to the High Priest and his entourage.

Another hypothesis, very plausible although old (1958), is that of P. Gaechter who sees in the death of James, the result of a permanent hostility of the household of Ananus against Jesus, and then against the leaders of the Church in its infancy. This thesis is interesting if we consider the family dynastic aspect of the replacement of Jesus; two clans would oppose then for the conquest of power.

For Messianic hope was also a struggle of influence between different groups, different tribes, Levi, Judas, family of David. The struggle for political and religious power was a struggle of clans. Let us think of incipient Islam. Muhammad having not settled his replacement, wars ensued, whence came Shiism, a movement with dynastic leanings. Nowadays still some leaders of the Arab-Muslim world want still care about remembering that they are descendants of Muhammad.

All that is not very sure, but nevertheless suggests the presence of a dynastic Christianity, what would be in keeping with the mentality of the time; (think of the function of High Priest in the time of the Maccabees, monopolized by a clan, of the family of Ananus, of the dynasties of zealots of the Law: the sons of Judas the Galilean are present in Massada). The leadership of the Jerusalem community is therefore for some time designed as a family affair, the duty of a clan. After the death of James, says Eusebius quoting Hegesippus, it will be other members of the family of Jesus who will be brought to power.

"Of the family of the Lord there were still living the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh. Information was given that they members of the family of David " (Eusebius of Caesarea III, 20,1).

This early church, exclusively Jewish consequently, will play a decisive role until 70.

The Christianity of this period remains for the most part integrated into the Jewish communities, within which it contents itself with affirming the Messianity of Jesus, both in Jewish Palestine and in the Diaspora. The execution of James, perhaps in 62, put an end to this second form of organization of Christianity. That in the year 62 the High Priest feared the influence that James had over the Jewish people on account of his piety, to the extent of making him assassinated at a moment when the Roman authority was weakened by an interim; shows how this head of the Church was integrated into the Jewish background. This arbitrary act would have however unforeseen consequences in many fields.

First consequence: the break of the movement. James had been for some twenty years a kind of pope to whom all the local communities were pledged, and to whom Paul himself had been obliged to come humbly and ask for reconciliation (Acts 21: 17-26; Romans 15: 25-31). From 62, the Christians found themselves without central authority and without the least system of coordination. The Christians of Jerusalem were divided into Judaizers and Judeo-Christians. Judeo-Christians were Christians of Jewish origin relatively independent of Jewish law; Judaizers were Christians of Jewish origin BUT STILL VERY ATTACHED TO JEWISH PRACTICES (circumcision, etc.).

The split must have broken as soon as James died. In fact, nothing is certain about his immediate succession. Simeon of Clopas, a member of Jesus's family, is only a hypothesis...

In view of what Professor Simon Claude Mimouni has established about the resolution of the Antioch incident, we can therefore suppose that in Jerusalem it was the Judaizers who prevailed and that the Judeo-Christians who were less attached to the Law of Moses had to leave.

And indeed there is a Christian tradition that signals to us the Christian community of Jerusalem at Pella, one of the cities of the Decapolis, east of the Jordan River.

Personal hypothesis.

-The current of Jewish Christians who were in the process of becoming independent from the Torah, being in the minority, left to settle on the other side of the Jordan River in Pella.

-They were joined a few months later by the Judaizers who had fled Jerusalem just before the final assault launched by Titus on September 25, 70, the latter having previously on several occasions proposed to the besieged to surrender, especially after the capture of the Antonia Tower (Titus's emissary was Flavius Josephus). John of Gischala refused, but other besieged people took the opportunity to flee the city...

"The question of the tradition of flight - or migration - from the Jerusalem community to Pella essentially arouses the problem of the continuity or discontinuity of the Jewish-Christian presence in the Holy City after 70. The history of the first developments of Christianity in Jerusalem is, in fact, presented in a different light according to whether or not you accept the historical reality of the facts reported by this tradition.

This question of the tradition of the flight at Pella is therefore an important file in the history of the Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem.....

At the end of this investigation, the historicity of the tradition of the flight of the Christian community from Jerusalem to Pella had to be recognized.

At a time which it is impossible to determine with a perfect precision, but which is between 62 and 70, the Christian community of the Holy City left Jerusalem to find itself in Pella - this place of residence or refuge was certainly imposed on it by the Roman authorities after leaving the city. However, it is necessary to point out that if Epiphanes of Salamis relates the episode of the flight to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, Eusebius of Caesarea, for his part, establishes a connection with the persecutions of which the Jews were guilty towards the Christian community, namely, the martyrdom of Stephen and James the brother of John and especially that of James the brother of Jesus " (Simon Claude Mimouni). In other words, after James the Just had been replaced by the Judaizer Thebutis???. Another important consequence of this exile in Pella was that the young Christian community entered into relations with marginal Jewish currents..

Last but not least: the birth of Christian anti-Judaism.

As BERNARD Lazare soberly summed it up in his book on the history of anti-Semitism...

Remained mostly inside or in the fringes of the synagogues, Christians could not undergo with full force the clash of the Jewish uprising against Rome in 66 and still more that of the capture of Jerusalem and of the final ruin of the Temple in 70.

The Church in Jerusalem, struck by the highest Jewish authority, will adopt in 66 a very reserved attitude, to say the least, against the uprising of the Palestinian Jews against Rome; which will therefore form the beginning of a deep separation between a Christian Nazorene community until then very integrated into Palestinian Judaism and the proper Jewish institutions.

It is possible that some Christians may have associated themselves in one way or another with this national insurrection, and that they either died in battle or were sold as slaves by the victorious Romans, but they were only a tiny minority.

"Absorbed in the expectation of the coming Messianic reign, the Jewish Christians of those days were "men without a country" ; the thought of free Judea no longer made their hearts throb, though some, like the seer of the Apocalypse, had a horror of Rome, still they had no passion for captive Jerusalem, which the zealots strove to liberate; they were unpatriotic.

When all Galilee rose in response to the appeal of John of Gischala, they held aloof, and when the Jerusalemites triumphed over Cestius Gallus (May 66, the Temple was indeed taken that year by the zealots of John of Gischala and the rest of the city by Simon Bar Giora); the Jewish Christians, indifferent to the outcome of this supreme struggle, fled from Jerusalem, crossed the Jordan and sought refuge at Pella. In the last battles which Bar Giora, John of Gischala and their faithful gave to the Roman power, to the trained legions of Vespasian and Titus, the disciples of Jesus took no part; and when Zion was reduced to ashes, burying under its ruins the nation of Israel, no Christian met his death amidst the destruction (Bernard Lazare).

Although we are very badly informed about the vicissitudes lived by the Christian community of Jerusalem between 66 and 70; the escape of the group to Pella and the Decapolis (Today Jordan) is not doubtful. And may even be earlier than 66 (see Eiphanius, Panarion IX, 7, 8).

Heirs to the poorest of Jerusalem, these emigrants were called ebyonim, what means in Hebrew "the poor." The Judaizer party besides will keep this name.

So there were very early Christians or more exactly Judeo-Christian in Arab lands because not all came back to Jerusalem when peace had returned; some remained in Decapolis. The oldest church in the world beside has been discovered in the northern Jordan at St. George in Rihab, near the Syrian border. Hence perhaps the first Christian influences in the pre-Islamic world.

Between 70 and 135 (the year of the end of the second Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar Kokhba), Christian Jews will consequently be doubly marginalized, from the inside and from the outside. Jewish orthodoxy and official Christianity evidently did not care to preserve the first evangelical materials, composed in Aramaic (or Hebrew) of this movement.

We can nevertheless find the trace, the reflection or the echo, of them, in addition to those which are preserved in the four Gospels, in a certain number of documents such as the Gospel known as Gospel of the Ebionites precisely.

The original has disappeared, but there are traces of it in the pseudo-Clementine literature, as well as in the state of (very subjective, of course) quotations in a certain number of Fathers of the Church (St. Jerome, Origen, and others).

The second major event of this period was the end of the Essenes as such.

Their site was razed during the revolt from 66 to 69, and they too had to flee to Decapolis beyond the Jordan, notably at Pella, on the other side of the Dead Sea; town in which they found the first Christians of Jerusalem who had already settled there.

As we have seen, the reconstruction of Judaism now deprived of the temple was chiefly led by a Pharisee rabbi named Johanan ben Zakkai; having established his school in Jamnia, a town about forty kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. Around 90, it seems, his reformation had imposed itself almost everywhere; and the dissidents, starting from the disciples of John the Baptist and of the new Joshua/Jesus (the Mandaean or Nazorene Christian) forced to leave the synagogues that had hitherto made room to them in their midst.

The official separation between Christianity and unified Judaism of after 70 will occur only with this synod of Jamnia; which will determine the official list (canon) of the sacred texts in Judaism, and set out the attitude to have with regard to the minim; the minim being the dissident or heretical Jews. This process, which will last several decades, in spite of the opposition of the Hillelites, finally led to the

fixing of the eighteen blessings of the prayer called Amidah, of which the twelfth, the birkat ha minim, will specifically attack the apostates and the notsrims; the notsrims besides being at the beginning only the Jews having abandoned their religion to convert to Christianity.

A double marginalization or exclusion will cause therefore the fragmentation of the Christian communities of Jewish origin into several groups. Some will remain in connection with the "Church" rapidly growing in the pagan world, the Nazorenes and the Elchasaites, the others, "more anti-Pauline," will remain attached to the "Synagogue," it will be the Ebionites ...

A part of the Judeo-Christians returned to Jerusalem renamed Aelia Capitolina in the reign of Adrian, and collaborated more or less with the Roman occupier to rebuild the city, but the others did not wish to leave the shores of the Dead Sea and the Decapolis.

The return to Jerusalem of a percentage of the community retreated to Pella, enriched by various Essene elements, changed nothing to the "disorganization" resulting from the events of 62 to 70. The Church of Jerusalem remained close to Judaism, although belonging no longer to it, will continue to live under the direction of members of the family of Jesus "according to the flesh" a life without splendor, before disappearing in obscure conditions.

Eusebius reports indeed that until the second Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar Kokhba (132-135), all the bishops of Jerusalem were Hebrews of old stock from the family of Jesus, like James. Their flocks were observing Jews, and all were waiting for a Messiah, son of David.

Some Jewish Christians thought it still possible at the time to propose to their Jewish brethren their faith in a new Joshua (Jesus) as the foundation of a restoration of Judaism. We have some literary clues to such attempts, even if we do not know their history. Let us quote first the epistle of James, of which some people could sometimes say that it was a Jewish writing hardly Christianized by the insertion of two mentions of Jesus Christ; but that it is better to see as an attempt to present the Christian faith in the same way as a liberal Judaism able of becoming the rallying point of all the synagogues.

The patronage of the former head of the Church in Jerusalem was very useful for that. The other writing, which reflects an attempt of the same kind, is the Gospel according to Mark in its present form, that is to say changed and reworked compared to that which was originally spread by the Hellenists. By presenting John the Baptist and Jesus as the victims of the intrigues of the leaders of Jewish Palestine, and by making the scribes of Jerusalem the worst enemies of Jesus; this book sought to rally to Christian belief, not isolated individuals torn from the synagogues; but rather the little Jewish people that the disaster of 70 had made distrustful towards the leaders and masters who had led it to this catastrophe.

The Gospel according to Matthew, which can be dated back 90-95, echoes a situation when the separation between the Church and the Synagogue is more advanced, though not yet complete. The author's effort to present the new Joshua (Jesus) as the fulfillment of messianic prophecies, and as the authorized interpreter of divine law, the violence of the attacks against the Pharisees and the scribes of their obedience (chapter 23), while others are treated with respect (13, 52), suggest that the evangelist is struggling with the authorities set up in the synagogues by Jamnia's reformers. He has still the hope of wresting from them a certain number of the faithful, and consequently endeavors to demonstrate that the Nazorene is the legitimate heir to all the past of Israel; so that a rallying to his person and to his community forms the true fidelity to the Covenant.

The culmination of this process was undoubtedly the insurrection of the year 135 led by Simon Bar Kochba, who was recognized as Christ or Messiah by hundreds of thousands of Jews, including the rabbi named Akiva.

Christians who refused to consider Simon Bar Kochba as the Messiah (since for them the Messiah had already come in the person of Jesus) were considered traitors by the revolted Jews and treated as such. To prevent betrayals, Bar Kochba and his followers executed even some Judeo-Christians, and measures were taken to distinguish them from the Jews.

The Judeo-Christians responded with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Once the defeat of Bar Kochba consummated (in the year 134: 600,000 dead according to Tacitus, and the Roman authorities prohibit the practice of Jewish worship in Jerusalem); they denounced to the governors of the province those of the Jews who continued to practice their rites secretly or who were still engaged

in the study of the Law in the city. On the ruins of the Holy City, a model Roman city was built, the Colony Aelia Capitolina, forbidden to the Jews. (It is therefore from this period that the first bishops of non-Jewish origin appeared in Jerusalem).

These Jewish Christians are called Nazorenes, but little is known of them, for they have remained distant from the circles which have produced the New Testament in its present form (at least in its largest part). They remained for a long time in the Empire, and for decades formed a powerful minority. Locally they will even continue to dominate in certain regions; for example, in Egypt, where a powerful Judeo-Christian community (in Egypt, there were 1 million Jews out of a population of 7-8 million inhabitants) had soon emerged, a community that would remain subordinate to that of Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION ABOUT JEWISH CHRISTIANITY.

In addition to the famous Dead Sea Scrolls attributable to the Essenes, some Jewish writings make the transition between the Messianic Judaism that is to say nationalist and warlike, and the "evangelical" Christianity of the "New Testament."

- The Book of Enoch. The chapters 37 to 71 contain some visions (visit to heaven) or parables about the Son of Man; which are not found in the manuscripts of the Dead Sea mentioned above, and therefore are of Christian inspiration.

- The 4 Esdras also called Apocalypse of Ezra (the Ezra in question is not that of the return from Babylonian Exile of course). The chapters 3 to 14 are purely Jewish. The chapters 1-2 and 15-16 are Christian.

- The 2 Baruch also called Apocalypse of Baruch. Somewhat similar to the previous one.

It is not easy to draw from this literature a specific theology that can be called Judeo-Christian and that would be the legacy of James, the Lord's brother. There is inside that can be called Judeo-Christianity a large variety of orientations, the theologies are not homogeneous. The diversity of these Jewish Christians currents, more or less direct legacy of the group of James, is a reflection of the diversity that prevailed then within the early Church. We will not say it enough, initially, there are Christianities and not one Christianity.

Although respectful of the Mosaic law, these Christian supporters of James and Peter, have nevertheless, it seems, substituted early baptism to circumcision. Judeo-Christian texts, included in the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, spoke of the "circumcision of the heart." The Didache comes from a mixed community where the ideal is to become Jewish, to Judaize (partly inspired by the ideas of James).

We have a series of Jewish Christian writings which prove their importance. Many Jewish sects (at least 7, according to the testimony of Hegesippus, himself Jewish and converted to Christianity in the second century) led into such a syncretism. The name Elchasaites that will be given later to some of them, comes from the name of one of their mentors, a certain Elchasai. The book of Elchasai, from which St. Epiphane gives us some excerpts ... requires a lot of lustration and incantation formulas. Hatred of the apostle Paul, the negation of the supernatural birth of Jesus, and next to the earthly Jesus the invention of a heavenly Adam, true Christ, true revealing principle; these are the main characteristics of this book, which can be dated to the first half of the second century.

We owe perhaps also to them the original text of Peter's Homilies, falsely attributed to Clement. The Gospel of Matthew is now considered Judeo-Christian; the author considers himself a Jew, the Christian movement is called the new Israel, this Gospel is written to win new Jewish adherents, it speaks little to pagans; the Law as Jesus had interpreted it is respected in it.

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are also writings increasingly perceived as having been rewritten by Jewish or very Judaizing authors; belonging to a community observing the law, but with a strong presence of Pagan- Christians. The Jewish Christians dominate this context. The Epistle of Jude, the Apocalypse of John, the second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James ... come from largely dominated by Judeo-Christian communities.

The documents of the first Christian literature express their belief in Jesus in the categories of contemporary Judaism and in light of the Jewish Torah; at a time when the New Testament was only a rumor that was transmitted orally and was not formed in a corpus.

Judeo-Christianity is a form of Christian thought which is expressed in frames borrowed from Judaism we have said and continues to think in its categories ... This Judeo-Christianity, of course, was that of Christians from Judaism, but also of some [rare] converted pagans.

The terms of reference of that Jewish thought is that of the apocalypse. It is "a visionary theology." The Judeo-Christian writings are quite numerous; they come from Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, and even Rome; few are from Palestine. So they are the echo of a vast expansion of Christianity as a result of the forced diaspora of the first community in Jerusalem after 70, at Antioch particularly. Some works are to be mentioned: a "Ascension of Isaiah" various "Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs," a "second book of Enoch," an important "cycle of Peter" (Gospel, Acts, Apocalypse), some "Gospels" (of

Nazarenes, Ebionites, Egyptians or according to the Hebrews.). The content of these writings is at the same time close to and different from the canonical writings. There are also liturgical documents (Didache circa 80) or poetic mystical (Odes of Solomon). Some writings listed among the Apostolic Fathers (between 100 and 150) are expressions of Judeo-Christianity ("Letter of Clement to the Corinthians," "Epistle of Barnabas," "Shepherd" of Hermas). Not to mention the famous Apocalypse falsely attributed to John and which falls obviously in Jewish Gnosticism. Eschatology is indeed one of the fundamental components of the early Judeo-Christian ideology.

Their authors perform an exegesis of the Jewish Bible similar to that of Diaspora Jews (cf. Philo), or according to other interpretations of Scripture, close to those of Palestinian writings (cf. "The Testament of Job" , for example). They respect the rabbinical methods by developing a certain interpretative creativity of the texts (midrash), but by using already the prophetic argument concerning Christ; e.g., Clement of Rome, "Letter to Corinthians" the obedience of the one who believes, like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot and Rahab announcement of that Christ (§12, and parallel in Justin, "Dialogue With Trypho "111, 3-4). Note that already Josephus in the "Jewish Antiquities" (V, 1-2), emphasized the prophetic nature of Rahab.

Judeo-Christian exegeses formed as a bridge between Jewish exegesis and Christian exegesis which will follow, laying the foundation of the Christian interpretation of Scripture.

What was the content of the belief of those Judeo-Christians?

The general framework of the dogma is the apocalypse.

The Pharisees believed in an afterlife in which every man, summoned after the death to a Last Judgment is valued according to his merits. This is a design that Judeo-Christianity resume by involving in it Jesus as Christ or Messiah. "The dogma is somehow the vision become formula." - The angelology is highly developed; in "The Shepherd," the Word is referred to as "Glorious Angel" or "Glorious man" (cf. Similitudes IX). If the transcendence of the Word over other angels is well marked, this angelic Christology largely widespread, will survive until the third century. A similar identification is done in "The Shepherd" of Hermas, between the Angel Gabriel and the Word, and / or between the Word and the Holy Spirit.

- The designations (epinoiai) of the Word are very diversified or fluctuating: Name of Yahweh, Law, Principle ...

- Some Judeo-Christian elements are found even in the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch: to the Ephesians. 1, 2; 3.1 ("bound by the name"). ; 19.1 (The Incarnation was "hidden from the prince of this world" ...); 19.2-3 (Symbolic system of the three Magas and of the Star).

- The Judeo-Christian theology is a "theology of glory" (theologia gloriae). For Ignatius of Antioch, the cross is an elevator to God: "you are stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope" (to the Ephesians 9.1). And the "Acts of Andrew" call the cross "a device of the salvation of the Most High."

- The Church. An evocative portrait of the Church of Rome in the second century is portrayed by Hermas the Shepherd, Vision III and in Parable or Similitude IX. The outlook is generally "millenarian"; the millenarianism designates the doctrine which, from a literal reading of Apocalypse 20, 5, announced a reign of 1000 years of the Christ Messiah of the Righteous men on the Earth; before the final passage of the universe into the world of the Resurrection. We find this doctrine in Justin, Irenaeus, Melito of Sardis. For Origen and Augustine, these 1000 years are to be interpreted allegorically as referring to "the time of the Church" between the two advents of Christ.

The resistance of the Judaizers who wanted to be with Jesus and at the same time to observe the Sabbath and Passover, however, was in vain, and vain also their reluctance to the conversion of non-Jews.

The ancient Judeo-Christianity will not survive the tremendous expansion of Christianity in the pagan world; it will become sectarian in its leftovers.

After Paul's travels in Asia Minor, the pagan-Christianity was successful. Behind the Apostle, there was an army, and that army opposed the Jewish spirit to the Hellenic spirit and Antioch to Jerusalem. The great mass of Christians broke away from the narrow doctrine of the little community of Jerusalem. It was a good thing for Christianity, at least in terms of its further development. The Ebionism would have been its death. If it had listened to those in Jerusalem, Christianity would have remained a small Jewish sect. To become a world religion, Christianity had to leave out the Jewish particularism. The

new faithful, the non-Jews, could not in fact practice the Jewish religion and remain Greek or Roman in the same time. But by freeing itself from the Ebionites and from the Jewish Christians, by breaking the ties that bound it to its mother, Christianity made the non-Jews able to come to it and to remain themselves; whereas Peter and the Judaizers ones would have forced them, by adopting Israel's customs, to lose a bit of their nationality, and to accept that of those who converted them.

All this was done naturally, because the large masses accepted the ideas of Stephen and Paul and joined the Pagan Christians. There remained a small group of stubborn Judaizers; they who had originally been orthodox, became, the day when Christianity adopted a new orientation, some heretics. So, from what was initially a branch of the Orthodox Church in the strict sense of the term, as soon as the late 1st century, two leanings arose, Ebionism and Elchasaism, which shall be considered heretics, of course; albeit it was mainly in the second century that this aspect will become more important.

At the beginning of the second century, there are therefore two rival Christian Schools. The first, the Church of Jerusalem. Ignatius of Antioch is the precious witness of an ancient polemic against these Judaizers Christians in conformity with Paul's thought (cf. Galatians). "It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to Judaize. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity"(Epistle to the Magnesians, 10, 3).

Therefore St. Ignatius of Antioch fought them vigorously and the opposition they aroused in the become predominantly not Jewish church, made this element gradually disappear from the Roman Empire.

These Jewish Christians nevertheless carried on until the fourth century, continuing to align themselves with James and Peter. Islam has gathered a part of their heritage; the Jesus (Issa) presented by the Quran, owes much to them: miraculous birth, Jesus is set apart by God or the Demiurge, but is not God Himself, Jesus is only a man, but it is a true prophet (Ebionite notion). This proves that there were still in the Middle East texts and men or women belonging to this current, in the time of Muhammad.

MANICHAISM.

Manichaeism is one of the revealed religions or "salvation religions" or even "religions of the Book." The constitution he gave itself corresponds to the "church" type, and as a matter of fact it called itself "the holy Church" as well as "the holy religion." But through its growth, and especially by its original intention and ambitions, Manichaeism figures in the rank of universal religions. The Gnostic (Mandaean, or Gnostic-Syriac) identity of Manichaeism was argued by Hans Jonas, Kurt Rudolph, Iain Gardner and Samuel N. C. Lieu.

According to Abd Al-Jabbar (932-1025), one of the leaders of the Mu'tazili School, and his book entitled *Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat Sayyidina Muhammad*, Mani would have been a Christian bishop, guilty of having imitated the Apostle Paul and of having corrupted, like him, the primordial Christian religion preached by Jesus. Paul disguised Roman paganism under the appearance of Christianity, and Mani used the religion of Zoroaster to spread his doctrine in Persia.

Ibn A-Nadim, a Shi'ite scholar in the Baghdad of the tenth century (died about 995/998), made it a syncretism stemming from a synthesis of Christianity and Zoroastrianism. See below the passage in question which speaks of it in his book entitled *Kitab al Fihrist*.

"Mani appeared in the second year of the reign of Galus ar-Rumi 1). Marqiyun 2) appeared about a hundred years before him, during the first year of the reign of the Emperor Titus Antunianus 3). Ibn Daysan 4) appeared about thirty years after Marqiyoun. He was called Ibn Daysan as he was born on the banks of the Daysan River. Mani maintained that he was the Paraclete, announced by Jesus, peace be with him. Mani drew his doctrine from those of the Magi and Christians. "

Apart from this excerpt from the *Kitab al Fihrist*, until the discovery in the 20th century of various manuscripts in Egypt and China, the only information about Manichaeism we had was that reported by some of its sworn enemies as St. Augustine, who was himself a Manichean before joining Catholicism (what explains many things).

The Cologne Mani Codex (*Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*) is a 5th-century papyrus codex which was found in 1969 near Assiut in Egypt. It is, however, in Cairo that it appears, although we cannot be sure of its precise origin. It contains a Greek text describing a part of the life and teaching of the founder of the Manichaean religion.

This discovery made us able to know much more about the founder of one of the most influential religions of the past.

This document tells the story of Mani's life in the Judeo-Christian Baptist sect of the Elkasaites. The teachings of Mani are revealed to him by his spiritual companion and celestial double Syzygus. The Greek text bears traces that show it was translated from an original in eastern Aramaic or old Syriac language. Whether it is a compilation of earlier texts is suggested by the names - apparently those of the rabbis at the basis of this teaching - which are at the head of each section of the text.

The *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* contains four apologues or logia spoken by Mani concerning a precursor called Alchasaïos, who prohibits bathing in running waters, plowing and cooking bread for these human activities are likely to cause the suffering of the Universal Soul.

According to the *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*, Mani, born in 216, would have lived the first years of his life in a Baptist sect in southern Babylon.

The exegetical connection between this Alchasaïos and the Judeo-Christian Elchasaïos, author of the *Book of Elxai*, implies the identification of this "Baptist" sect with that of the Elchasaïtes.

Ibn al-Nadim mentions in his bibliographical catalog that Fatiq and Mani Bin Fatiq (216-274 / 277), his son, were members of the sect called Mughtasilah or Sabat al-Bata'ih, the " Sabians of the marshlands," who respect the "ritual of ablution" and "wash all that they eat," according to the precepts received from the founder of their movement: Alkhasayh.

Ibn An-Nadim asserts that when he was twelve years old Mani would have been "inspired from above" by the "King of the Gardens of Light" or "Almighty God" through the revelations handed down by Al-Tawm. But al-Tawm allegedly ordered 24-year-old Mani to leave the Elkasaite sect in order to teach the word of Christ.

Considering himself an imitator of the life of Jesus, Mani began to preach about 240, the year of his departure for the Indo-Greek kingdom in the footsteps of the community of the apostle Thomas, where he was probably influenced by Greco-Buddhism.

N.B. Mani is identified in it with the Amitabha Buddha, in whom people believed to recognize Iranian kinships. The couple Amitabha - Avalokitesvara presiding over the West, whose color is white, designates Mani or the prophet from the West, dressed in a white tunic.

Back in 242, Mani joined the Court of the Sassanid King Shapur I, faithful to Zoroastrianism, to whom he dedicates his first Persian work, *Shabuhrgan*, and presents his doctrine to him.

The monarch understands all the interest of a national religion to unify his States, and allowed him to spread his teaching freely throughout the Persian Empire, where he preached in Aramaic. The new faith develops rapidly and communities are multiplied.

Then came the reign of Bahram I, in 272, which, instead, favored a return to Mazdaism.

Persecuted, Mani took refuge in the Khorasan where he will make many followers among the local lords.

Anxious to see this influence grow, Bahram I recalled him back to Ctesiphon. But it is prison and ill-treatment that await for him. The order will be to make him die slowly under the weight of his chains.

His death throes will last 26 days, then he will die of exhaustion in Gundishapur around February 26, 277, about sixty years old.

For Abu Mansur at-Tha'alibi, his body will be skinned and his skin, filled with straw, suspended at an entrance to the city while Ibn al-Nadim relates in the *Kitab al-Fihrist* that his corpse cut in two will be exhibited at each of the entrances to the city.

At the end of the Sassanid dynasty (c. 226-651), Manichaeism was more prevalent in Khorasan than in Mesopotamia. The toleration expressed during the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) by the Iraqi governors, Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf and Khalid Ibn Abdallah Al-Qasri, but also by Caliph Al-Walid Ibn Yazid (around 690-710) will favor the reappearance of the Manichaean communities in Mesopotamia.

Nevertheless, during the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258), between the caliphate of Al-Mahdi and the caliphate of Al-Muqtadir (775-932), a violent persecution caused the return of the Manicheans to Khorasan, the transfer of the see of the Manichean pontificate from Babylonia to Samarkand and the gradual disappearance of the communities of Mananiyya or Manawiyya from the history of medieval Islam.

Several Muslim authors of the 9th-10th centuries mention the presence of Manichaeism in the tribe of the Quraysh, the dominant tribe of Mecca in the seventh century, which was that of Muhammad. Hisham Ibn Al-Kalbi (died around 820) in his *Kitab mathalib al-'Arab* included Manichaeism among the religions of the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period. Muhammad Ibn Habib (d. 860) mentions in his *Kitab al-Muhabbar* that divine justice sent the punishment of a violent death on the eight Manichaean heretics of the tribe of the Quraysh. Ibn Qutayba (died about 889) asserts in his *Al-Ma'arif* that "the zandaqa was widespread among the Quraysh who held it from Hira" and Al-Maqdisi (around 966) confirms, in his *Al-Bad wal Tarikh*, that "the zandaqa and ta'til (negation of the divine attributes and names) existed among the Quraysh. This would explain the Docetist Christology in the Quran (Sura 4 verses 157-158).

The mythology and theology of Manichaeism form a complex religious system, based on a corpus of canonical writings and on the paradoxical logic of the syncretism between the Abrahamic religious spaces and the Eastern religious spaces. The essential principle of this construction is the absolute

dualism between the Principle of Light and the Principle of Darkness or between the Principle of Good and the Principle of Evil, rewritten from Zoroastrian-Zurvanist primary sources and extrapolated from the biblical-evangelical, Gnostic-Hermetic or Hindu-Buddhist-Taoist sources which, in their turn, evidence the opposition between Light and Darkness.

In the Manichean law, there is no gray area, an act is good or evil, quite simply.

This so drastic concept, of course, applies to the world of ideas

So that the spirit of a man can, once dead, free itself from the cycle of reincarnations and thus reaches the kingdom of light, it must detach itself from all that is material in his lifetime.

The fundamental principles of Manichaeism are to refute the pleasure of the flesh, not to kill and not to blaspheme. Manichaeans have no right except to respect the rites and rules imposed upon them. As can be seen, the rules of this religion are therefore both simple and rigorous.

As regards the symbols, Manichaeism has very little of them. Four obvious and known to all symbols are nevertheless part of Manichaeism. The first two symbols are those of Light and Darkness. The third is the cross borrowed from Christianity. It means the incarnation of Jesus in human form in order to be the link between man and God but the suffering of Christ during his passion seems to be the result of an illusion among the Manichaeans. The fourth symbol is the serpent, representing the flesh, therefore that which is evil.

Manichaeism spread in the Roman Empire, particularly in Egypt and North Africa, and was the subject of a decree of persecution signed by Diocletian in 297, because of its novelty, opposed to the traditional Roman worship, and of its Persian origin. The decrees of religious toleration in 311 and 313 (edicts of Serdica and Milan), mainly intended to put an end to anti-Christian measures, also put an end to the anti-Manichean persecutions.

St. Augustine was a Manichaean in his youth, and he knew Mani's doctrine through various testimonies or writings which are all come to us.

A rather ambiguous and double-edged philosophical criticism of Manichaeism appears in his Confessions, Book VII, Chapter 3. The argument against the Manichaeans is the following one.

The Manichaeans admit by principle two opposite substances, Good and Evil, and make them to fight. Now, if God is incorruptible (in the metaphysical sense of the term, pure of all mixture, and incapable of being mixed up with another substance), Evil has no means of fighting him. Therefore, either the Manichaeans design that God is imperfect (what goes against the definition of God), or that God is incorruptible, and that he undertook of his own a fight won in advance against Evil.

An important Manichean library was discovered in the Mogao caves or Grottoes of the thousand Buddha in the Chinese province of Gansu, on the Silk Road.

Manichaeism ("School of Mani" or "School of Light") has indeed entered China from the sixth century, following the same ways as Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, or Islam; by the land (North-West) and sea (Southeast) Silk Road.

It became important in the eighth century when its practice was officially authorized, but only for "foreigners," mostly Sogdian merchants. Supported from the middle of the eighth century mainly by the Uyghurs, tolerated by the emperors for military and diplomatic reasons, it was banned from the middle of the ninth century, not without having aroused faithful among Chinese.

In this sense it is significant that in the thirteenth century the Inquisitors of the Catholic Church fought simultaneously against Manichaeism in Mongolia and against Catharism in the south of France. In the years 1253-1254, in the city of Karakorum, before the Mongol monarch Mangu Khan (around 1208-1259), the Flemish Franciscan William of Rubruck (about 1220-1293) indeed started a long theological debate with a group of Manichaean monks in China who preached the doctrine of the Two Principles and the transmigration of souls.

Chinese Manicheism survived until the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and remained particularly well established in the coastal areas which were the outcome of the sea "silk route," where its traces were still visible in the 20th century.

- 1) Galus ar Rumi = Gallus or Gallienus of the Romans.
- 2) Marqiyun = Marcion.
- 3) Titus Antuniyanus = Titus Antonianus
- 4) Ibn Daysan = Bardaisan of Edessa.

THE EASTERN CHRISTIANITY.

THE FIRST SCHOOL.

There was in Mesopotamia, including in the loop of the Euphrates (Jezirah) , important Jewish communities (so much so that it is there that will be formed the Babylonian Talmud). This is probably among these Jews that at the beginning of our era a certain number of men and women recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and that very soon. So this is here that from the first century, we will find this form of Christian expression that is distinguished from anything with which we are more or less familiar, and of which, at least culturally, we are members. For us, indeed, Christianity is the one that has developed under the Roman Empire, and whose great instigator was the apostle Paul. His apostolate starts from Syria, precisely from Antioch, where was formed, around 40-50, the community which will be called first "Christian," then turned westward definitively after the ruin of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. But from Antioch, other apostles and evangelists of Aramaic language have also spread their ideology in regions where this language was the dominant language: Palestine, Perea, Phoenicia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, where it will give rise besides to Manicheism, in Baghdad. That is to say the countries located on both sides of the border between the Roman Empire and its great eastern rival, the Parthian Empire. The large number of Jews living in these regions made these natural areas of expansion of first Christianity. But these attempts towards the East are known to us only by late legends. These early communities remained indeed mainly based on oral tradition, what deprives us of information about their history after their separation from Judaism.

While the churches of Pauline tradition made a considerable literary effort to help the Greek-speaking communities, recently excluded from the synagogues, to master their existence without the relay offered up to this point by the synagogue institutions; the churches of Aramaic language scattered throughout Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia, themselves, remained faithful to the oral transmission of belief. Some later legends, the existence of Aramaic translations of apocryphal books written in Greek language, well attested if it remains only fragments of them, the appearance early in the third century of a rather rich Syriac Christian literature; allow us to say that these churches were relatively numerous and alive. We must take this fact into account if we want to present a picture of what Christianity in the late first century of our era.

There existed a whole preaching in Aramaic language (that of Jesus). The immense development that these Christian communities have lived for centuries, despite the separations that an enmity, national as much if not more, as a dogmatic opposition to the great councils of the Greek Church (Ephesus and Chalcedon) caused; left traces in a still little known, but very abundant, literature. One of the first things which is striking is the profound difference of genius between the Semitic thought language, compared to the Western thought with abstract, precise, conceptual and rigorous, nature, that a cerebral philosophical work has developed over the centuries. The Oriental Semite is very different from the European , his culture is very different of the European culture, which has its roots in the Indo-European world. Among the Semites poetry plays a much larger role than in Europe in its way of expression. The language is concise, colorful, and, by a charming awkwardness, knows to express abstractions and higher realities only with often naive images. Finally, their religion is that of the invisible God or Demiurge; so to reach him you have to use anthropomorphism. The Syriac version of the Old Testament, made largely according to the Babylonian Targum 1), was used for the liturgical texts of all these churches. Though it may suffer later the influence of the Septuagint, it is virtually the only liturgical version of the Old Testament that comes directly from a source other than this one, and that is of Semitic genius, not modeled on the Greek text. That gives the liturgies of these churches a particular originality. No need was felt for them to use translations of Scripture. It is also understood that for the New Testament, despite the extreme care that the translators set to reflect the Greek text, Aramaisms have been able to keep a much greater intelligibility than in any other language.

The one or almost one who among the Syrian fathers has entered our current literature (the Greeks besides had already translated him , thanks to Latin versions of the popularization editions or some translations in modern language); is St. Ephrem who was born at Nisibis around 306 and lived in Edessa. He is venerated as a saint by Christians in the whole world, but especially among those in Syria. Ephrem wrote with the greatest variety hymns, poems and sermons in verse, as well as Bible

commentaries in prose. It was for the latter some practical theological works for the edification of the church in troubled times. So popular were his works, that they were read at the Service as inspired writings, as it was done some time for the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistles by Clement of Rome; and that several centuries after his death, Christian authors still wrote under his name hundreds of pseudepigraphical works.

The writings of Ephrem show an expression of the still early, but vibrant, Christian faith, little influenced by European thought patterns, and more rooted in the ways of speaking of the East. Almost all the churches of Syriac language became in the fifth century, separated from other Christian churches. The alternations of hard times and agreement between the princes of the Persian Empire and the Byzantine emperors complicated the relations between the two Churches; to the point that after the victory of Shapur II and the death of the emperor Julian, the Euphrates Christendom proclaimed itself independent at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon of 424. It had to take a stand against the prejudice, which had it that Christians Persian were the natural allies of the Romans, and the sworn enemies of the Persian King of kings, a prejudice which caused to them a certain number of bloody setbacks. Independence does not mean separation, but this will come soon, because the opposition to the dogma of Ephesus and to the "councils of Roman emperors" and the attachment to the prestigious Theodore of Mopsuestia or the doctrine of Nestorius; kept this Church of the former southern Persia, in the Nestorianism.

A tireless worker, Theodore has continued throughout his life to accumulate volume on volume. He died in 428 without his teaching was suspected. He embodies the orientations of the School of Antioch, whose exegesis, marked by the use of the literal sense, is based on careful historical-grammatical analysis, using the least possible allegory. The guiding thought of this school is colored by the influence of Judaism: it relies on the concrete one. Regarding Christology, it is attached first to the historical facts, the earthly life of the man Jesus, for as much without losing sight of his divine nature of Son, uncreated and co-eternal with the Father. It is unthinkable to confuse the two natures of Christ, certainly united, but discernible.

This distance, out of Christian unity, of the churches in Mesopotamia and Persia, of almost all the Semitic Christianized world, was the first big break that affected the Christian world.

1) The Targum is a translation of the Torah or Hebrew Bible, with commentary, into Aramaic.

THE FIRST (OR SECOND) MISSIONARY WAVE: STEPHEN, NICHOLAS AND PHILIP (about the year 35 ? 40?)

As we have already had the opportunity to say, using the image of the wave to describe this dynamic of conversion, we do not wish to insist on the parallelism of the trajectories nor on the length of the time interval between their appearance and their development.

In this case, the wave about which we will discuss in this chapter of our essay started from the same place and very soon after the first one, but it was not at all concentric and reached shores very different from the first one. Whereas the tip of the previous one died on the sands of Islam several centuries later.

The Second Christian School, that of the (future) Great Church, is especially active in Caesarea, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Galatia. It originates from the preaching of Stephen and of the Hellenist current.

One of the first structural divisions of the early Christians was their degree of attachment to the Law of Moses. All were Jewish, therefore Judeo-Christian, but some were very attached to the Jewish Law, the Judaizers, and others more open, more independent of it.

But there was also another factor of division or regrouping, the mother tongue, for some Aramaic, for others Greek.

The wave of conversion which we shall speak of below will be studied according to this criterion, which is added to that of the more or less rigorous practice of the 613 mitzvot of strict observance Judaism. It goes without saying, however, that these two criteria largely overlapped and often had the same effects.

This second Christian school, that of the (future) Great Church, was especially active in Caesarea, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Galatia. Its origins lie in the preaching of Stephen and of the Hellenistic movement.

The first disciples originally visited only synagogues where the Bible was read in Hebrew (the language of the scribes) and explained or commented on in Aramaic (the language of the people). The Hebrew language played almost the same role as Latin in the Middle Ages. In the first century, the sacred text was accessible only in Hebrew language, and it was the language of the teaching of the clerics. These disciples of the origins were therefore called "the Hebrews" (Acts of the Apostles, 6,1). Among the first disciples, were there some who spoke Greek? One can ask the question for two of them, who have Greek names: Philip and Andrew. They are seen acting as intermediaries between "Greeks" (Hellenistic Jews or proselytes?) and Jesus (John 12, 20-22). There was a sufficient number of bilingual disciples for the Hellenistic (Greek speaking) milieu was reached in Jerusalem itself. It happened very early. The choice of the group of the Seven to supervise the Hellenists (Acts 6,1-15), the Greek preaching of Stephen, the reactions it provoked, and the martyrdom of the preacher (6: 8; 7: 60) take place before the conversion of St. Paul. It is therefore necessary to consider as soon as this time a Greek translation of the fundamental evangelical materials, in forms adapted to the "Hellenistic" Jews.

They frequented synagogues where Scripture was read in its Greek translation and commented on in Greek. One of these places of prayer was called "the synagogue of the Freedmen" (Acts 6, 9). The remains of one of these synagogues were discovered in Jerusalem, with the following inscription in Greek. "Theodotus, son of Vettenu, a priest and synagogue ruler), son of a synagogue ruler, grandson of a synagogue ruler built the synagogue for the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments, and the guest chamber and the rooms and the water installations for lodging for those needing them from abroad, which his fathers, the elders and Simonides founded."

In spite of the feeling of brotherhood which drove the first faithful, the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem was therefore made, from the beginning, of two clearly differentiated elements: the Hebrews and the Hellenists.

The Hebrews were Jews from Jerusalem or from Palestine, speaking Aramaic, and strict observers of the Law.

The Hellenists were the Jews of the Diaspora. In Jerusalem there were many of them from all parts of the Roman world. There they had their synagogue as we have just seen, and spoke Greek (in other words, they were of Greek language and education).

The disagreement which broke out between the Hebrews and the Hellenists was not due only to the diversity of language or education. Hellenistic Judaism was regarded by the Hebrews as an inferior

Judaism. These racist prejudices explain therefore to some extent the incidents that gave rise to the institution of deacons.

Acts of the Apostles 6,1. In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

There were two types of proselytes at that time, those who accepted all the customs of Judaism, including circumcision, and who were called the proselytes of justice, and those who hesitated to be circumcised, and who were called proselytes of the gate. This Nicholas was to be a proselyte of justice. NB. Judging by their names, the deacons seem therefore to have been all Hellenistic Jews.

From the time of his appointment, Stephen will consequently preach the gospel to the Jews of the diaspora dwelling in Jerusalem. The first true founder of Christianity is therefore perhaps Stephen; and in the Pentecost Jerusalem, the Jews from Cyprus, visiting the city, naturally became part of the Hellenistic faction of the first Christians, that of Stephen, which was the most detached from the practices of the Temple.

Head of the Hellenists, Stephen raises the opposition in a synagogue frequented by foreign Jews. Officials take him to a Sanhedrin and make a complaint against the message he preaches.

Probably in substance words against Moses and the Law, and perhaps even an allusion to a possible destruction of the Temple in a near future.

In a long speech (7, 2-53) in response to this accusation, Stephen expresses this decisive conviction: "The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands" (7:48). A druid like Toland could have said the same thing!

If the Acts of the Apostles report speeches of Peter and Paul, none is as developed as that of Stephen. His overview of the history of salvation, from Abraham to Israel's entry into the Promised Land with Moses and Joshua, fascinated the exegetes: there are elements that seem to escape the current interpretation of the "Old Testament. Some even saw in it the reflection of a Samaritan background, coherent with the mission in Samaria which will soon be undertaken by the Hellenists. The last verses are surprisingly polemical coming from a defendant, since Stephen accuses his listeners of having given up and murdered Jesus, as their forefathers before had persecuted the prophets. It is hardly surprising that such an accusation had brought to its height the fury against Stephen: he is therefore driven out of the city and stoned to death ...

Stephen was stoned because his speech addressed to the Jews represented the Hellenistic Christian leanings, which will later motivate the propagators of this belief. Stephen reproached them for not having understood the notion of spiritual and universal worship, and to remain attached to legal particularism or formalism.

The Hellenists were therefore dispersed by the persecution which followed the death of St. Stephen; and it will be consequently the Hellenists who will first spread Christianity in the rest of Judea, in Samaria, and as far as Phoenicia, the island of Cyprus, and Antioch. Less formalistic with regard to Jewish law than the Hebrews of Jerusalem, they were the most apt to be the agents of Christian spreading among the Jews of the Diaspora, and especially among the Greeks.

The departure of Jerusalem to preach to a larger audience was therefore not the result of a wanted and voluntary planning but of persecution. The evictees who become missionaries are the most radical Christians in relation to the worship of the Temple. The missionary activity itself could have shown a certain neutrality with regard to Judaism, but with the Hellenists as spokesman, it must inevitably become a centrifugal force. Their converts to Jesus will detach themselves gradually from the most essential characteristics of Jewish worship. Such is at least the thesis of Raymond E. Brown.

Very soon, contact will also be established with the pagan world, in Palestine itself (Roman occupiers, Greek or Eastern traders, etc.) and in the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin, while beginning with proselytes.

According to Acts 8: 5, the Hellenists begin by going to the Samaritans and preaching Jesus to non-Jews.

According to the Acts of the Apostles (8: 4-25), Philip meets Simon the philosopher when he comes to preach among the Samaritans. During the lifetime of Jesus, the Apostles were instructed to avoid those whom they regarded as strangers: "Do not go onto the road of the pagan nations or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 10: 6. Another point of view: John 4: 1-42). We already find here a kind of foretaste of heresy (in relation to official Judaism), since the Samaritans were like the pariahs of this religion (the Judaism).

To this racist prejudice is added a second difficulty, namely that the Samaritans have already their own prophet, for whom they have an immense respect. "This man (Simon) they said, is the power of God or the Demiurge that is called Great" (Acts 8: 10). Many intellectuals of the time believed indeed that God or the Demiurge is absolutely transcendent, an absolutely simple and self-sufficient superior Being. But what can be then his relation to the world in this case ?? The solution of the philosophers of the time was to assume a whole hierarchy of divine TRANSITIONAL beings between the primordial superior Being (God or the Demiurge) and the basely material world that is ours. They imagine transitional powers (dynamis) or workings of God or the Demiurge outside himself, some being more important than others, for example the Logos or word of God- or-Devil in Plato. Simon of Samaria " had given it out that he was someone momentous, and everyone believed in him; eminent citizens and ordinary people" especially because, for a long time " they had been astounded by his wizardry" (Acts VIII, IX and XI). It was known that the Apostles converted crowds by performing miracles, Simon proceeded in a similar way, by using (according to the Apostles) "wizardry." Yet something happened with Simon, which made that he was not just considered a "magician" among others. Simon is also really interested in Christianity, and discovers affinities with Philip. " Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw (Acts 8,13). There is therefore here clearly an act of conversion. (Editor's note. The later undoubted existence of Gnostic Christians tends to prove that Simon was more or less Christian at some point in his life).

There could have been a situation of competition - very clearly foreseen in this passage - which would have led to a simple rejection. It would have been sufficient to insist on the difference between "miracle" and "wizardry" to say that Simon was an impostor, as formerly the magicians of pharaoh. But it happens that Simon approaches Philip, and even, that he converts and recognizes in Philip the best of "magicians." This step is presented in a single sentence, but the process seems to have lasted some time. The text tells us: "He followed Philip everywhere," what does not presuppose only a conversion, but that they have seen much each other. They became friends. Simon could have become a new apostle. One of the Fathers of the Church even, for obviously he is also an inspired man. He has a "divine power" and what also made him sympathetic in the eyes of the Christians is that he admits the pre-eminence of Christ.

The fact of being a "magus" or "magician" (what is the same thing) is not a sufficient reason to reject Simon, since the Wise Men who came to worship Christ, will later be presented as being in the same situation. In short, Simon could have become not only the Thirteenth Apostle, but also the fourth Magus.

How is it then that Simon, who was first received by Philip in the Christian community, was suddenly seen so badly and even rejected? The continuation of the Acts tells us: " When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria" (Acts 8:14). The latter obviously do not have the same sympathy for Simon. On the other hand, they do something more than Simon and Philip, they lay hands on the converts so that they receive the Holy Spirit. Simon then would have offered money to get the same power from the Apostles. But Peter said to him, " May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!(Acts 8:20.) The violence of Peter's answer suggests other grievances than the one that is openly expressed. Indeed, his argument does not establish Simon as "father of all heresies," but simply as an inspiration for "simony" (this term comes from the same episode). Let us add that this reproach is a "classic," in this case, it is not very far from that Socrates expressed against the sophists.

Simon's answer is quite humble: "Pray to the Lord for me, so that nothing you have said may happen to me". The real problem of Simon does not come from what he performed magic instead of performing miracles; nor even that he would have practiced the venality of spiritual things (a reproach

abundantly expressed against the Catholic Church itself, notably by Luther). The real problem is that he converted while remaining more than a simple Christian.

In short, Peter and John being involved in this first opening in the direction of non-Jews (in this case Jews not entirely Jews), a first split with incalculable consequences occurred in the incipient Christianity: the separation between faith and philosophy. Simon and his followers distanced themselves, and Peter and John return to a Jerusalem that they would have done better to never leave.

Philip will meet then a very strange character whose symbolism is so evident for the problem of circumcision that we have difficulty to believe in his real existence: a high official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. This eunuch was perhaps a pagan seduced by Judaism and practicing some of the rituals and mitzvot (concrete commands of Judaism). Perhaps he was ready to convert to Judaism, but it was not possible! For a man to convert to Judaism, he had to comply with the sign asked by God or the Demiurge to the named Abraham, in other words, the circumcision. Now a eunuch could not be circumcised, the priest could not take away his foreskin since, by definition, he was no longer a real male!

Deuteronomy, Chapter XXIII, verse 1: No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord.

Hence his question to Philip about baptism. Chapter VIII verse 36. "What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"

No sooner said than done, and this Ethiopian will be the first (or second after the centurion Cornelius?) non-Jewish Christian in history, the Samaritans being all the same half Jews.

The text of Acts concerning him shows us the eunuch trying to understand a passage in the book of Isaiah. What makes him, if this scene is true, either a pagan attracted by Judaism (a God-fearer) or a proselyte already converted.

The "God-fearers" (also sometimes called "worshippers of God") were non-Jews, sympathizing to Judaism, but without circumcision. In the synagogues of the Diaspora, they sometimes formed a not insignificant proportion of the participants in the ceremonies. At that time, as we have seen, there was an active Jewish propaganda in all the countries of the region. The Hebrew religion made a great number of adherents in the aristocratic or disadvantaged classes of Rome and of the great cities. Several Latin satirical poets also ridicule this mode of the Judaization, which then prevailed among the elites. Various passages in the Acts are better understood if it is considered that this sympathy for Judaism could be more or less great, depending on the case (from the regular practitioner to the simple sympathizer); but in any case all "Godfearers" were considered by the Jews as pagans. On the other hand, they were ready to receive the Christian message. These sympathizers, of whom, in the first century before our era, the number grew incessantly, did not have the nationalist prejudices of the Jews; They judaized, but their eyes were not only turned towards Jerusalem. We can even say in a sense that the exalted patriotism of the Jews of the time stopped or limited conversions.

Verse 39: "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again" makes nevertheless somewhat doubt the factual reality of this story.

In any case, this text shows us Philip continuing to proclaim the good news in the Azotus or Ashdod region on the Mediterranean coast; Then to Caesarea, an important Roman port in northern Palestine, the capital of that time, where he founded a first local church. The capital of Palestine indeed was no longer, for a long time, the old city of Jerusalem, but a new and modern city, teeming with life, Caesarea (now Qaisarya), on the coast, thirty-six kilometers south of Haifa. Not to be confused with the Caesarea of ??Philip, situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, where the evangelists situate what is commonly called the "confession of Caesarea Philippi" (Mk 9: 7; Mt 16,13).

Editor's note. When the Emperor Augustus gave him the territory of this coastal harbor, Herod undertook to build a port and a city there. Dedicated to the emperor, the city will have the name of Caesarea. Between 22 and 9 before our era, Herod commanded a whole series of buildings (in addition to the port and its facilities, we can mention a temple, a theater, a racecourse, an aqueduct and an amphitheater); to make Caesarea the principal city of his kingdom. In a few years, major works will be carried out, thus raising the new town to the most important port of Palestine.

After the death of Herod, this Caesarea Maritima fell to his son Archelaus, who lost it during her exile, and became the capital of Roman Palestine, the official seat of the prefect; Center of administration, even garrison city.

The Governor of Idumea, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (placed under the immediate authority of the Syrian legate from 26 to 36), Pontius Pilate dwelt there during the events evoked in the four Gospels.

The Hellenists expelled from Jerusalem flocked therefore to Caesarea, and the Church founded by Philip in that city was able from the very beginning to enjoy conditions favorable to its development (maritime relations with the native island of Barnabas, Cyprus, etc.). It was, therefore, perhaps from Caesarea that the gospel spread to the Roman world.

The Hellenists separated completely the Jewish precepts from the idea of ??nationality, but they relied on the Jewish work already accomplished for this purpose. The Essene-Baptist preaching of the first Christianity will be addressed to all the "Jewries" in Asia Minor, Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Italy, in which there were not very orthodox elements, in order to engage them. Without the existence of these elements in the Jewish settlements, Christianity could not have been established.

"Sent in order to make disciples of all nations, " according to the text added later in Matthew 28:19, the apostles began in reality by speaking only to their Jewish compatriots and their sympathizers; But this Jewish world in the broad sense of the term formed already a vast network in itself, extending well beyond Palestine.

It included:

- The Jews of Palestine, part of Israel politically absorbed in the Roman Empire, but keeping its distance from the pagan world. The Temple of Jerusalem was its heart.
- The Jews of the Diaspora (in Greek scattering) living abroad, much more numerous than the Jews in Palestine.

These Jews lived together in local communities, sometimes very important, as in the city of Alexandria or in Rome, without breaking the tie that binds them to their spiritual capital, Jerusalem. In the Roman Empire, the right of association was regulated, but the Jews had been allowed to congregate and celebrate their worship successively by Caesar, Augustus and Claudius. Judaism was therefore a "religio licita" as it is said in Latin.

ON THE CONDITION OF RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

"In the cities, where they arrived, the Hellenists went straight to the prayer houses (the synagogue) and there made their propaganda and found their first helpers; later a Christian community was founded, side by side with the Jewish community, and the original Jewish nucleus was increased by all those whom they had convinced among the Pagans.

Without the existence of Jewish colonies Christianity would have encountered much greater obstacles; it would have had greater difficulties in establishing itself [and perhaps even would not have existed. Editor's note]. The Jews therefore paved the way for Christianity. As has been stated, the Jews in ancient society enjoyed considerable privileges; they had protective charters assuring them an independent political and judicial organization and freedom of worship. These privileges facilitated the development of the Christian churches. For a long time, the associations of the Christians were not distinguished by the authorities from Jewish associations, the Roman government taking no cognizance of the division between the two religions. Christianity was treated as a Jewish sect, thus benefiting by the same advantages; it was not only tolerated, but, in an indirect way, protected by the imperial governors"(Bernard Lazare).

As we could see it also, the Church of Philip was thus very quickly composed of various elements, Greek-speaking Jews or Greeks of origin, and therefore it became particularly able to play an important role in the spreading of the message. So early enough in this Caesarea Maritima there was a Christian community composed, partly, of uncircumcised non-Jews, with whom the Judeo-Christian strictly observing the law of Moses could not fraternize.

The Church of Caesarea also seems to have lodged a certain time Saul / Paul after his expulsion from Jerusalem by Judaizers.

It is difficult to imagine today the tensions that existed between the very first Christians on the question of the universality of the gospel. At the beginning of the first century of our era, they convey probably only very basic teachings about the God-or-demon of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Some indeed, beginning with Jesus himself, advocated bringing the gospel, "only to the lost sheep of Israel."

The Christians of the first century of our era therefore had to overcome a severe difficulty, a true challenge: the intrinsic contradictions of their message.

For it is one or the other, either God or the Demiurge saves his people by destroying the world (Apocalypse = end of the time and last judgment); or he saves his people by freeing it from the hold of other nations, without there is for all that end of the world (traditional Jewish messianism).

It is not the same thing, even if Daniel 7-12 and Mark 3 mix merrily both themes. Jesus must return in order to at once free his followers (messianism) and proceed to the final judgment after the end of the time (apocalypse).

Same thing for the law of Moses. To respect it at 100% or not? Matthew 5: 17-18 goes rather in the direction of the 100% respect.

Given the total failure of the traditional Jewish messianic point of view (no triumphal liberation, but on the contrary an arrest and crucifixion between two anonymous thugs) early Christians succeeded by merging various elements that can be summarized as follows.

- a) Jesus was actually the Messiah (Christ) sent by God or the Demiurge. b) He is even God.
- But his kingdom was not of this world. On the other hand, he is already secretly at work here on earth * and will be fully realized when all men will have become Christians **.
- Jesus died not according to the prophecies about the Messiah but according to the prophecies about the suffering servant,
- For the sins of all men, not only of the Jews.
- He brings salvation (eternal life) to all those who believe in Him.
- He is also the Son of Man who is to return to judge the living and the dead after the end of Time.
- His full glory will be revealed at that time, because it was deliberately concealed during his life on earth (that sounds a bit schizophrenic).
- There will be then a resurrection of the bodies so that each one can physically undergo his punishment, or be rewarded (idea borrowed from the Pharisees).

These are, presumably, the constituent elements of the first Christian catechesis. This Hellenizing reform of Judaism will have as its slogan a discourse of the type "good news (gospel in Greek language) the Savior has arrived!"

* Schizophrenia or autosuggestion method typical of Christianity which calls it kerygma.

** What is not about to happen, at the speed things are going). 2 Peter 3:4: "They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'"

All the Palestinian movements of the time proclaim indeed the "good news," in Greek evangelion, gospel, according to which a kyrios, a lord (in Greek language still) will descend or re-descend, on Earth, to save the Righteous and condemn the Wicked. The Hellenists too therefore probably announced that a nonhuman but having assumed the appearance of a man, messiah, had descended onto Earth and then ascended to Heaven to sit on the right hand of the true God.

This first Christianity attributes to his "aggelos christos" or "angel Christ" some words (logia) borrowed most often from the biblical texts and from various "wisdom" (wisdom of Solomon, wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira).

This first Christian belief (Docetism) will be abandoned by later Christians and replaced by the belief in a true god but also true man Jesus (on the other hand the Muslims themselves will remain faithful to it).

The first non-Jews rallied to the belief in the Messianity of Jesus were probably at first only sympathizers of a certain Judaism, that of the Septuagint; and it was perhaps for the first time at Caesarea that his faithful celebrated a new worship, different from that of the synagogue, but analogous to that which was performed in Greek language for the sovereigns in the Hellenistic world. By the influence of mystery cults, the primitive rites of baptism and breaking of bread took on a new meaning, that of the union with the god-or-demon dead and risen. They also resorted to the baptismal

rite, which was already attested, and which existed more or less everywhere, even though Jesus himself never baptized.

The Hellenists are perhaps also the source of the first secret gospel of Mark (of what was to become the gospel of Mark); and they passed then perhaps the relay to the apostle Apollos (unless Apollos was one of them) as well to Barnabas (Acts 11: 5-26). And so to Paul in the end, before he became famous following his discovery by Marcion. Paul indeed will spend two years in Caesarea, as a prisoner, after his arrest in the Temple of Jerusalem and his appearance before the Sanhedrin (Acts 21, 27-22, 29; 23, 23-35; 24, 1-26 and 32).

Under the influence of the Sadducees, Paul had been charged with political accusations: he was a dangerous revolutionist, guilty of sedition, leader of an unauthorized sect, of a "religio illicita." Finally, he would have profaned the Temple of Jerusalem by introducing a non-Jew in it. Each of these offenses was punishable by death.

Before Antonius Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, Paul refuted the accusations of the high priest Ananias, by insisting that he was not unfaithful to the religion of his forefathers who professed the Messianic faith. His position about resurrection was that of Judaism, a religion protected by the State; therefore he could not be blamed for preaching an "illicit religion." These were only divergences within the boundaries of the Jewish religion, what did not interest the Romans.

But all the information that reached Felix proved that the case of Paul still worried the diehard Jews as well as the Judeo-Christians. It seems indeed to have been collusion or objective alliance between both groups. The close relations between the high priest and James, the brother of Jesus, imply it. The prefect nevertheless ordered to make the incarceration of Paul, who was a Roman citizen, as supportable as possible. He will be therefore guarded in the prison of the palace, but his captivity will be without unnecessary rigor. The members of the Church of Caesarea will be allowed to visit him and thus contribute to the evolution of his ideas. Perhaps even that it was they who suggested to him his defense system in court.

Given the importance at the time of the Church of Caesarea, one wonders well why the Acts of the Apostles attribute the conversion of the centurion Cornelius to Peter rather than to Philip, whose preaching must have all the same seriously prepared the ground for him. Could it be that somebody had erased the name of Philip in order to substitute it the name of Peter?

Acts of the Apostles 10: 1-48.

" One of the Centurions of the Italica cohort stationed in Caesarea was called Cornelius. [Some legions or cohorts of the Roman army were nicknamed "Italic" to remind of their recruitment that had been done in Italy. The centurion was the subordinate officer or non-commissioned officer commanding the smallest unit of the Roman infantry, that is to say one hundred men].

He and the whole of his household were devout and God-fearing, and he gave generously to Jewish causes and constantly prayed to God. One day at about the ninth hour he had a vision in which he distinctly saw the angel of God come into his house and call out to him, 'Cornelius!'

He stared at the vision in terror and exclaimed, 'What is it, Lord?' The angel answered, 'Your prayers and charitable gifts have been accepted by God. Now you must send some men to Jaffa and fetch a man called Simon, known as Peter, who is lodging with Simon the tanner whose house is by the sea.' When the angel who said this had gone, Cornelius called two of the slaves and a devout soldier of his staff, told them all that had happened, and sent them off to Jaffa.

Next day, while they were still on their journey and had only a short distance to go before reaching the town, Peter went to the housetop at about the sixth hour to say his prayers.

He felt hungry and was looking forward to his meal, but before it was ready he fell into a trance and saw heaven thrown open and something like a big sheet being let down to earth by its four corners; it contained every kind of animal, reptile and bird.

A voice then said to him, 'Now, Peter, kill and eat!'

But Peter answered, 'Certainly not, Lord; I have never yet eaten anything profane or unclean.'

Again, a second time, the voice spoke to him, 'What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane.'

This was repeated three times, and then suddenly the container was drawn up to heaven again. Peter was still at a loss over the meaning of the vision he had seen when the men sent by Cornelius arrived. They had asked where Simon's house was and they were now standing at the door."

Editor's note. The story of the dream had by Saint Peter is nevertheless very strange, and one wonders whether this is not a justification a posteriori.

St. Luke, in his gospel as in his Acts of the Apostles, endeavored to demonstrate that the universalism of the Good News was willed by God. One of the important links in his demonstration is precisely this episode of the conversion of the Centurion Cornelius. St. Peter, the leader of the apostles, is somehow forced by God to go to the pagan Cornelius and to baptize him. From the first words, the universalism of Christianity is thus clearly affirmed (verse 34).

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right".

But this episode is much better suited to the Hellenist Philip than to the man who aborted the rapprochement with the movement of Simon of Samaria.

Whatever it be "The circumcised believers were astonished." Acts chapter X verse 45. At the beginning of chapter XI Peter will be again reproached on this subject: ""You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them"(verse 3).

It is therefore difficult to situate the exact outlines of Christian orthodoxy in the first century.

What is found in the big Christian centers of antiquity: Edessa, Alexandria, and Asia Minor, there are indeed Christianities far away from later Orthodoxy (the orthodox Catholicism). The discoveries made in Upper Egypt at Nag Hammadi in 1945 prove that the official Christian dogma of today was a very little thing in the second century.

Everyone agrees that the Orthodoxy we know in the West took two or three centuries to be established, to be finally affirmed by the great councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is therefore from the fourth century alone that we can really by contrast speak of heresies.

For there is not first, at the beginning, a Christianity, but CHRISTIANITIES, all equally legitimate. True Christian belief, true Christianity, or Orthodoxy, did not exist before the third or fourth century.

Orthodoxy will be built only by successive elimination, certain currents succeeding in supplanting others (before being in turn dismissed?) until there is only one left; basically from the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople as we have just seen. But the present image of Christianity is not less heretical than the Gnosis, Arianism, Marcionism, or Montanism, of the first centuries 1).

There was not, at the time, one Christianity 2), but SOME, all equally legitimate, Christianities, once again let us repeat it, and characterizing more or less active minorities.

Every Hollywood movie, every book, every broadcast, every study, every work of fiction, taking into account only the present idea of Christianity, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Reformist, is consequently detrimental to the truth, therefore to the progress of Mankind.

From the middle of the second century, the faithful from pagan origin became the majority in Christianity and gradually outweigh the Judeo-Christians. Their lack of success with other Jews contrast with the great success that the Pagan-Christian group got in the pagan world. The movement looks increasingly as a new religion separate from Judaism.

The relatively rapid numerical increase of the manpower of this orientation, due to the situation created by the Roman Empire (cities and trade routes to connect them) will lead the (future) Great Church to split into several branches.

- Gnostic Christianity.
- The Marcionism that separates from the "Great" Church and ended in eclipsing it during one time.
- The spiritual ancestors of Orthodox Catholics and other Parabolani of the Eastern Christianity.
- Montanism or new prophecy which will remain still very close to them.

These three fanaticisms (Marcionism Parabolani and Montanism) nevertheless meet with regard to their contempt of the body. If Marcion sees in ascetic exaggeration a way of revoking the demiurge (the evil god and the failed world he created), Montanus sees in the principle of abstinence the only criterion of existence according to Christ . Montanism will give rise to the current at the origin of Christianity as we know it today, by eliminating all other orientations.

The Proto-Catholic or proto-Orthodox current is but a very tenuous thread which will be constructed little by little, haphazardly, at the price of multiple borrowings, including from the branches it rejects by calling them " Heresies. But heresy was the original manifestation of Christianity (it was a heresy of

Judaism) , orthodoxy a later phenomenon. Orthodoxy was built only slowly, through successive elimination. It is not original. There is not at first the orthodoxy, and then more or less rapidly heretical deviations: there is at first a large variety of currents, all equally heretical in relation to Judaism.

1. To mention only the main currents.
2. Implied a true one as opposed to fakes or mistakes.

DOCUMENT.

SAINT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA THE STROMATA BOOK VII.

It is now time to show the Greeks that the Gnostic alone is truly pious; so that the philosophers, learning of what description the true Christian is, may condemn their own stupidity in rashly and inconsiderately persecuting the [Christian] name, and without reason calling those impious who know the true God. And clearer arguments must be employed, I reckon, with the philosophers, so that they may be able, from the exercise they have already had through their own training, to understand, although they have not yet shown themselves worthy to partake of the power of believing. The prophetic sayings we shall not at present advert to, as we are to avail ourselves of the Scriptures subsequently at the proper places. But we shall point out summarily the points indicated by them, in our delineation of Christianity, so that by taking the Scriptures at once (especially as they do not yet comprehend their utterances), we may not interrupt the continuity of the discourse.....

It is, then, our purpose to prove that the Gnostic alone is holy and pious, and worships the true God in a manner worthy of Him; and that worship meet for God is followed by loving and being loved by God. He accordingly judges all excellence to be honourable according to its worth; and judges that among the objects perceived by our senses, we are to esteem rulers, and parents, and every one advanced in years; and among subjects of instruction, the most ancient philosophy and primeval prophecy; and among intellectual ideas, what is oldest in origin, the timeless and unoriginated First Principle, and Beginning of existences — the Son — from whom we are to learn the remoter Cause, the Father, of the universe, the most ancient and the most beneficent of all; not capable of expression by the voice, but to be revered with reverence, and silence, and holy wonder, and supremely venerated; declared by the Lord, as far as those who learned were capable of comprehending, and understood by those chosen by the Lord to acknowledge; "whose senses," says the apostle, "were exercised."

The service of God, then, in the case of the Gnostic, is his soul's continual study and occupation, bestowed on the Deity in ceaseless love.....

The Gnostic himself ministers to God, and exhibits to men the scheme of improvement, in the way in which he has been appointed to discipline men for their amendment. For he is alone pious that serves God rightly and unblameably in human affairs. For as that treatment of plants is best through which their fruits are produced and gathered in, through knowledge and skill in husbandry, affording men the benefit accruing from them; so the piety of the Gnostic, taking to itself the fruits of the men who by his means have believed, when not a few attain to knowledge and are saved by it, achieves by his skill the best harvest. And as Godliness (theoprepia) is the habit which preserves what is becoming to God, the godly man is the only lover of God, and such will he be who knows what is becoming, both in respect of knowledge and of the life which must be lived by him, who is destined to be divine (???), and is already being assimilated to God. So then he is in the first place a lover of God. For as he who honours his father is a lover of his father, so he who honours God is a lover of God. Thus also it appears to me that there are three effects of gnostic power: the knowledge of things; second, the performance of whatever the Word suggests; and the third, the capability of delivering, in a way suitable to God, the secrets veiled in the truth.

THE GNOSTIC CHRISTIANITY.

The word gnosis literally means knowledge in Greek language. The idea of a ??liberation through an absolute knowledge is not specifically Christian. We find it , for example, in a pronounced way in the West in druidism, in the Far East in Buddhism, and in certain yoga.

As we have seen, when Christianity came into the world, gnosis was already born; but the Gospels brought it new elements, and it considered the life and word of Jesus, as it had already considered the Old Testament.

Specialists call Gnosticism - or Gnosis – every doctrine and every religious attitude based on the theory and experience of getting salvation through knowledge. Adolf von Harnack and, after him, the German theologians from the higher critical School, as far as Bultmann and his disciples, assumed that the Gnostic doctrines were already formed at the time of the writing of the Gospels. Thus early Christianity would have owed a great debt to Gnosticism, which would have been a sharp form of Hellenization of Christianity.

The second sociological background having been affected by Christianization, after the Palestinian Judaism by definition (where it will end in failure, as we shall see afterwards) was the Gnostic background; probably through the intermediary of the Hellenists and of their successful conversion of Simon of Samaria.

Generally speaking, those who are called "Gnostics" formed groups or schools which thought that they possessed a revealed knowledge, knowledge at once saving and more or less secret. Intellectuals more or less colored by philosophy, Gnostic Christians sought "knowledge" with obvious mystical and religious preoccupations.

The idea of gnosis as knowledge of the true origin and of the true destiny of the soul is present in Orthodox Christianity as a possible component of salvation. It is found in Clement of Alexandria and particularly Origen (and after them Evagrius Ponticus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor). The Gnosticism of Christian origins is ... "a perfect knowledge," got through revelation and enlightenment during an inner experience. This revelation brings salvation.

As we have already seen it, the father of Christian Gnosticism is Simon of Samaria, called "the Magician." It is the only heresiarch named in the first biblical text founding the Christian Church as an institution, that is, the Acts of the Apostles, written six or eight decades after the events. The fact that, apart from the changes that have occurred in the meantime, Simon's name still appears in the Acts, suggests that the matter was of importance and probably still relevant at the time of the writing. The Christianity we know has been built by fighting the other Christians, with all its strength, and with all its soul. It is built against diversity. Everything leads us to believe that this "father of all heresies" - as Irenaeus of Lyons called him in his *Adversus haereses* of the 2nd-3rd century - had spiritual heirs. No doubt he had left in his wake some "Gnostic School," still active at the time of the writing of the Acts; and even beyond, since Hippolytus (100-165) compared him to the "dark Heraclitus," and that Eusebius of Caesarea too (265-340) sees in him the first author of all heresies.

For the rest of what is told about Simon in the patristic (pseudo-Clementine, Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Ambrose) literature, it is difficult to distinguish between things. Reality, invention, exaggeration or increasing distortion of the character? Apart from Hitler there are in fact few historical figures in whom the process of negative amplification can be followed so tangibly. A fascinating narrative crescendo causes that, the further away from real historical existence we are, the more Simon's portrait grows and enriches itself with new details, to become the terrifying archetype of all heresies.

But "Orthodox" Christianity itself is only a heresy of "orthodox" Judaism at the time.

The rediscovery of ancient Jewish sources (other than the biblical canon) shows indeed , on the margins of the Jewish orthodoxy, spiritual currents which, partly, approach certain Gnostic texts. Now we have abundant Jewish sources underlining this kind of speculation. The Christian Gnosticism is perhaps only the Christian form of Jewish speculations of this type. But we must also take into account the Greek contribution.

For example, Pythagoras may be considered as an ancestor of gnosis by his conception of the tetrad. Irenaeus says of the Gnostic Christians that their doctrine gave room to the "Pythagorean tetrad." Plato can also be considered as an ancestor of gnosis by his conception of recollection and his allegorical exegesis of the myths of the Greek religion. And it is true that the Platonic current which will allegorize the writings of Plato, will be one of the vehicles of gnosis. The Mysteries of the religions in the East and in Egypt will be, in turn, allegorized and changed into "wisdom." At the intersection of the Greek and Jewish Gnostic leanings, in any case, there is Philo of Alexandria.

Philo lived from 20 before our era to + 40. He is therefore contemporary with Christ. Very much attracted by Plato (distinction between the world of Ideas that he attaches to the Logos, and the material world), he maintains that the best of the Ideas is found in the Jewish Scriptures, principally in the Pentateuch, that he comments upon allegorically. His work is a try of interpretation of Jewish theology in terms of Hellenistic philosophy. Two major aspects of his thought: the allegorical interpretation of Scripture; the doctrine of Logos.

1. The allegorical interpretation of Scripture.

It makes it possible to show that all the truths proposed by the sacred text are identical to those taught by philosophers. A hundred years before Philo, Aristobulus had already done so to report the anthropomorphisms of Scripture. Philo compares the literal meaning of Scripture to the shadow projected by the body; It finds its authentic and deeper meaning in the spiritual meaning of which it is the symbol. About Genesis 11: 7 (the episode of Babel) Philo writes, "Let us then confuse their language, so that each of them may not understand the voice of his neighbor"; which is equivalent to, let us make each separate one of the parts of wickedness deaf and dumb, so that it shall neither utter a voice of its own, nor be able to sound in unison with any other part, so as to be a cause of mischief (Let us note that we are away from the Hebrew words and from the rabbinic exegesis!) This, now, is our opinion upon and interpretation of this passage. But they who follow only what is plain and easy, think that what is here intended to be recorded, is the origin of the languages of the Greeks and barbarians, whom, without blaming them (for, perhaps, they also put a correct interpretation on the transaction), I would exhort not to be content with stopping at this point, but to proceed onward to look at the passage in a figurative way, considering that the mere words of the scriptures are, as it were, but shadows of bodies, and that the meanings which are apparent to investigation beneath them, are the real things to be pondered upon "[cf. Plato, Rep. VII, 514 et sequenda. The myth of the cave].

2. The design of the Logos.

Like the supporters of the Middle Platonism, Philo thinks that God is absolutely transcendent. He even surpasses the eternal Ideas. God is the pure Being, absolutely simple and self-sufficient, "without qualities" (Leg I., 51). Because of His transcendence, he cannot be enclosed in any of the logical categories in which we classify finite beings. But then, what can be his relationship to the world in this case ?? The solution of Philo's contemporary Platonism is to place a hierarchy of divine beings between the Supreme Good (God) and the material order (the world), the first governing and creating the material world. Philo cannot accept this solution, since nothing can undermine the uniqueness of God, revealed in Scripture. On the other hand, he designs intermediate powers (dunamis) or workings of God outside himself. And the most important and highest of these powers is the Logos. "The Logos of God is over all the world, and is the most ancient, and the most universal of all the things that are created" (Allegorical interpretations III, 175, cf. On the confusion of tongues 145-147).

The role of the Logos in Philo.

1 It is the agent of God in creation (On the Cherubim 125-127).

2 It is the means through which the human mind grasps God.

These two activities of the Logos are those attributed to it by Stoicism. For the Stoics, the Logos (Reason, Principle, Plan ...) is the rational principle immanent to the reality to which it gives shape and meaning. If reality is accessible to men, it is because the Logos is present in the things: it gives them the principle of being and their meaning. Since God creates "by his Word" (to Logo), and it was through him that he revealed himself to the prophets, Philo concludes that the Logos is in a very special relationship with God. "Like a river, it flows forth from wisdom as from a spring" (cf. De somniis II, 245-246). Sometimes even Wisdom and Logos are identified: "Virtue derives its beginning from

Eden, which is the wisdom of God: that is the logos of God" (Allegorical interpretations I, 65). It is the image (eikon) of God: "

It is very suitable to desire to see him; and, if they are unable to do that, at least to see his Image, the most sacred Logos" (On the confusion of tongues 97).

Is the Logos for Philo a personal being? Philo identifies the Logos with the Platonic ideas or archetypes, the tangible reality of which is the image (cf. Creation of the world 20). In man there is a "rational thought within the mind" (or logos endiathetos). There is also in man "a thought which is expressed by the word" (or logos prophorikos). Similarly, the Divine Logos is Thought or Ideas of the Spirit of God. Projected in a formless matter, without reality, it makes it a real and rational universe (cf. Life of Moses II, 127).

The Logos is therefore the intermediary through which God governs the world; It is "the ruler and steersman of all" (On the Cherubim 36). By contemplating the Image of God Logos we can therefore come to know God. The Angel of Yahweh who appears to the Patriarchs is, for Philo, the Logos (cf. Dreams I, 232-239).

Christian Gnosticism now.

Some Gnostics call themselves Christians. For them Gnosticism is the "true" Christianity, but reserved for an elite. Such movements radically different of today's Christianity begin hardly to be studied; and, more we have often for that only the words that their adversaries have preserved to us in order to demonstrate their infamy (according to them), and that we must untangle from their calumnies or from their puritan view of things. Nevertheless, we can now better understand the birth of Christian Gnosticism. It comes mainly from the dissident circles of the Hellenistic Judaism. Due to the elimination of Gnosticism by the future Catholics or Orthodox or Reformists, much of its literature has disappeared. Their doctrine is therefore known (indirectly) by the Christian writers who have fought it. Irenaeus of Lyons, as we shall see.

The Fathers of the Church have indeed written abundantly concerning Gnosticism, in order to refute it. They give many details about the Gnostic school leaders and the systems they proposed. Excerpts from Gnostic texts are also found in their writings. We must mention among these self-proclaimed heresiologists in the West; St. Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century), then Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome (presumed author of the Refutation of all heresies); in the East, Clement of Alexandria (3rd century), Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Epiphanius of Salamis (315-403), Theodoretus of Cyrus (393-460), not forgetting St. Augustine (4th century). The opinions on the subject of these inquisitors before this institution is invented should be taken with caution, their main objective being not to make an "exact" account of Gnosticism, but to prevent anyone from being interested in it.

A large number of Gnostic texts, written in Coptic, were discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt, including precious "gospels," of course, apocryphal.

The term gospel refers to various realities among the Christian Gnostics. It circulates probably very early to designate the announcement of the Good News, and then, in the second half of the second century, it was used to designate also the text of the Gospels. But at this time precisely the Gospels multiplied when the Marcionite Church, the mainstream, retained only one of them, the one attributed to St. Luke. The fact is that the approach is very different.

For the Gnostics salvation is offered in the form of knowledge; accessible by means of an oral revelation, sometimes also conveyed writing, this revelation consisting mainly of words attributed to the savior, or comments on his words. If we read the Ptolemy's Letter to Flora, we see that the handover of this knowledge follows precise rules: it is a strict handover of the traditions going back to the Savior (Epiphanius, in his book entitled "Panarion" 31, 7.9).

The Letter to Rheginos on the resurrection (perhaps of the third century) emphasizes especially the notion of enlightenment of the soul / mind discovering through gnosis the way of its salvation. Books such as the tripartite tractate, the Apocryphon of John, or the Origin of the World illustrate other facets of these Gnostic circles devoted to biblical exegesis, theology, astronomy, cosmology, medical recipes, or simply psychology. Gnosis is also ultimately a medicine of the soul / mind, a discovery that passes through the knowledge of oneself.

The questions which worried above all Gnostic Christianity are the origin of the world and the origin of the evil, and its fundamental doctrines can be summarized as follows.

- Design as abstract as possible of the first principle, often regarded as indeterminate.
- Design of the matter, sometimes as a non-being, sometimes in the way of the [Iranian or Persian] Parsee as the seat of the bad principle.
- Attribution of the tangible world to a secondary creating power, the Demiurge.

- Interval between the Demiurge and the first principle filled with a series of intermediate beings, the eons, derived from the first principle by emanation. What the Hindus call vryuha and the Muslims shirk (to condemn it).
- The evil is the material or hyllic substance. The good, on the contrary, the pneumatic, which is found in the world, is explained by the descent into matter of an element belonging to the divine kingdom of light.
- Salvation consists in the separation of the elements and the return of the Universal Including into itself. The eon that performs this return uses the body of an earthly man as an instrument and a mask.

The true savior can have only an apparent body, can suffer and die only in appearance. Gnostic Christianity distinguishes therefore hylics (from the Greek hyle, matter) close to animality, psychics (from psyche, soul) and pneumatics (from pneuma, breath, spirit). Psychics have a soul, but do not possess the Knowledge. Their nature is confined to believing, to having the pistis (faith or belief). They arouse the contempt of the pneumatics or spiritual ones who, in addition, have the gnosis or knowledge of the Man, of the world, and of the salvation path. Gnostic Christians align themselves with an esoteric teaching, "official" Christianity being, according to them, the message intended for the masses, the hylics and the psychics. For this current, only the gnosis, the possession of the spirit, ensures the access to the divine universe and to the salvation according to the teaching of the aggelos christos, the Christ angel, whose descent on Earth and rise to heaven constituted the message.

One of the characteristics of Christian Gnosticism is its strong tendency to spiritualize completely the new Nazorene Joshua known as Jesus. Viewed as an emanation of the Pleroma, he has nothing to do with this world, except that he has taken the appearance of a man in order to bring his teaching. Like the Muslims of today, these Gnostics deny the hypothesis of the Incarnation and of the Cross (Docetism), the Nazorene Jesus having been replaced on it by Simon of Cyrene, to whom he will have given his appearance, in order to deceive his opponents.

For this first tendency of the rising Christianity Jesus was not a true man, but only an angel descended to Earth, so his resurrection is only the return of that angel to the divine light in which souls merge. Dualism and demiurge apart, it is also a little what appears from the letters of St. Paul precisely. This design of Jesus as aggelos christos or messiah angel will be vigorously fought a few generations later, under the name of Docetism, by the Christian current become official and majority, the future Catholics Orthodox and Reformists.

Morality. Redemption concerns only the soul: acts in which there is only the body involved are without importance. A bit like in some love stories today. It is admitted that you can only love one person while having merely physical relations with others. That Gnostics were ahead of their time. For these early Christians, only the gnosis, the possession of the spirit, guarantees access to the divine universe. Law and common morality therefore do not apply to the pneumatics, since they concern only the body and the soul, a regime from which he is liberated. The pneumatics being those who possess gnosis, they are saved by definition. This leads to a certain contempt for the things of this world, a contempt that can lead to asceticism as well as to lust. As matter is more or less identified with evil, morality in this case is no more than a purely physical discipline, consisting essentially in abstaining from matter; or then in an excessive ease, no staining of the flesh being able to reach the pneumatics. Some of these Christians too, like the visionaries of Corinth, drank a great deal of wine during the "devogdonion" communion meal (during communion or the agape). They considered it to be one of the surest means of reaching the next world temporarily; and considered the influx of vital energy released by the body under certain circumstances (including on the sexual level) as consequences of the presence or descent of Christ within them (charisms). They made love a little with anyone during their love feasts (concupitus promiscui) and even more for the Adamites. The disciples of Marcus the magician, mentioned as heretics by St. Irenaeus, practiced perhaps a kind of sacred prostitution in the manner of the Greeks, and used philters or magic potions during the Eucharist (cf. Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses.1.13). This could correspond, at a much more "platonic" level, to what the apostle Paul says of the Christian communities where there is neither Jew, nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female (Galatians 3:28).

Some characteristics of the Gnostic movement.

A great use of mythological representations; a very imaginative interpretation of the Scriptures (Genesis) and a systematic use of the symbolism of numbers (arithmology); a pronounced taste for the apocalypse; a fundamental esotericism (secrets reserved for comrunos or initiates); an anti-cosmic and anti-carnal attitude. The visible world is bad, for it is the result of a decay; consequently , man is the prisoner of a body incapable of salvation, what leads to a Docetic [and Muslim] interpretation of Christology. The humanity of Christ was only an appearance (dokein) and it could not suffer on the cross.

Other characteristics: an anti-historical attitude. Man is a prisoner of time and must be freed from it. An anthemic or dualist attitude: the world is a mixture of two opposed and irreconcilable natures, light and darkness. The Gnostic must therefore escape the inferior world and liberate his spiritual kinship with the higher world. A metaphysics of intermediaries finally, through which the Gnostic must go back to his origin and his last end.

Gnosticism is therefore a spirituality which appears at the beginning of the Christian era, in the form of many sometimes divergent currents. These Christian (and non-Christian) Gnostic schools where the Jewish angelology met, especially in the region of Alexandria and Antioch, the Greek philosophy, will form the melting pot from which, in the 4th century, the draft of a more elaborate Christian theology will come out . The books of Enoch of the Ethiopian Church already proposed an explanation of the Gnostic type to the presence of evil on Earth and to the future of men, heirs to evil angels but also to guardian angels sent by a God concerned about his creatures. The Gnostics saw the world differently from Orthodox Judaism. With this advantage of not putting the apparently unjust suffering and evil, down to God. For go and tell the mother who has lost her child: "It was God who willed it," which is nevertheless the logical consequence of the reasoning that God knows everything, sees everything and can do everything. In fact, the mistake, according to the Gnostics, is to consider the loss of a child as an evil. For death and suffering are only illusions, not things that are really bad in themselves. For more details on this subject see Buddhism.

The Alexandrian Jews had, as we know, undergone the influence of Platonism and Pythagoreanism. Philo was even the precursor of Plotinus and Porphyry in this renewal of the metaphysical spirit. With the help of the Hellenic doctrines, the Jews interpreted the Bible. They scrutinized the mysteries contained therein; they allegorized and developed them.

Starting religiously from the monotheism of the time and from the idea of a personal ??God or Demiurge, the Jews of Alexandria were to metaphysically arrive to pantheism, to the idea of ??the divine substance, to the doctrine of the intermediaries between the Supreme Universal Including and Man; in other words, the emanations, the eons of Valentinus (about thirty) or the Sephirot of the Cabbalah. On this Judaic background were added the contributions of the Chaldean, Persian, and Egyptian religions, which coexisted in the town of Alexandria; and then were elaborated those extraordinary theogonies, so numerous, so varied, so madly mystical, which characterize Gnosis.

The Christian (or not Christian, besides) Gnostics, admit generally, though in different forms, the idea of ??an evil God, whom they call the demiurge; and of a good, perfect, inaccessible, unknowable, God who, having delegated his power of creation to the first, withdraws from the world on seeing the disaster that this has given.

In non-Christian gnosis, Wisdom, Achamoth-Sophia-Mariamne (in Hebrew Ruah the divine breath is indeed female), in short, the Spirit of the God Good; descends into the world created by the God Bad (the demiurge) and undertakes to show human beings the salvation path after having concealed his divine spark in the guise of a woman passing from one man to another, Prunikos.

This comparison of Wisdom with a prunikos (prostitute) did not shock the men in the Near East of the time in which Wisdom was often personified, seen as a sister or a she lover, or even a dragon lady, the one of whom certain proverbs of the Bible speak.

" Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud: "To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it. Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right.....

I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasures full. The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. When there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth.....

I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind. Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instructions and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favors from the Lord. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death. etc.etc.... "

Transposed in Christian mode this will give us Mary or Jesus instead of Prunikos.

For this current, to which will be opposed the Nazorenes or Ebionites and even the Montanists or Parabolani later, therefore the spiritual ancestors of the future Orthodox Catholic or Reformist, as we shall see; Christ is therefore only an angel descended onto Earth, and then gone back up to the right hand of the Lord; an angel destined to enlighten men and to offer them salvation through voluntary sacrifice or renunciation and especially not a real man.

It is difficult to believe that such groups could have existed only on the level of intellectual reflection, without also having a practice (prayers, piety, community life, food practices). For contrary to what the Fathers of the Church suggest, most of these movements were in fact groups of believers often practicing asceticism daily, but with exceptions, once a week, for example.

Their asceticism was besides developed or exacerbated to such a degree that, for a Father of the Church of the second century, they would rather have looked like "Buddhist monks" (if they had been able to meet some of them at that time ...). Many Gnostic texts emphasize the existence of a very warm brotherly relationship between the members of the group ... The Gnostic groups function with kinds of spiritual masters, surrounded by disciples eager to progress along the path of knowledge. These groups could evolve at the margins of other Christian communities, within or outside of them. Apart from the elitist characteristic of an access to salvation reserved for those who use their intelligence and culture, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish a Gnostic from the Christian faithful of another movement.

GNOSTIC GLOSSARY.

Christian tradition made the great philosopher Simon of Samaria the first of the Gnostics. This point of view is debatable. What seems obvious in retrospect is that there was a mutual misunderstanding.

Reality and truth are not simple data but complex data. Opposites are often complementary. This is true even in physics, where light can be understood both as an undulating and corpuscular phenomenon. Realistic and credible thinking must be nuanced.

In order to better understand the baseness of the intellectually dishonest critics from Irenaeus, some terminological clarifications will be necessary before beginning to read his heavy and not very charitable charge on this subject; for it is true that the Gnostics, obviously, liked very much the words, Greek and more or less complicated, the symbolism of numbers and so on. And it is no less evident that Irenaeus deliberately made a confused account of them, mixing up a little everything, or even voluntarily omitting certain explanations, in order to better denigrate the doctrines that he is reviewing in this way. Indeed, no one can deny that Irenaeus' intention in writing this pamphlet was anything but a legitimate and sincere desire to make his reader understand better what he was talking about.

What is necessary to know is that the Gnostics saw the world as being moved by two opposing forces, a supreme Being of all goodness and a force of Evil at work in this world which is his thing.

What we need to know next is that the Gnostics consider that there are basically three types of men.

Those in whom the physical is predominant: the hylics.

Those in whom the spirit is more present: the psychics.

Those for whom the body is of no importance: the pneumatics.

The third characteristic of the Gnostics is that they try to explain our world by means of basic forces that are mutually derived from each other.

Let us finally add a pronounced taste for everything that we would call today paranormal, clairvoyance, esotericism, occultism...

All this in Greek since this language played at the time the role of the international English or globish of today.

For the rest Christian theology is just as full of mysteries and anthropomorphisms (prophecies, miracles, sacraments, baptism, operation of the Holy Spirit, Holy Virgin, etc..).

Gnostic glossary.

Eon = Angel.

Aletheia = Truth.

Anthropos = Man.

Bythos = Abyss.

Charis = Grace.

Enthymesis = Substance.

Ekklesia = Assembly then Church.

Logos = Word.

Monogenes = Unique son or first-born.

Syge= Silence.

Zoe = Life.

Cosmogony and creation of the world.

The Initial Including Principle (Pro-Pator or Pro-Father etc.) invisible, inconceivable, eternal, immobile, emits a thought, and from there everything is linked ...

Eon or angel. The eon is a superior entity, derived from the very first superior being, which is sometimes also referred to as Eon. Their number varies according to the system. They generally go by two (syzygies or conjunctions).

Each letter being in Hebrew both an alphabetic sign and a figure (or number), you can calculate the sum of the letters / digits of that word or group of words.

The practice.

Feeling of membership in an elite.

(Republicans with speeches at John Toland) banquets.

Sexuality. All or nothing, according to the Schools.

The example of a system caricatured by Irenaeus: that of the Barbelognostics.

Pre-existing to all times, there is in the invisible and uncreated heights a perfect eon, Being without mixture, and primary principle, radically transcendent and ineffable. From this higher Being derive eons or divine emanations functioning in pairs or syzygies. What the Hindus call vyuha and the Muslims shirk (to denounce it).

The first emanated eon, a spontaneous replication of the principle by reflection in its own light, is called Barbelos in this theology. From this first couple two other eons emanate, forming a Tetrad. Four additional emanations give an Ogdoad. The Ogdoad then produces emanations to the glory of the Father, completing the Pleroma which has thirty eons.

The last produced eon, Wisdom (Greek Sophia, Achamoth in Hebrew), is at the origin of a complex cosmic fall. This Wisdom one day will have with the Father an almost incestuous relationship that will give birth to a runt named Ialdabaoth, the first Archon, who then will be expelled from the Pleroma.

With the seven Archons who surround him, resulting like himself from ignorance, this Demiurge (identified with the God of the Old Testament) creates the psychic man, from a reflection of the Father in the waters. But this man of a psychic nature will be unable of moving. Christ (born from Barbelos at the time of the formation of the Pleroma, after this eon has intensely contemplated the Father) suggests to Ialdabaoth to blow on man, what animates him: thus is born the pneumatic (of pneuma meaning soul).

Realizing that their creation surpasses them in knowledge, the Archons throw Man in the depths of matter. There, the Father intervenes, giving to man the "Life," which hides deep within him and enlightens him about the origin of his deficiency, showing him thus the path of elevation. In retaliation, the Archons imprison the man in a body of matter and install it later in the Garden of Eden.....

Let us remember finally that it is evident that for the Jews of the time, the Messiah had to take the form of a savior and redeemer of the Jewish people, warrior, therefore strictly human. It was therefore necessary to be pagan or at least completely heretical in relation to official Judaism in order to imagine that a god could be incarnated or assumed a human form, that of Jesus. It is, moreover, this pagan or heretical psychological basis by definition that made there was Christianity and not a Jewish sect more destined to return sooner or later in the bosom of the synagogue like the Judeo-Christianity of the 'time. As Simone Weil (the philosopher) summed it up very well: the Christian is a bad heathen, converted by a bad Jew. The god of the Christians always claims to be the god of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob with all that implies of particularism (it is not the god of the philosophers but that of a new chosen people, the Verus Israel) on the other hand what can be said is that the characteristics of his worship and of its theology result from his acclimatization in pagan land and without that there would have been no Christianity. What in Christianity can't be explained by Judaism necessarily comes, not from the Holy Spirit, but from the Eastern paganism of the first centuries. In other words, the Holy Spirit who gradually detached the Church from the Synagogue was pagan. It was the spirit of the Eastern paganism of the time.

Now Let us come to the book of Irenaeus of Lyons properly speaking, against what he calls hatefully heresies, whence his name in Latin (adversus haereses).

The great contribution of Irenaeus of Lyons is especially indeed his frantic struggle against the other Christians, and especially against the Valentinian Gnosticism which was then very widespread in Gaul; for it corresponded fairly well with the speculations of the last high-knowers of the druidiaction (druidecht) subsisting as teachers in the secular colleges of the time.

What is sad is to see so much intellectual energy (Irenaeus is a great writer who knew how to make shared his obsession ... of Jewish prophecies and writings) used to caricature denigrate or deride (eternal story of the pot calling the kettle black) men who do not share his ideas; In order to substitute for them, a system (the Orthodox Catholicism) WHICH IS NOT MUCH BETTER, EVEN WHICH IS WORSE, OR SOME INANITIES in the manner of French journalists or intellectuals. What a psychosis! Without forgetting the horrendous racism of this Parabolanus or Taliban of Christianity against popular languages ??and cultures (that is to say, neither Greek nor Latin nor Hebrew), hypocrisy in addition ."

You will not expect from me, who am resident among the Celts, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect, any display of rhetoric, which I have never learned, or any excellence of composition, which I have never practiced, or any beauty and persuasiveness of style, to which I make no pretensions. But what etc.

ST. IRENAEUS, AGAINST HERESIES ???

Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretense of [superior] knowledge, from Him who rounded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.

Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) truer than the truth itself. One far superior to me has well said, in reference to this point, "A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on that precious jewel the emerald (which is most highly esteemed by some), unless it comes under the eye of one able to test and expose the counterfeit. Or, again, what inexperienced person can with ease detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed up with silver?" "Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they do not perceive the true character of these men -because they outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on our guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different-I have deemed it my duty (after reading some of the Commentaries, as they call them, of the disciples of Valentinus, and after making myself acquainted with their tenets through personal intercourse with some of them) to unfold to you, my friend, these portentous and profound mysteries, "which do not fall within the range of every intellect."

Counter-lay No. 3.

And it is also true, as Abul Ala al-Ma'ari (973 - 1057) wrote very well in his time (the Syria of the eleventh century); "The world holds two classes of men, intelligent men without religion, and religious men without intelligence".

Abul Ala al-Ma'ari was a blind poet, known for his virtuosity and for the originality or the pessimism of his views.

On the equally incomprehensible nature, for those who have a little bit of intelligence, of the Christian, Catholic, Orthodox, or Reformist, mysteries, see the famous work of John Toland entitled "Christianity not mysterious."

I do this, in order that you obtaining an acquaintance with these things, may in turn explain them to all those with whom you are connected, and exhort them to avoid such an abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ. I intend, then, to the best of my ability, with brevity and clearness to set forth the opinions of those who are now promulgating heresy. I refer especially to the disciples of Ptolemaeus, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus. I shall also endeavor, according to my moderate ability, to furnish the means of overthrowing them, by showing how absurd and inconsistent with the truth are their statements. You will not expect from me, who I am resident among the Celts, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect [Notice of Peter DeLaCrau: The dialect in question must therefore be Celtic, which is consequently treated as a barbarian language by the anti-racist Irenaeus. Ah Religion of love, how captivating you are!], any display of rhetoric, which I have never learned, or any excellence of composition, which I have never practiced, or any beauty and persuasiveness of style, to which I make no pretensions. But you will accept in a kindly spirit what I in a like spirit write to you simply, truthfully, and in my own homely way; whilst you yourself (as being more capable than I am) will expand those ideas of which I send you, as it were, only the seminal principles; and in the comprehensiveness of your understanding will develop to their full extent the points on which I briefly touch, so as to set with power before your companions those things which I have uttered in weakness. In fine, as I (to gratify your long-cherished desire for information regarding the tenets of these persons) have spared no pains, not only to make these doctrines known to you, but also to furnish the means of showing their falsity; so shall you, according

to the grace given to you by the Lord, prove an earnest and efficient minister to others, that men may no longer be drawn away by the plausible system of these heretics.

FORMATION OF THE PLEROMA.

They maintain, then, that in the invisible and ineffable heights above there exists a certain superior pre-existent, being. This primal superior being whom they call Proarche (first beginning), Propator (Profather), and Abyss (Bythus), and describe as being invisible and incomprehensible. Eternal and misbegotten, he remained throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity and quiescence. There existed along with him Ennoea (thought), whom they also call Charis (Grace) and Sige (Silence). At last this Bythus (Abyss) determined to send forth from himself the beginning of all things, and deposited this production (which he had resolved to bring forth) in his contemporary Sige (Silence), even as seed is deposited in the womb. She then, having received this seed, and becoming pregnant, gave birth to Nous (Intelligence), who was both similar and equal to him who had produced him, and was alone capable of comprehending his father's greatness. This Nous they also call Monogenes, and Father, and the Beginning of all Things. Along with him was also produced Aletheia (the Truth); and these four constituted the first and first-begotten Tetrad, which they also denominate the root of all things. For there are first Abyss and Silence, and then Intelligence and Truth. And Monogenes, perceiving for what purpose he had been produced; also himself sent forth Logos (word) and Zoe (Life), being the father of all those who were to come after him, and the beginning and fashioning of the entire Pleroma. By the conjunction or syzygy of Logos and Zoe were brought forth Anthropos (Man) and Ecclesia (Church); and thus was formed the first-begotten Ogdoad, the root and substance of all things, called among them by four different entities, viz., Abyss, and Intelligence, and Word, and man (Bythus, and Nous, and Logos, and Anthropos). For each of these is masculine-feminine.

Word and Life, after producing Man and Church, sent forth other ten Eons, whose names are the following: Bythus and Mixis, Ageratos and Henosis, Autophyes and Hedone, Acinetos and Synchysis, Monogenes and Macaria. These are the ten Eons whom they declare to have been produced by Word and Life.

Moreover, they declare that this invisible and spiritual Pleroma of theirs is tripartite, being divided into an Ogdoad, a Decad, and a Duodecad. And for this reason they affirm it was that the "Savior"-for they do not please to call Him "Lord"-did no work in public during the space of thirty years, thus setting forth the mystery of these Eons. They also maintain that these thirty Eons are most plainly indicated in the parable of the laborers sent into the vineyard. For some are sent about the first hour, others about the third hour, others about the sixth hour, others about the ninth hour, and others about the eleventh hour. Now, if we add up the numbers of the hours here mentioned, the sum total will be thirty: for one, three, six, nine, and eleven, when added together, form thirty. And by the hours, they hold that the Eons were pointed out.

After this substance (Enthymesis) had been placed outside of the Pleroma of the Eons, and its mother restored to her proper conjunction (syzygy), they tell us that Monogenes, acting in accordance with the prudent forethought of the Father, gave origin to another conjugal pair, namely Christ and the Holy Spirit (lest any of the Eons should fall into a calamity similar to that of Wisdom/Sophia), for the purpose of fortifying and strengthening the Pleroma, and who at the same time completed the number of the Eons. Christ then instructed them as to the nature of their syzygy, and taught them what related to the Father, -namely, that he cannot be understood or comprehended, nor so much as seen or heard, except in so far as he is known by Monogenes only. And the reason why the rest of the Eons possess perpetual existence is found in that part of the Father's nature which is incomprehensible; but the reason of their origin and formation was situated in that which may be comprehended regarding him, that is, in the Son. Christ, then, who had just been produced, effected these things among them. But the Holy Spirit taught them to give thanks on being all rendered equal among themselves, and led them to a state of true repose. Thus, then, they tell us that the Eons were constituted equal to each other in form and sentiment, so that all became as Nous, and Logos, and Anthropos, and Christus. The female Eons, too, became all as Aletheia, and Zoe, and Spiritus, and Ecclesia. Everything, then, being thus established, and brought into a state of perfect rest, they next tell us that these beings sang praises with great joy to the Primary Principle (Propator), who himself shared in the abounding exaltation. Then, out of gratitude for the great benefit which had been conferred on them, the whole Pleroma of the Eons, with one design and desire, and with the concurrence of Christ and

the Holy Spirit, their father also setting the seal of His approval on their conduct, brought together whatever each one had in himself of the greatest beauty and preciousness. They tell us, however, that this knowledge has not been openly divulged, because all are not capable of receiving it, but has been mystically revealed by the Savior through means of parables to those qualified for understanding it. This has been done as follows. The thirty Eons are indicated (as we have already remarked) by the thirty years during which they say the Savior performed no public act, and by the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Paul also, they affirm, very clearly and frequently names these Eons, and even goes so far as to preserve their order, when he says, "To all the generations of the Eons of the Eon." Ephesians 3: 21). Nay, we ourselves, when at the giving of thanks we pronounce the words, "To Eons of E ons" (for ever and ever), do set forth these Eons. And, in fine, wherever the words Eon or Eons occur, they at once refer them to these beings.

Counter-lay No. 4.

The Greek word translated by the Latin saeculum "century" is indeed the one which also produced "eon," what can we do, my poor Irenaeus? As for the Gnostic characteristic of certain writings of St. Paul, it is incontestable. See our chapter on the subject.

The production, again, of the Duodecad of the Eons, is indicated by the fact that the Lord was twelve years of age when He disputed with the teachers of the law, and by the election of the apostles, for of these there were twelve. The other eighteen Eons are made manifest in this way: that the Lord, [according to them,] conversed with His disciples for eighteen months after His resurrection from the dead. They also affirm that these eighteen Eons are strikingly indicated by the first two letters of His name [Iesou], namely Iota (=10) and Eta (=8). And, in like manner, they assert that the ten Eons are pointed out by the letter Iota, which begins His name; while, for the same reason, they tell us the Savior said, "One Iota, or one tittle, shall by no means pass away until all be fulfilled."

They further maintain that the passion which took place in the case of the twelfth Eon is pointed at by the apostasy of Judas, who was the twelfth apostle, and also by the fact that Christ suffered in the twelfth month. For their opinion is, that He continued to preach for one year only after His baptism. The same thing is also most clearly indicated by the case of the woman who suffered from an issue of blood. For after she had been thus afflicted for twelve years, she was healed by the advent of the Savior, when she had touched the border of His garment; and on this account the Savior said, "Who touched me?" -teaching his disciples the mystery which had occurred among the Eons, and the healing of that Eon who had been involved in suffering. For she who had been afflicted twelve years represented that power whose essence, as they narrate, was stretching itself forth, and flowing into immensity; and unless she had touched the garment of the Son, that is, Truth (Aletheia) of the first Tetrad, who is denoted by the hem spoken of, she would have been dissolved into the general essence [of which she participated]. She stopped short, however, and ceased any longer to suffer. For the power that went forth from the Son (and this power they term Right Boundary –Horos-) healed her, and separated the passion from her.

They, moreover, affirm that the Savior is shown to be derived from all the Eons, and to be in Himself everything by the following passage: "Every male that opens the womb." For He, being everything, opened the womb of the enthymesis of the suffering Eon, when it had been expelled from the Pleroma. This they also style the second Ogdoad, of which we shall speak presently.

And they state that it was clearly on this account that Paul said, "And He Himself is all things;" and again, "All things are to Him, and of Him are all things;" and further, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead;" and yet again, "All things are gathered together by God in Christ." Thus do they interpret these and any like passages to be found in Scripture.

Moreover, they affirm that the Apostle Paul himself made mention of this cross in the following words: "The doctrine of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God." And again: "God forbid that I should glory in anything save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

Such, then, is the account which they all give of their Pleroma, and of the formation of the eons in the universe, striving, as they do, to adapt the good words of revelation to their own wicked inventions. And it is not only from the writings of the evangelists and the apostles that they endeavor to derive proofs for their opinions by means of perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions: they deal in the same way with the law and the prophets, which contain many parables and allegories that can frequently be drawn into various senses, according to the kind of exegesis to which they are subjected.

And others of them, with great craftiness, adapted such parts of Scripture to their own figments, lead away captive from the truth those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

These three kinds of existence, then, having, according to them, been now formed, -one from the passion, which was matter; a second from the conversion, which was animal and the third, that which she (Achamoth) herself brought forth, which was spiritual.

They affirm, therefore, that he was constituted the Father and God of everything outside of the Pleroma, being the creator of all animal and material substances. For he it was that discriminated these two kinds of existence hitherto confused, and made corporeal from incorporeal substances, fashioned things heavenly and earthly, and became the Demiurge of psychics and hylics, of those on the right and those on the left, of the light and of the heavy, and of those tending upwards as well as of those tending downwards. He also created seven heavens, above which they say that he, the Demiurge, exists.

They affirm, moreover, that these seven heavens are intelligent, and speak of them as being angels, while they refer to the Demiurge himself as being an angel bearing a likeness to God; and in the same strain, they declare that Paradise, situated above the third heaven, is a fourth angel possessed of power, from whom Adam derived certain qualities while he conversed with him.

As, then, they represent all hylic or material substance to be formed from three passions, viz., fear, grief, and perplexity, the account they give is as follows: Coarsely psychic or animal substances originated from fear and from conversion; the Demiurge they also describe as owing his origin to conversion; but the existence of all the other coarsely psychic or animal substances they ascribe to fear, such as the soul/minds of irrational animals, and of wild beasts, and men. And on this account, he (the Demiurge), being incapable of recognizing any pneumatic or spiritual essences, imagined himself to be God alone, and declared through the prophets, "I am God, and besides me there is none else." They further teach that the spirits of wickedness derived their origin from grief. Hence the devil, whom they also call Cosmocrator (the ruler of the world), and the demons and every wicked spiritual being that exists, found the source of their existence.

Having thus formed the world, he (the Demiurge) also created the earthy [part of] man, not taking him from this dry earth, but from an invisible substance consisting of fusible and fluid matter, and then afterwards, as they define the process, breathed into him the psychic part of his nature. It was this latter which was created "after his image and likeness." The hylic or material part, indeed, was very near to God, so far as the image went, but not of the same substance with him. The psychic, on the Other hand, was so in respect to likeness; and hence his substance was called the spirit of life, because it took its rise from a spiritual outflowing. After all this, he was, they say, enveloped all round with a covering of skin; and by this they mean the outward sensitive flesh.

There being thus three kinds of substances, they declare of all that is hylic or material (which they also describe as being "on the left hand") that it must of necessity perish, inasmuch as it is incapable of receiving any breath of incorruption. As to every psychic or animal existence (which they also denominate "on the right hand"), they hold that, inasmuch as it is a mean between the spiritual/pneumatic and the material/hylic, it passes to the side to which inclination draws it.

Spiritual or pneumatic substance, again, they describe as having been sent forth for this end, that, being here united with that which is animal or psychic, it might assume shape, the two elements being simultaneously subjected to the same discipline. And this pneumatic element they declare to be "the salt" and "the light of the world." For the animal psychic substance had need of training by means of the outward senses; and on this account they affirm that the world was created, as well as that the Savior came to the animal psychic substance (which was possessed of free will), that He might secure for it salvation. For they affirm that He received the first fruits of those whom He was to save [as follows], from Achamoth that which was pneumatic or spiritual, while He was invested by the Demiurge with the psychic Christ, but was begirt by a [special] dispensation with a body endowed with an animal nature, yet constructed with unspeakable skill, so that it might be visible and tangible, and capable of enduring suffering. At the same time, they deny that He assumed anything hylic or material [into His nature], since indeed matter is incapable of salvation. They further hold that the consummation of all things will take place when all that is spiritual or pneumatic has been formed and perfected by Gnosis (knowledge); and by this they mean spiritual or pneumatic men who have attained to the perfect knowledge of God, and been initiated into these mysteries by Achamoth. And they represent themselves to be these persons.

Psychic men, again, are instructed in psychic things; such men, namely, as are established by their works, and by a mere faith, while they do not have perfect knowledge (gnosis). We of the Church, they

say, are these persons. Wherefore also they maintain that good works are necessary to us, for that otherwise it is impossible we should be saved. But as to themselves, they hold that they shall be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual or pneumatic by nature. For, just as it is impossible that material or hylic substance should partake of salvation (since; indeed, they maintain that it is incapable of receiving it), so again it is impossible that spiritual or pneumatic substance (by which they mean themselves) should ever come under the power of corruption, whatever the sort of actions in which they indulged. For even as gold, when submersed in filth, loses not on that account its beauty, but retains its own native qualities, the filth having no power to injure the gold, so they affirm that they cannot in any measure suffer hurt, or lose their spiritual substance, whatever the material actions in which they may be involved.

Wherefore also it comes to pass that the "most perfect" among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of forbidden deeds of which the Scriptures assure us that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." For instance, they make no scruple about eating meats offered in sacrifice to idols, imagining that they can in this way contract no defilement [Editor's note. As St. Paul ended up advocating it apparently].

Then, again, at every heathen festival celebrated in honor of the idols, these men are the first to assemble; and to such a pitch do they go that some of them do not even keep away from that bloody spectacle hateful both to God and men, in which gladiators either fight with wild beasts, or singly encounter one another. Others of them yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature, while spiritual things are provided for the spiritual. Some of them, moreover, are in the habit of defiling those women to whom they have taught the above doctrine, as has frequently been confessed by those women who have been led astray by certain of them, on their returning to the Church of God, and acknowledging this along with the rest of their errors. Others of them, too, openly and without a blush, having become passionately attached to certain women, seduce them away from their husbands, and contract marriages of their own with them. Others of them, again, who pretend at first, to live in all modesty with them as with sisters, have in course of time been revealed in their true colors, when the sister has been found with child by her [pretended] brother

And committing many other abominations and impieties, they run us down (who from the fear of God guard against sinning even in thought or word) as utterly contemptible and ignorant persons, while they highly exalt themselves, and claim to be perfect, and the elect seed. For they declare that we simply receive grace for use, wherefore also it will again be taken away from us; but that they themselves have grace as their own special possession, which has descended from above by means of an unspeakable and indescribable syzygy; and on this account more will be given them. They maintain, therefore, that in every way it is always necessary for them to practice the mystery of the conjunction. And that they may persuade the thoughtless to believe this, they are in the habit of using these very words, "Whosoever being in this world does not so love a woman as to obtain possession of her, is not of the truth, nor shall attain to the truth. But whosoever being of this world has intercourse with a woman shall not attain to the truth, because he has so acted under the power of concupiscence." On this account, they tell us that it is necessary for us whom they call psychics (animal men), and describe as being of the world, to practice continence and good works, that by this means we may attain at length to the intermediate habitation, but that to them who are called "the spiritual and perfect" such a course of conduct is not at all necessary. For it is not conduct of any kind which leads into the Pleroma, but the seed sent forth thence in a feeble, immature state, and here brought to perfection.

In this intermediate place, also, shall the souls of the righteous repose; but nothing of an animal nature shall find admittance to the Pleroma. When these things have taken place as described, then shall that fire which lies hidden in the world blaze forth and bum; and while destroying all matter, shall also be extinguished along with it, and have no further existence. They affirm that the Demiurge was acquainted with none of these things before the advent of the Savior.

There are also some who maintain that he also produced Christ as his own proper son, but of a psychic nature, and that mention was made of him by the prophets. This Christ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube; and there descended upon him in the form of a dove at the time of his baptism, that Savior who belonged to the Pleroma, and was formed by the combined efforts of all the Eons its inhabitants. He also continued free from all suffering, since indeed it was not possible that He should suffer who was at once incomprehensible and invisible. And for this reason the Spirit of Christ, who had been placed within Him, was taken away when He was brought before Pilate.

Then, again, they divide the prophecies [into different classes], maintaining that one portion was uttered by the mother, a second by her seed, and a third by the Demiurge. In like manner, they hold

that Jesus uttered some things under the influence of the Savior, others under that of the mother, and others still under that of the Demiurge, as we shall show further on in our work.

But they relate that when the Savior came, the Demiurge learned all things from Him, and gladly with all, his power joined himself to Him. They maintain that he is the centurion mentioned in the Gospel, who addressed the Savior in these words: "For I also am one having soldiers and servants under my authority and whatsoever I command they do." They further hold that he will continue administering the affairs of the world as long as that is fitting and needful, and especially that he may exercise a care over the Church; while at the same time he is influenced by the knowledge of the reward prepared for him, namely, that he may attain to the habitation of his mother.

They conceive, then, of three kinds of men, pneumatics, psychics and hylics (spiritual material, and animal), represented by Cain, Abel, and Seth. These three natures are no longer found in one person, but constitute various kinds [of men]. The hylic or material goes, as a matter of course, into corruption. The psychic or animal, if it makes choice of the better part, finds repose in the intermediate place; but if the worse, it too shall pass into destruction. But they assert that the pneumatic principles which have been won by Achamoth, being disciplined and nourished here from that time until now in righteous souls (because when given forth by her they were yet but weak), at last attaining to perfection, shall be given as brides to the angels of the Savior, while their animal souls of necessity rest for ever with the Demiurge in the intermediate place. And again subdividing the animal souls themselves, they say that some are by nature good, and others by nature evil. The good are those who become capable of receiving the [spiritual] seed; the evil by nature are those who are never able to receive that seed.

Such, then, is their system, which neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles delivered, but of which they boast that beyond all others they have a perfect knowledge. They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand, while they endeavor to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support. In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth. By transferring passages, and dressing them up anew, and making one thing out of another, they succeed in deluding many through their wicked art in adapting the oracles of the Lord to their opinions. Their manner of acting is just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed by some skillful artist out of precious jewels, should then take this likeness of the man all to pieces, should rearrange the gems, and so fit them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox, and even that but poorly executed; and should then maintain and declare that this was the beautiful image of the king which the skillful artist constructed, pointing to the jewels which had been admirably fitted together by the first artist to form the image of. In like manner do these persons patch together old wives' fables, and then endeavor, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles of God to their baseless fictions. We have already stated how far they proceed in this way with respect to the interior of the Pleroma.

Then, again, as to those things outside of their Pleroma, the following are some specimens of what they attempt to accommodate out of the Scriptures to their opinions. They affirm that the Lord came in the last times of the world to endure suffering, for this end, that He might indicate the passion which occurred to the last of the Eons, and might by His own end announce the cessation of that disturbance which had risen among the Eons. They maintain, further, that that girl of twelve years old, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, to whom the Lord approached and raised her from the dead, was a type of Achamoth, to whom their Christ, by extending himself, imparted shape, and whom he led anew to the perception of that light which had forsaken her. And that the Savior appeared to her when she lay outside of the Pleroma as a kind of abortion, they affirm Paul to have declared in his Epistle to the Corinthians [in these words], "And last of all, He appeared to me also, as to one born out of due time." Again, the coming of the Savior with His attendants to Achamoth is declared in like manner by him in the same Epistle, when he says, "A woman ought to have a veil upon her head, because of the angels." Now, that Achamoth, when the Savior came to her, drew a veil over herself through modesty, Moses rendered manifest when he put a veil upon his face. Then, also, they say that the passions which she endured were indicated by the Lord upon the cross. Thus, when He said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" He simply showed that Sophia was deserted by the light, and was restrained by Horos (Boundary) from making any advance forward. Her anguish, again, was indicated when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; " her fear by the words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me"; and her perplexity, too, when He said, "And what I shall say, I do not know."

And they teach that He pointed out the three kinds of men as follows: the material or hylic, when He said to him that asked Him, "Shall I follow you?" "The Son of man has not where to lay His head;" -the animal or psychic, when He said to him that declared, "I will follow you, but suffer me first to bid them farewell that are in my house," "No man, putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (for this man they declare to be of the intermediate class, even as they do that other who, though he professed to have worked a large amount of righteousness, yet refused to follow Him, and was so overcome by [the love of] riches, as never to reach perfection)-this one it pleases them to place in the animal class;-the spiritual or pneumatic, again, when He said, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go you and preach the kingdom of God," and when He said to Zaccheus the publican, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in your house" -for these they declared to have belonged to the spiritual class. Also the parable of the leaven which the woman is described as having hidden in three measures of meal, they declare to make manifest the three classes. For, according to their teaching, the woman represented Sophia; the three measures of meal, the three kinds of men, pneumatic, psychic, hylic, spiritual, animal, and material; while the leaven denoted the Savior Himself. Paul, too, very plainly set forth the material, animal, and spiritual, or hylic, psychic, pneumatic, saying in one place, "As is the hylic, such are they also that are hylic;" and in another place, "But the psychic or animal man does not receive the things of the Spirit"; and again: "He that is spiritual or pneumatic judges all things." And this, "The psychic or animal man does not receive the things of the Spirit," they affirm to have been spoken concerning the Demiurge, who, as being animal or psychic, knew neither his mother who was spiritual (pneumatic), nor her seed, nor the Eons in the Pleroma. And that the Savior received first fruits of those whom He was to save, Paul declared when he said, "And if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy," teaching that the expression "first fruits" denoted that which is spiritual or pneumatic, but that "the lump" meant us, that is, the psychic or animal Church, the lump of which they say He assumed, and blended it with Himself, inasmuch as He is "the leaven."

Moreover, that Achamoth wandered beyond the Pleroma, and received form from Christ, and was sought after by the Savior, they declare that He indicated when He said that He had come after that sheep which was gone astray. For they explain the wandering sheep to mean their mother, by whom they represent the Church as having been sown. The wandering itself denotes her stay outside of the Pleroma in a state of varied passion, from which they maintain that matter derived its origin. The woman, again, who sweeps the house and finds the piece of money, they declare to denote the Sophia (Wisdom) above, who, having lost her enthymesis, afterwards recovered it, on all things being purified by the advent of the Savior. Wherefore this enthymesis or substance also, according to them, was reinstated in Pleroma. They say, too, that Simeon, "who took Christ into his arms, and gave thanks to God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to your word," was a type of the Demiurge, who, on the arrival of the Savior, learned his own change of place, and gave thanks to Bythus (Abyss). They also assert that by Anna, who is spoken of in the gospel as a prophetess, and who, after living seven years with her husband, passed all the rest of her life in widowhood until she saw the Savior, and recognized Him, and spoke of Him to all, was most plainly indicated Achamoth, who, having for a little while looked upon the Savior with His associates, and dwelling all the rest of the time in the intermediate place, waited for Him till He should come again, and restore her to her proper consort. Her name, too, was indicated by the Savior, when He said, "Yet wisdom is justified by her children." This, too, was done by Paul in these words, "But we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." They also declare that Paul has referred to the conjunctions or syzygies within the Pleroma, showing them forth by means of one; for, when writing of the conjugal union in this life, he expressed himself thus: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

Further, they teach that John, the disciple of the Lord, indicated the first Ogdoad, expressing themselves in these words: John, the disciple of the Lord, wishing to set forth the origin of all things, so as to explain how the Father produced the whole, lays down a certain principle, that, namely, which was first-begotten by God, which Being he has termed both the only-begotten (monogenes) Son and God, in whom the Father, after a seminal manner, brought forth all things. By him the Word was produced, and in him the whole substance of the Eons, to which the Word himself afterwards imparted form. Since, therefore, he treats of the first origin of things, he rightly proceeds in his teaching from the beginning, that is, from God and the Word or Logos. And he expresses himself thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God." Having, first of all, distinguished these three-God, the Beginning, and the Word-he again unites them, that he may exhibit the production of each of them, that is, of the Son and of the Word,

and may at the same time show their union with one another, and with the Father. For "the beginning" is in the Father, and of the Father, while "the Word" is in the beginning, and of the beginning. Very properly, then, did he say, "In the beginning was the Word," for He was in the Son; "and the Word was with God," for He was the beginning; "and the Word was God," of course, for that which is begotten of God is God. "The same was in the beginning with God"-this clause discloses the order of production. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made;" for the Word was the author of form and beginning to all the Eons that came into existence after Him. But "what was made in Him," says John, "is life." Here again he indicated conjunction or syzygy; for all things, he said, were made by Him, but in Him was life. This, then, which is in Him, is more closely connected with Him than those things which were simply made by Him, for it exists along with Him, and is developed by Him. When, again, he adds, "And the life was the light of men," while thus mentioning men, he also indicated Church by that one expression, in order that, by using only one name, he might disclose their fellowship with one another, in virtue of their syzygy or conjunction. For Man and Church spring from Logos and Life. Moreover, he styled life (Zoe) the light of men, because they are enlightened by her, that is, formed and made manifest. This also Paul declares in these words: "For whatsoever does make manifest is light." Since, therefore, Zoe the Life manifested and begat both Anthropos and Ecclesia (Man and Church), she is termed their light. Thus, then, did John by these words reveal both other things and the second Tetrad, Logos and Life (Zoe), Anthropos and Ecclesia (Man and Church). And still further, he also indicated the first Tetrad. For, in discoursing of the Savior and declaring that all things beyond the Pleroma received form from Him, he says that He is the fruit of the entire Pleroma. For he styles Him a "light which shines in darkness, and which was not comprehended" by it, inasmuch as, when He imparted form to all those things which had their origin from passion, He was not known by it. He also styles Him Son, and Aletheia, and Zoe, and the "Word made flesh, whose glory," he says, "we beheld; and His glory was as that of the Only-begotten or Monogenes (given to Him by the Father), full of grace and truth." (But what John really does say is this: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Monogenes (only begotten) of the Father, full of grace and truth.") Thus, then, does he [according to them] distinctly set forth the first Tetrad, when he speaks of the Father, and of the Grace (Charis), and Monogenes, and Truth (Aletheia). In this way, too, does John tell of the first Ogdoad, and that which is the mother of all the Eons. For he mentions the Father, and Grace (Charis), and Monogenes, and Truth (Aletheia), and Logos, and Life (Zoe), and Anthropos, and Ecclesia (Man and Church). Such are the views of Ptolemaeus.

You see, my friend, the method which these men employ to deceive themselves, while they abuse the Scriptures by endeavoring to support their own system out of them. For this reason, I have brought forward their modes of expressing themselves, that thus you might understand the deceitfulness of their procedure, and the wickedness of their error. The fallacy, then, of this exposition is manifest.

Counter-lay No. 5.

The most Orthodox or most Catholic Christianity, or even the most Reformist and purified, does exactly the same with its Old Testament; By using and abusing allegories, complicated words invented for the occasion (Trinity, hypostases, persons, Eucharist, transubstantiation, and so on). And itself too, like Gnosticism, is made of currents that sometimes contradict each other violently (Catholics, Orthodox, Reformists, Evangelists ...)

But since what may prove a finishing stroke to this exhibition is wanting, so that any one, on following out their farce to the end, may then at once append an argument which shall overthrow it, we have judged it well to point out, first of all, in what respects the very fathers of this fable differ among themselves, as if they were inspired by different spirits of error. For this very fact forms an a priori proof that the truth proclaimed by the Church is immovable, and that the theories of these men are but a tissue of falsehoods.

Let us now look at the inconsistent opinions of those heretics (for there are some two or three of them), how they do not agree in treating the same points, but alike, in things and names, set forth opinions mutually discordant.

The first of them, Valentinus, who adapted the principles of the heresy called "Gnostic" to the peculiar character of his own school, taught as follows: He maintained that there is a certain Dyad (twofold being), who is inexpressible by any name, of whom one part should be called Arrhetus (unspeakable), and the other Sige (silence). But of this Dyad a second was produced, one part of whom he names Pater, and the other Truth. From this Tetrad, again, arose Logos and Life, Man and Church (Anthropos

and Ecclesia). These constitute the primary Ogdoad. He next states that from Logos and Life ten powers were produced, as we have before mentioned. But from Man and Life proceeded twelve, one of which separating from the rest, and falling from its original condition, produced the rest of the universe. He also supposed two beings of the name of Horos (Boundary), the one of whom has his place between Bythus and the rest of the Pleroma, and divides the created Eons from the uncreated father, while the other separates their mother from the Pleroma.

There is another, who is a renowned teacher among them, and who, struggling to reach something more sublime, and to attain to a kind of higher knowledge, has explained the primary Tetrad as follows: There is [he says] a certain Proarche (First Principle) who existed before all things, surpassing all thought, speech, and nomenclature, whom I call Monotes (unity). Together with this unity there exists a power, which again I term oneness Henotes) This Henotes/ oneness and Monotes/Unity, being one, produced, yet not so as to bring forth [apart from themselves, as an emanation] the beginning of all things, an intelligent, misbegotten, and invisible being, which beginning language terms "Monad." With this Monad there coexists a power of the same essence, which again I term one. These powers then-Unity, and Oneness, and Monas, and One-produced the remaining company of the Eons.

Iu, Iu! Pheu, Pheu!-for well may we utter these tragic exclamations at such a pitch of audacity in the coining of names as he has displayed without a blush, in devising nomenclature for his system of falsehood. For when he declares: There is a certain First Principle (Proarche) before all things, surpassing all thought, whom I call Monotes (Unity) ; and again, with this Unity there coexists a power which I also call oneness (Henotes)-it is most manifest that he confesses the things which have been said to be his own invention, and that he himself has given names to his scheme of things, which had never been previously suggested by any other. It is manifest also that he himself is the one who has had sufficient audacity to coin these names; so that, unless he had appeared in the world, the truth would still have been destitute of a name. But, in that case, nothing hinders any other, in dealing with the same subject, to affix names after such a fashion as the following:

There is a certain royal Pro-Principle , surpassing all thought, a power existing before every other substance, and extended into space in every direction. But along with it there exists a power which I term a Gourd and along with this Gourd there exists a power which again I term Utter-Emptiness. This Gourd and Utter-Emptiness, since they are one, produced (and yet did not simply produce, so as to be apart from themselves) a fruit, everywhere visible, eatable, and delicious, which fruit-language calls a Cucumber. Along with this Cucumber exists a power of the same essence, which again I call a Melon. These powers, the Gourd, Utter-Emptiness, the Cucumber, and the Melon, brought forth the remaining multitude of the delirious melons of Valentinus.

Others still, however, have called their primary and first-begotten Ogdoad by the following names: first, the Primary Principle (Proarche); then Unintelligible (Anennoetos); thirdly, Inexpressible (Arrhetos); and fourthly, Invisible (Aoratos). Then, from the first Principle, Proarche, there was produced, in the first and fifth place, the principle (arche); from Anennoetos, in the second and sixth place, Incomprehensible (Acataleptos); from Arrhetos, in the third and seventh place, Unspeakable (Anonomastos); and from Aoratos, in the fourth and eighth place, Uncreated (Agennetos). This is the Pleroma of the first Ogdoad. etc.

Counter-lay No. 6.

In the Gnostic book that Irenaeus browsed quickly, there was to be a chart intended to show that after a certain time each of these emanations returned to its origin. Hence all these: "Then, from the first Principle, Proarche, there was produced, in the first and fifth place, the principle (arche); from Anennoetos, in the second and sixth place, Incomprehensible (Acataleptos) and so on." A massive agnosticism is nevertheless preferable to any gibberish whether Jewish Christian or Muslim.

To these persons one may justly exclaim: "O you trifling sophists!" since, even respecting the Primeval Abyss (Bythus) himself, there are among them many and discordant opinions. For some declare him to be without a consort, and neither male nor female, and, in fact, nothing at all; while others affirm him to be masculine-feminine, assigning to him the nature of a hermaphrodite; others, again, allot Silence (Sige) to him as a spouse, that thus may be formed the first conjunction (Syzygy).

But the followers of Ptolemy say that the Bythos has two consorts, which they also call his diatheses , viz., Thought and Will. For, as they affirm, he first conceived the thought of producing something, and

then willed to that effect. Wherefore, again, these two affections, or powers, Thought and Will, having intercourse, as it were, between themselves, the production of Monogenes and Truth took place according to the conjunction.

These fancied beings (like the Jove of Homer, who is represented as passing an anxious sleepless night in devising plans for honoring Achilles and destroying numbers of the Greeks) will not appear to you, my dear friend, to be possessed of greater knowledge than He who is the God of the universe. He, as soon as He thinks, also performs what He has willed; and as soon as He wills, also thinks that which He has willed; then thinking when He wills, and then willing when He thinks, since He is all thought, [all will, all mind, all light,] all eye, all ear, the one entire fountain of all good things.

Those of them, however, who are deemed more skillful than the persons who have just been mentioned, say that the first Ogdoad was not produced gradually, so that one Eon was sent forth by another, but that all the Eons were brought into existence at once by Propator and his Thought (Ennoea).

They have much contention also among themselves respecting the Savior. Others assert that he was produced from those ten Eons alone who sprang from Logos and Life, and that on this account he was called Logos and Zoe, thus preserving the ancestral names. Others, again, affirm that he had his being from those twelve Eons who were the offspring of Man and Church (Anthropos and Ecclesia); and on this account he acknowledges himself the Son of man, as being a son of Man . Others still, assert that he was produced by Christ and the Holy Spirit, who were brought forth for the security of the Pleroma; and that on this account he was called Christ, thus preserving the appellation of the Father, by whom he was produced. And there are yet others among them who declare that the First Father of the whole, the first unintelligible principle, is called Anthropos; and that this is the great and abstruse mystery, namely, that the Power which is above all others, and contains all in his embrace, is termed Anthropos (Man); hence does the Savior style himself the "Son of man."

But there is another among these heretics, Marcus by name, who boasts himself as having improved upon his master. He is a perfect adept in magical impostures, and by this means drawing away a great number of men, and not a few women, he has induced them to join themselves to him, as to one who is possessed of the greatest knowledge and perfection, and who has received the highest power from the invisible and ineffable regions above. Thus it appears as if he really were the precursor of Antichrist. For, joining the buffooneries of Anaxilaus to the craftiness of the magi, as they are called, he is regarded by his senseless and cracked-brain followers as working miracles by these means.

Pretending to consecrate cups mixed with wine, and protracting to great length the word of invocation, he contrives to give them a purple and reddish color, so that Charis (Grace), who is one of those that are superior to all things, should be thought to drop her own blood into that cup through means of his invocation, and that thus those who are present should be led to rejoice to taste of that cup, in order that, by so doing, the Charis, who is set forth by this magician, may also flow into them. Again, handing mixed cups to the women, he bids them consecrate these in his presence. When this has been done, he himself produces another cup of much larger size than that which the deluded woman has consecrated) and pouting from the smaller one consecrated by the woman into that which has been brought forward by himself, he at the same time pronounces these words: "May that Charis who is before all things, and who transcends all knowledge and speech, fill your inner man, and multiply in you her own knowledge, by sowing the grain of mustard seed in you as in good soil."

Repeating certain other like words, and thus goading on the wretched woman [to madness], he then appears a worker of wonders when the large cup is seen to have been filled out of the small one, so as even to overflow by what has been obtained from it. By accomplishing several other similar things, he has completely deceived many, and drawn them away after him.

It appears probable enough that this man possesses a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of whom he seems able to prophesy, and also enables as many as he counts worthy to be partakers of his Charis (Grace) themselves to prophesy. He devotes himself especially to women, and those such as are well bred, and elegantly attired, and of great wealth, whom he frequently seeks to draw after him, by addressing them in such seductive words as these: "I am eager to make you a partaker of my Grace (Charis), since the Father of all doth continually behold your angel before His face. Now the place of your angel is among us: it behooves us to become one. Receive first from me and by me [the gift of] Charis. Adorn yourself as a bride who is expecting her bridegroom, that you may be what I am, and I what you are. Establish the germ of light in your nuptial chamber. Receive from me a spouse,

and become receptive of him, while you are received by him. Behold Charis (Grace) has descended upon you; open your mouth and prophesy."

On the woman replying, "I have never at any time prophesied, nor do I know how to prophesy; "then engaging, for the second time, in certain invocations, so as to astound his deluded victim, he says to her," Open your mouth, speak whatsoever occurs to you, and you will prophesy." She then, vainly puffed up and elated by these words, and greatly excited in soul by the expectation that it is herself who is to prophesy, her heart beating violently [from emotion], reaches the requisite pitch of audacity, and idly as well as impudently utters some nonsense as it happens to occur to her, such as might be expected from one heated by an empty spirit. (Referring to this, one superior to me has observed that the soul is both audacious and impudent when heated with empty air.) Henceforth she reckons herself a prophetess, and expresses her thanks to Marcus for having imparted to her of his own Grace. She then makes the effort to reward him, not only by the gift of her possessions (in which way he has collected a very large fortune), but also by yielding up to him her person, desiring in every way to be united to him that she may become altogether one with him.

But already some of the most faithful women, possessed of the fear of God, and not being deceived (whom, nevertheless, he did his best to seduce like the rest by bidding them prophesy), abhorring and execrating him, have withdrawn from such a vile company of revelers. This they have done, as being well aware that the gift of prophecy is not conferred on men by Marcus, the magician, but that only those to whom God sends His grace from above possess the divinely bestowed power of prophesying; and then they speak where and when God pleases, and not when Marcus orders them to do so. For that which commands is greater and of higher authority than that which is commanded, inasmuch as the former rules, while the latter is in a state of subjection. If, then, Marcus, or anyone else, does command-as these are accustomed continually at their feasts to play at drawing lots, and [in accordance with the lot] to command one another to prophesy, giving forth as oracles what is in harmony with their own desires-it will follow that he who commands is greater and of higher authority than the prophetic spirit, though he is but a man, which is impossible.

Counter-lay No. 7.

However, it seems well to us, druids of the 21st century, that the Pentecostal or "Evangelical" Christians do the same thing. But let us give the floor to Mr. Irenaeus and his delusions about the great or little satans, and the anathemas, especially against women (sexism ??? machismo ???). What is clear from this text by Irenaeus himself is that there was a great deal of back-and-forth between Gnosticism and his own religious sensitivity : the Catholic Orthodox Great Church. At least with regard to the female elements. For the rest to everyone his tastes in the matter. Official Christian theology with its notions of Trinity or change of bread and wine into blood and body of Christ, original sin, assumption and other mysteries of this kind; does not seem to us much simpler than all these stories of triads of triacontads of ogdoads and so on.

But such spirits as are commanded by these men, and speak when they desire it, are earthly and weak, audacious and impudent, sent forth by Satan for the seduction and perdition of those who do not hold fast that well-compacted faith which they received at first through the Church.

Moreover, that this Marcus compounds philters and love potions, in order to insult the persons of some of these women, if not of all, those of them who have returned to the Church of God, a thing which frequently occurs, have acknowledged, confessing, too, that they have been defiled by him, and that they were filled with a burning passion towards him. A sad example of this occurred in the case of a certain Asiatic, one of our deacons, who had received him (Marcus) into his house. His wife, a woman of remarkable beauty, fell a victim both in mind and body to this magician, and, for a long time, traveled about with him. At last, when, with no small difficulty, the brethren had converted her, she spent her whole time in the exercise of public confession, weeping over and lamenting the defilement which she had received from this magician.

Some of his disciples, too, addicting themselves to the same practices, have deceived many silly women, and defiled them. They proclaim themselves as being "perfect," so that no one can be compared to them with respect to the immensity of their knowledge, nor even were you to mention Paul or Peter, or any other of the apostles. They assert that they themselves know more than all others, and that they alone have imbibed the greatness of the knowledge of that power which is unspeakable. They also maintain that they have attained to a height above all power, and that therefore they are free in every respect to act as they please, having no one to fear in anything. For

they affirm, that because of the "Redemption" it has come to pass that they can neither be apprehended, nor even seen by the judge.

Such are the words and deeds by which, in our own district of the Rhone, they have deluded many women, who have their consciences seared as with a hot iron. Some of them, indeed, make a public confession of their sins; but others of them are ashamed to do this, and in a tacit kind of way, despairing of [attaining to] the life of God, have, some of them, apostatized altogether; while others hesitate between the two courses.

Marcus declares that the infinitely exalted Tetrad descended upon him from the invisible and indescribable places in the form of a woman (for the world could not have borne it coming in its male form), and expounded to him alone its own nature, and the origin of all things, which it had never before revealed to anyone either of gods or men. This was done in the following terms: When first the unoriginated, inconceivable father, who is without material substance, and is neither male nor female, willed to bring forth that which is ineffable to Him, and to endow with form that which is invisible, He opened His mouth, and sent forth the Word similar to Himself, who, standing near, showed Him what He Himself was, inasmuch as He had been manifested in the form of that which was invisible.

The diverse sounds (he adds) are those which give form to that Eon who is without material substance and misbegotten, and these, again, are the forms which the Lord has called angels, who continually behold the face of the Father.

Those names of the elements which may be told, and are common, he has called Eons, and words, and roots, and seeds, and fullnesses, and fruits. He asserts that each of these, and all that is peculiar to every one of them, is to be understood as contained in the name Ecclesia.

Thus it is, that in regard to the whole name, which consists of thirty letters, and Bythus, who receives his increase from the letters of this [name], and, moreover, the body of Aletheia, which is composed of twelve members, each of which consists of two letters, and the voice which she uttered without having spoken at all, and in regard to the analysis of that name which cannot be expressed in words, and the soul of the world and of man, according as they possess that arrangement, which is after the image [of things above], he has uttered his nonsensical opinions. It remains that I relate how the Tetrad showed him from the names a power equal in number; so that nothing, my friend, which I have received as spoken by him, may remain unknown to you; and thus your request, often proposed to me, may be fulfilled.

Along with Unity (Monotes) there coexisted Oneness (Henotes), from which sprang two productions, as we have remarked above, Monas and One, which, added to the other two, make four, for twice two are Four. And again, two and four, when added together, exhibit the number six. And further, these six being quadrupled, give rise to the twenty-four forms. And the names of the first Tetrad, which are understood to be most holy, and not capable of being expressed in words.

Moreover, that name of the Savior which may be pronounced, viz., Jesus consists of six letters, but His unutterable name comprises four and twenty letters. The name Christ/Son comprises twelve letters, but that which is unpronounceable in Christ contains thirty letters. And for this reason he declares that he is 801 (Alpha and Omega), that he may indicate the dove, inasmuch as that bird has this number [in its name].

Counter-lay No. 8.

These are probably processes derived from Jewish gematria. This process is possible because in Hebrew there are no digits and each letter is associated with a number. Gematria is one of the three methods of reading sacred texts written in Hebrew. It makes it possible to bring closer words whose the sum of the letters that compose them is identical. We are therefore delighted to see that Irenaeus takes the gematria n for nonsense.

But Jesus, he affirms, has the following unspeakable origin. From the mother of all things, that is, the first Tetrad; there came forth the second Tetrad, after the manner of a daughter; and thus an Ogdoad was formed, from which, again, a Decad proceeded, thus was produced a Decad and an Ogdoad. The Decad, then, being joined with the Ogdoad, and multiplying it ten times, gave rise to the number eighty; and, again, multiplying eighty ten times, produced the number eight hundred. Thus, then, the whole number of the letters proceeding from the Ogdoad [multiplied] into the Decad, is eight hundred and

eighty-eight. This is the name of Jesus; for this name, if you reckon up the numerical value of the letters, amounts to eight hundred and eighty-eight.

Thus, then, you have a clear statement of their opinion as to the origin of the supercelestial Jesus. Wherefore, also, the alphabet of the Greeks contains eight units (Monads), eight tens (Decads), and eight hundreds (Hecatads), which present the number eight hundred and eighty-eight, that is, Jesus, who is formed of all numbers. And, again, they put the matter thus: If the first Tetrad be added up according to the progression of numbers, the number ten appears. For one, and two, and three, and four, when added together, form ten; and this, as they will have it, is Jesus.

Such a raving speech, we may now well say, goes beyond *lu, lu, Pheu, Pheu*, and every kind of tragic exclamation or utterance of misery. For who would not detest one who is the wretched contriver of such audacious falsehoods, when he perceives the truth turned by Marcus into a mere image, and that punctured all over with the letters of the alphabet?

But who will tolerate your nonsensical Primeval Silence (*Sige*), who names Him that cannot be named, and expounds the nature of Him that is unspeakable, and searches out Him that is unsearchable, and declares that He whom you maintain to be destitute of body and form, opened His mouth and sent forth the Word, as if He were included among organized beings; and that His Word, while like to His Author, and bearing the image of the invisible, nevertheless consisted of thirty elements and four syllables? It will follow, then, according to thy theory, that the Father of all, in accordance with the likeness of the Word, consists of thirty elements and four syllables! Or, again, who will tolerate you in your juggling with forms and numbers, -at one time thirty, at another twenty-four, and at another, again, only six, whilst you shut up [in these] the Word of God, the Founder, and Framer, and Maker of all things; and then, again, cutting Him up piecemeal into four syllables and thirty elements; and bringing down the Lord of all who founded the heavens to the number eight hundred and eighty-eight, so that He should be similar to the alphabet; and subdividing the Father, who cannot be contained, but contains all things, into a Tetrad, and an Ogdoad, and a Decad, and a Duodecad; and by such multiplications, setting forth the unspeakable and inconceivable nature of the Father, as you yourself declare it to be?

Marcus, you former of idols, inspector of portents, skilled in consulting the stars, and deep in the black arts of magic, ever by tricks such as these confirming the doctrines of error, furnishing signs unto those involved by you in deception, wonders of power that is utterly severed from God and apostate, which Satan, you true father, enables you still to accomplish, by means of Azazel, that fallen and yet mighty angel, thus making you the precursor of his own impious actions."

Counter-lay No. 9

This recourse to Satan, the Devil, and the biblical demon of the Old Testament named Azazel, seems to us no more reasonable than the methods of Jewish gematria used by Marcus.

"The world holds two classes of men, intelligent men without religion, and religious men without intelligence". Abul-Ala al-Ma'ari, a great Arab poet of the eleventh century.

Blending in one the production of their own Eons, and the straying and recovery of the sheep [spoken of in the Gospel], these persons endeavor to set forth things in a more mystical style, while they refer everything to numbers, maintaining that the universe has been formed out of a Monad and a Dyad. I well know, my dear friend, that when you have read through all this, you will indulge in a hearty laugh over this their inflated wise folly! But those men are really worthy of being mourned over, who promulgate such a kind of religion, and who so frigidly and perversely pull to pieces the greatness of the truly unspeakable power, and the dispensations of God in themselves so striking, by means of Alpha and Beta, and through the aid of numbers. But as many as separate from the Church, and give heed to such old wives' fables as these, are truly self-condemned; I also wish to explain to you their theory as to the way in which the creation itself was formed through the mother by the Demiurge (as it were without his knowledge), after the image of things invisible. They maintain, then, that, first of all, the four elements, fire, water, earth, and air, were produced after the image of the primary Tetrad above, and that then, we add their operations, viz., heat, cold, dryness, and humidity, an exact likeness of the Ogdoad is presented. They next reckon up ten powers in the following manner. There are seven globular bodies, which they also call heavens; then that globular body which contains these, which also they name the eighth heaven; and, in addition to these, the sun and moon. These, being ten in number, they declare to be types of the invisible Decad, which proceeded from Logos and Zoe.

As to the Duodecad, it is indicated by the zodiacal circle, as it is called; for they affirm that the twelve signs do most manifestly shadow forth the Duodecad, the daughter of Man and Church (Anthropos and Ecclesia).

Moses, then, they declare, by his mode of beginning the account of the creation, has at the commencement pointed out the mother of all things when he says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" for, as they maintain, by naming these four-God, beginning, heaven, and earth-he set forth their Tetrads. Indicating also its invisible and hidden nature, he said, "Now the earth was invisible and unformed."

They will have it, moreover, that he spoke of the second Tetrads, the offspring of the first, in this way, by naming an abyss and darkness, in which were also water, and the Spirit of the Elohim moving upon the water. Then, proceeding to mention the Decad, he names light, day, night, the firmament, the evening, the morning, dry land, sea, plants, and, in the tenth place, trees. Thus, by means of these ten names, he indicated the ten Eons. The power of the Duodecad, again, was shadowed forth by him thus: He names the sun, moon, stars, seasons, years, whales, fishes, reptiles, birds, quadrupeds, wild beasts, and after all these, in the twelfth place, man. Thus they teach that the Duodecad was spoken of through Moses by the Spirit.

Moreover, man also, being formed after the image of the power above, had in himself that ability which flows from the one source. This ability was seated in the region of the brain, from which four faculties proceed, after the image of the Tetrads above, and these are called: the first, sight, the second, hearing, the third, smell, and the fourth, taste. And they say that the Ogdoad is indicated by man in this way: that he possesses two ears, the like number of eyes, also two nostrils, and a twofold taste, namely, of bitter and sweet.

As to the Duodecad, in connection with which the mystery of the passion of the defect occurred, from which passion they maintain that all things visible were framed, they assert that it is to be found strikingly and manifestly everywhere [in Scripture]. For they declare that the twelve sons of Jacob, from whom also sprang twelve tribes, the breastplate of the high priest, which bore twelve precious stones and twelve little bells, the twelve stones which were placed by Moses at the foot of the mountain, the same number which was placed by Joshua in the river, and again, on the other side, the bearers of the ark of the covenant, those stones which were set up by Elijah when the heifer was offered as a burnt offering; the number, too, of the apostles; and, in fine, every event which embraces in it the number twelve, set forth their Duodecad.

And then the union of all these, which is called the Triacontad, they strenuously endeavor to demonstrate by the ark of Noah, the height of which was thirty cubits; by the case of Samuel, who assigned Saul the chief place among thirty guests; by David, when for thirty days he concealed himself in the field; by those who entered along with him into the cave; also by the fact that the length (height) of the holy tabernacle was thirty cubits; and if they meet with any other like numbers, they still apply these to their Triacontad.

I judge it necessary to add to these details also what, by garbling passages of Scripture, they try to persuade us concerning their Primeval Father or Propator, who was unknown to all before the coming of Christ. Their object in this is to show that our Lord announced another Father than the Maker of this universe, whom, as we said before, they impiously declare to have been the fruit of a defect. For instance, when the prophet Isaiah says, "But Israel has not known Me, and My people have not understood Me," they pervert his words to mean ignorance of the true initial principle behind everything, the Bythus. And that which is spoken by Hosea, "There is no truth in them, nor the knowledge of God," they strive to give the same reference.

Besides the above [misrepresentations], they adduce an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they themselves have forged, to bewilder the minds of foolish men, and of such as are ignorant of the Scriptures of truth. Among other things, they bring forward that false and wicked story which relates that our Lord, when He was a boy learning His letters, on the teacher saying to Him, as is usual, "Pronounce Alpha," replied [as He was bid], "Alpha." But when, again, the teacher bade Him say, "Beta," the Lord replied, "Do you first tell me what Alpha is, and then I will tell you what Beta is." This they expound as meaning that He alone knew the Unknown, which He revealed under its type Alpha.

Some passages, also, which occur in the Gospels, receive from them a coloring of the same kind, such as the answer which He gave His mother when He was twelve years of age: "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" Thus, they say, He announced to them the Father of whom they were ignorant. On this account, also, He sent forth the disciples to the twelve tribes that they

might proclaim to them the unknown God. And to the person who said to Him, "Good Master," He confessed that God who is truly good, saying, "Why call you Me good: there is one who is good, the Father in the heavens; " and they assert that in this passage the Eons receive the name of heavens. Moreover, by His not replying to those who said to Him, "By what power do you this? " but by a question on His own side, put them to utter confusion; by His thus not replying, according to their interpretation, He showed the unutterable nature of the Father.

But they adduce the following passage as the highest testimony, and, as it were, the very crown of their system:-"I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, my Father; for so it seemed good in your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Father but the Son, or the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."

In these words they affirm that He clearly showed that the Father of truth, conjured into existence by them, was known to no one before His advent. And they desire to construe the passage as if teaching that the Maker and Framer [of the world] was always known by all, while the Lord spoke these words concerning the Father unknown to all, whom they now proclaim.

It happens that their tradition respecting redemption is invisible and incomprehensible, as being the mother of things which are incomprehensible and invisible; and on this account, since it is fluctuating, it is impossible simply and all at once to make known its nature, for every one of them hands it down just as his own inclination prompts. Thus there are as many schemes of "redemption" as there are teachers of these mystical opinions. And when we come to refute them, we shall show in its fitting place that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God, and thus to a renunciation of the whole [Christian] faith.

They maintain that those who have attained to perfect knowledge must of necessity be regenerated into that power which is above all. For it is otherwise impossible to find admittance within the Pleroma, since this [regeneration] it is which leads them down into the depths of the Universal Principle (Bythus). For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins, but the redemption brought in by that Christ who descended upon Him, was for perfection and they allege that the former is animal but the latter spiritual. And the baptism of John was proclaimed with a view to repentance, but the redemption by Jesus was brought in for the sake of perfection. And to this He refers when He says, "And I have another baptism to be baptized with, and I hasten eagerly towards it." Moreover, they affirm that the Lord added this redemption to the sons of Zebedee, when their mother asked that they might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom, saying, "Can you be baptized with the baptism which I shall be baptized with? " Paul, too, they declare, has often set forth, in express terms, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and this was the same which is handed down by them in so varied and discordant forms.

For some of them prepare a nuptial couch, and perform a sort of mystic rite (pronouncing certain expressions) with those who are being initiated, and affirm that it is a spiritual marriage which is celebrated by them, after the likeness of the conjunctions above. Others, again, lead them to a place where water is, and baptize them, with the utterance of these words, "Into the name of the unknown father of the universe,into truth, the mother of all things,into Him who descended on Jesus,into union, and redemption, and communion with the powers." Others still repeat certain Hebrew words, in order the more thoroughly to bewilder those who are being initiated, as follows: "Basema, Chamosse, Baoenaora, Mistadia, Ruada, Kousta, Babaphor, Kalachthei." The interpretation of these terms runs thus: "I invoke that which is above every power of the Father, which is called light, and good Spirit, and life, because you have reigned in the body." Others, again, set forth the redemption thus: The name which is hidden from every deity, and dominion, and truth which Jesus of Nazareth was clothed with in the lives of the light of Christ-of Christ, who lives by the Holy Ghost, for the angelic redemption. The name of restitution stands thus: Messia, Uphareg, Namempsoeman, Chaldoeaur, Mosomedoea, Acphranoe, Psaua, Jesus Nazaria.

The interpretation of these words is as follows: "I do not divide the Spirit of Christ, neither the heart nor the supercelestial power which is merciful; may I enjoy your name, O Savior of truth!"

Such are words of the initiators; but he who is initiated, replies, "I am established, and I am redeemed; I redeem my soul from this age (world), and from all things connected with it in the name of lao, who redeemed his own soul into redemption in Christ who lives." Then the bystanders add these words, "Peace be to all on whom this name rests." After this they anoint the initiated person with balsam; for they assert that this unguent is a type of that sweet odor which comes from the eons.

But there are some of them who assert that it is superfluous to bring persons to the water, but mixing oil and water together.

The rule of truth which we hold is that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed, out of that which had no existence, all things which exist. Thus says the Scripture, to that effect "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all their might, by the spirit of His mouth." And again, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made." There is no exception or deduction stated; but the Father made all things by Him, whether visible or invisible, objects of sense or of intelligence, temporal, on account of a certain character given them, or eternal; and these eternal things He did not make by angels, or by any powers separated from His Ennoea. For God needs none of all these things, but is He who, by His Word and Spirit, makes, and disposes, and governs all things, and commands all things into existence, He who formed the world (for the world is of all), He who fashioned man, He [who] is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, above whom there is no other God, nor initial principle, nor power, nor pleroma, He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall prove. Holding, therefore, this rule, we shall easily show, notwithstanding the great variety and multitude of their opinions, that these men have deviated from the truth; since, therefore, it is a complex and multiform task to detect and convict all the heretics, and since our design is to reply to them all according to their special characters, we have judged it necessary, first of all, to give an account of their source and root, in order that, by getting the knowledge of their most exalted Higher Being (Bythus), you may understand the nature of the tree which has produced such fruits.

Simon the Samaritan was that magician of whom Luke, the disciple and follower of the apostles, says, "But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime used magical arts in that city, and led astray the people of Samaria, declaring that he himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this is the power of God, which is called great. And to him they had regard, because that of a long time he had driven them mad by his sorcery." This Simon, then-who feigned faith, supposing that the apostles themselves performed their cures by the art of magic, and not by the power of God; and with respect to their filling with the Holy Ghost, through the imposition of hands, those that believed in God through Him who was preached by them, namely, Christ Jesus-suspecting that even this was done through a kind of greater knowledge of magic, and offering money to the apostles, thought he, too, might receive this power of bestowing the Holy Spirit on whomsoever he would, was addressed in these words by Peter: "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God can be purchased with money :you have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God; for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." He, then, not putting faith in God a whit the more, set himself eagerly to contend against the apostles, in order that he himself might seem to be a wonderful being, and applied himself with still greater zeal to the study of the whole magic art, that he might the better bewilder and overpower multitudes of men. Such was his procedure in the reign of Claudius Caesar, by whom also he is said to have been honored with a statue, on account of his magical power. This man, then, was glorified by many as if he were a god.

Having redeemed from slavery at Tyre, a city of Phoenicia, a certain woman named Helena, he was in the habit of carrying her about with him, declaring that this woman was the first conception of his mind, the mother of all, by whom, in the beginning, he conceived in his mind [the thought] of forming angels and archangels. For this First Thought (Ennoea) leaping forth from him, and comprehending the will of her father, descended to the lower regions [of space], and generated angels and powers, by whom also he declared this word was formed. But after she had produced them, she was detained by them through motives of jealousy, because they were unwilling to be looked upon as the progeny of any other being. As to himself, they had no knowledge of him whatever; but his Primary Thought (Ennoea) was detained by those powers and angels who had been produced by her. She suffered all kinds of contumely from them, so that she could not return upwards to her father, but was even shut up in a human body, and for ages passed in succession from one female body to another, as from vessel to vessel. She was, for example, in that Helen on whose account the Trojan war was undertaken; for whose sake also Stesichorus was struck blind, because he had cursed her in his verses, but afterwards, repenting and writing what are called palinodes, in which he sang her praise, he was restored to sight. Thus she, passing from body to body, and suffering insults in every one of them, at last became a common prostitute; and she it was that was meant by the lost sheep.

On this account, he pledged himself that the world should be dissolved, and that those who are his should be freed from the rule of them who made the world.

The successor of this man was Menander, also a Samaritan by birth, and he, too, was a perfect adept in the practice of magic.

Arising among these men (Simon and Menander), Saturninus (who was of that Antioch which is near Daphne) and Basilides laid hold of some favorable opportunities, and promulgated different systems of doctrine—the one in Syria, the other at Alexandria. Saturninus, like Menander, set forth one father unknown to all, who made angels, archangels, powers, and potentates. The world, again, and all things therein, were made by a certain company of seven angels. Man, too, was the workmanship of angels, a shining image bursting forth below from the presence of the supreme power. He has also laid it down as a truth, that the Savior was without birth, without body, and without figure, but was, by supposition, a visible man; and he maintained that the God of the Jews was one of the angels; and, on this account, because all the powers wished to annihilate his father, Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews, but to save such as believe in him; that is, those who possess the spark of his life. This heretic was the first to affirm that two kinds of men were formed by the angels, the one wicked, and the other good. And since the demons assist the most wicked, the Savior came for the destruction of evil men and of the demons, but for the salvation of the good.

They also declare that marriage and generation are from Satan. Many of those, too, who belong to his school, abstain from animal food, and draw away multitudes by a reigned temperance of this kind.

They hold, moreover, that some of the prophecies were uttered by those angels who made the world, and some by Satan; whom Saturninus represents as being himself an angel, the enemy of the creators of the world, but especially of the God of the Jews.

Salvation belongs to the soul alone, for the body is by nature subject to corruption. He declares, too, that the prophecies were derived from those powers (archontes) who were the makers of the world, but the law was specially given by their chief, who led the people out of the land of Egypt. He attaches no importance to [the question regarding] meats offered in sacrifice to idols, thinks them of no consequence, and makes use of them without any hesitation; he also holds the use of other things, and the practice of every kind of lust, a matter of perfect indifference. These men, moreover, practice magic; and use images, incantations, invocations, and every other kind of curious art. Coining also certain names as if they were those of the angels, they proclaim some of these as belonging to the first, and others to the second heaven; and then they strive to set forth the names, archontes (principles), angels, and powers of the three hundred and sixty-five imagined heavens.

The multitude, however, cannot understand these matters, but only one out of a thousand, or two out of ten thousand. They declare that they are no longer Jews, and that they are not yet Christians; and that it is not at all fitting to speak openly of their mysteries, but right to keep them secret by preserving silence.

They make out the local position of the three hundred and sixty-five heavens in the same way as do mathematicians. For, accepting the theorems of these latter, they have transferred them to their own type of doctrine. They hold that their chief is Abraxas; and, on this account, that word contains in itself the numbers amounting to three hundred and sixty-five.

Carpocrates, again, and his followers maintain that the world and the things which are therein were created by angels greatly inferior to the misbegotten father. They also hold that Jesus was the son of Joseph, and was just like other men, with the exception that he differed from them in this respect, that inasmuch as his soul was steadfast and pure, he perfectly remembered those things which he had witnessed within the sphere of the misbegotten God. On this account, a power descended upon him from the Father, that by means of it he might escape from the creators of the world; and they say that it, after passing through them all, and remaining in all points free, ascended again to him, and to the powers, which in the same way embraced like things to itself. They further declare that the soul of Jesus, although educated in the practices of the Jews, regarded these with contempt, and that for this reason he was endowed with faculties, by means of which he destroyed those passions which dwelt in men as a punishment [for their sins].

They also practice magical arts and incantations; philters, also, and love potions; and have recourse to familiar spirits, dream-sending demons, and other abominations, declaring that they possess power to rule over, even now, the princes and formers of this world; and not only them, but also all things that are in it. These men, even as the Gentiles, have been sent forth by Satan to bring dishonor upon the Church, so that, in one way or another, men hearing the things which they speak, and imagining that we all are such as they, may turn away their ears from the preaching of the truth; or, again, seeing the things they practice, may speak evil of us all, who have in fact no fellowship with them, either in doctrine or in morals, or in our daily conduct. But they lead a licentious life, and, to conceal their impious doctrines, they abuse the name [of Christ], as a means of hiding their wickedness; so that "their condemnation is just," when they receive from God a recompense suited to their works. So unbridled is their madness that they declare they have in their power all things which are irreligious and impious, and are at liberty to practice them; for they maintain that things are evil or good, simply in virtue of human opinion. They deem it necessary, therefore, that by means of transmigration from body to body, souls should have experience of every kind of life as well as every kind of action (unless, indeed, by a single incarnation, one may be able to prevent any need for others, by once for all, and with equal completeness, doing all those things which we dare not either speak or hear of, nay, which we must not even conceive in our thoughts, nor think credible, if any such thing is mooted among those persons who are our fellow citizens), in order that, as their writings express it, their souls, having made trial of every kind of life, may, at their departure, not be wanting in any particular. It is necessary to insist upon this, lest, on account of some one thing being still wanting to their deliverance, they should be compelled once more to become incarnate. And thus, if ungodly, unlawful, and forbidden actions are committed among them, I can no longer find ground for believing them to be such.

And in their writings we read as follows, the interpretation which they give [of their views], declaring that Jesus spoke in a mystery to His disciples and apostles privately, and that they requested and obtained permission to hand down the things thus taught them, to others who should be worthy and believing. We are saved, indeed, by means of faith and love; but all other things, while in their nature indifferent, are reckoned by the opinion of men—some good and some evil, there being nothing really evil by nature.

Others of them employ outward marks, branding their disciples inside the lobe of the right ear. From among these also arose Marcellina, who came to Rome under [the episcopate of] Anicetus, and, holding these doctrines, she led multitudes astray. They style themselves Gnostics. They also possess images, some of them painted, and others formed from different kinds of material; while they maintain that a likeness of Christ was made by Pilate at that time when Jesus lived among them. They crown these images, and set them up along with the images of the philosophers of the world that is to say, with the images of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the rest. They also have other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner as the Pagans.

Cerinthus represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being.

Those who are called Ebionites agree that the world was made by the true God; but their opinions with respect to the Lord are similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetic writings, they endeavor to expound them in a somewhat singular manner: they practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.

The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the first seven ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, [when they are represented] as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

Counter-lay No. 10.

Eating anything, as long as it is good for health, even for taste, was nevertheless well, it seems to us, the characteristic of those who know and who don't have a weak conscience according to St. Paul (1 Corinthians 8), no? As for fornication ... it is perhaps the fact that they regarded sexuality as natural and not necessarily as a source of sin. In short, that to make love was to be as natural as drinking a glass of fresh water. Is it so criminal ???

Cerdo was one who took his system from the followers of Simon, and came to live at Rome in the time of Hyginus, who held the ninth place in the episcopal succession from the apostles downwards. He taught that the God proclaimed by the law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known, but the latter unknown; while the one was also righteous, but the other benevolent.

Marcion of Pontus succeeded him, and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring Him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself.

Counter-lay No. 11.

What, it seems to us, is not so silly as that! It is enough to read a little the Jewish Bible without a blinder and without allegory or gematria, to realize that countless contradictions or ridiculous anthropomorphisms characterize, according to it, the Higher Being. Let us make simple: the God or the Demiurge of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, can in no way be the Supreme Being of the philosophers.

But Jesus being derived from that father who is above the God that made the world, and coming into Judea in the times of Pontius Pilate the governor, who was the procurator of Tiberius Caesar, was manifested in the form of a man to those who were in Judaea, abolishing the prophets and the law, and all the works of that God who made the world, whom also he calls Cosmocrator. Besides this, he mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most dearly confessing that the Maker of this universe is His Father. He likewise persuaded his disciples that he himself was more worthy of credit than are those apostles who have handed down the Gospel to us, furnishing them not with the Gospel, but merely a fragment of it. In like manner, too, he dismembered the Epistles of Paul, removing all that is said by the apostle respecting that God who made the world, to the effect that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also those passages from the prophetic writings which the apostle quotes, in order to teach us that they announced beforehand the coming of the Lord.

Counter-lay No. 12.

See our chapter about Marcion. We question, in no way the science, the intelligence, nor the faith of Irenaeus, but modern criticism has clearly shown that, as far as Paul's epistles were concerned, it was rather Marcion who was right; And as regards the birth and infancy of the man Jesus, the greatest skepticism must be the rule about what the four Gospels tell us. That said, we doubt in no way the manifest superiority of Irenaeus and his supreme inspiration by the spirit of divine truth. Irenaeus was not a dangerous idiot, a Taliban of Christianity (Parabolanus) but a superior mind. An Einstein what!

Salvation will be the attainment only of those souls which had learned his doctrine; while the body, as having been taken from the earth, is incapable of sharing in salvation. In addition to his blasphemy against God Himself, he advanced this also, truly speaking as with the mouth of the devil, and saying all things in direct opposition to the truth, that Cain, and those like him, and the Sodomites, and the Egyptians, and others like them, and, in fine, all the nations who walked in all sorts of abominations, were saved by the Lord, on His descending into Hell, and on their running unto Him, and that they welcomed Him into their kingdom. But Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and those other righteous men who sprang from the patriarch Abraham, with all the prophets, and those who were pleasing to God,

did not partake in salvation. For since these men, he says, knew that their God was constantly tempting them, so now they suspected that He was tempting them, and did not run to Jesus, or believe His announcement: and for this reason he declared that their souls remained in Hell

Many offshoots of numerous heresies have already been formed from those heretics we have described. This arises from the fact that a number of them, indeed, we may say all, desire themselves to be teachers, and to break off from the particular heresy in which they have been involved. Forming one set of doctrines out of a totally different system of opinions, and then again others from others, they insist upon teaching something new, declaring themselves the inventors of any sort of opinion which they may have been able to call into existence.

To give an example: Springing from Saturninus and Marcion, those who are called Encratites preached against marriage, thus setting aside the original creation of God, and indirectly blaming Him who made the male and female for the propagation of the human race. Some of those reckoned among them have also introduced abstinence from animal food, thus proving themselves ungrateful to God, who formed all things. They deny, too, the salvation of him who was first created. It is but lately, however, that this opinion has been invented among them. A certain man named Tatian first introduced the blasphemy. He was a hearer of Justin's, and as long as he continued with him he expressed no such views; but after his martyrdom he separated from the Church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher, as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine. He invented a system of certain invisible Eons, like the followers of Valentinus; while, like Marcion and Saturninus, he declared that marriage was nothing else than corruption and fornication. But his denial of Adam's salvation was an opinion due entirely to himself. Others, again, following upon Basilides and Carpocrates, have introduced promiscuous intercourse and a plurality of wives, and are indifferent about eating meats sacrificed to idols, maintaining that God does not greatly regard such matters. But why continue? For it is an impracticable attempt to mention all those who, in one way or another, have fallen away from the truth.

Besides those, however, among these heretics who are Simonians, and of whom we have already spoken, a multitude of Gnostics have sprung up, and have been manifested like mushrooms growing out of the ground.

I now proceed to describe the principal opinions held by them.

Some of them, then, set forth a certain Eon who never grows old, and exists in a virgin spirit: him they style Barbelos. They declare that somewhere or other there exists a certain father who cannot be named, and that he was desirous to reveal himself to this Barbelos.

Next they maintain that from the first angel, who stands by the side of Monogenes, the Holy Spirit has been sent forth, whom they also term Sophia and Prunicus.

Others, again, portentously declare that there exists, in the power of the original Abyss (Bythus), a certain primary light, blessed, incorruptible, and infinite: this is the Father of all.

They have also given names to [the several persons] in their system of falsehood, such as the following: he who was the first descendant of the mother is called Ialdabaoth; he, again, descended from him, is named Iao; he, from this one, is called Sabaoth; the fourth is named Adonai the fifth, Elohim; the sixth, Oreus; and the seventh and last of all, Astanphaeus. Moreover, they represent these heavens, potentates, powers, angels, and creators, as sitting in their proper order in heaven, according to their generation, and as invisibly ruling over things celestial and terrestrial.

They also teach that, thus being emptied of the divine substance, Adam and Eve were cursed by Ialdabaoth, and cast down from heaven to this lower world. He reduced, however, under his power the angels here, and begat six sons, he himself forming the seventh person, after the example of that Hebdomad which surrounds the father.

They further declare that these are the seven mundane demons, who always oppose and resist the human race, because it was on their account that their father was cast down to this lower world. Adam and Eve previously had light, and clear, and as it were spiritual bodies, such as they were at their creation; but when they came to this world, these changed into bodies more opaque, and gross, and sluggish. Their soul was also feeble and languid, inasmuch as they had received from their creator a merely mundane inspiration. This continued until Prunicus, moved with compassion towards them, restored to them the sweet savor of the besprinkling of light, by means of which they came to a remembrance of themselves, and knew that they were naked, as well as that the body was a material substance, and thus recognized that they bore death about with them. They thereupon became patient, knowing that only for a time they would be enveloped in the body. They also found out food, through

the guidance of Sophia; and when they were satisfied, they had carnal knowledge of each other, and begat Cain, whom the serpent, that had been cast down along with his sons, immediately laid hold of and destroyed by filling him with mundane oblivion, and urging into folly and audacity, so that, by slaying his brother Abel, he was the first to bring to light envy and death. After these, they affirm that, by the forethought of Prunicus, Seth was begotten, and then Norea, from whom they represent all the rest of mankind as being descended. They affirm that the serpent cast down has two names, Michael and Samael.

Ialdabaoth, again, being incensed with men, because they did not worship or honor him as a father and God, sent forth a deluge upon them, that he might at once destroy them all. But Sophia opposed him in this point also, and Noah and his family were saved in the ark by means of the besprinkling of that light which proceeded from her, and through it the world was again filled with mankind. Ialdabaoth himself chose a certain man named Abraham from among these, and made a covenant with him, to the effect that, if his seed continued to serve him, he would give to them the earth for an inheritance. Afterwards, by means of Moses, he brought forth Abraham's descendants from Egypt, and gave them the law, and made them the Jews. Among that people he chose seven days, which they also call the holy Hebdomad. Each of these receives his own herald for the purpose of glorifying and proclaiming God; so that, when the rest hear these praises, they too may serve those who are announced as gods try the prophets.

Moreover, they distribute the prophets in the following manner: Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun, and Amos, and Habakkuk, belonged to Ialdabaoth; Samuel, and Nathan, and Jonah, and Micah, to Iao; Elijah, Joel, and Zechariah to Sabaoth; Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel, to Adonai; Tobias and Haggai to Elohim; Michaiah and Nahum to Oreus; Esdras and Zephaniah to Astanphaeus. Each one of these, then, glorifies his own father and God.

Prunicus brought it about by means of Ialdabaoth (who did not know what he did), that emissions of two men took place, the one from the barren Elizabeth, and the other from the Virgin Mary.

They further declare that he descended through the seven heavens, having assumed the likeness of their sons, and gradually emptied them of their power. For they maintain that the whole besprinkling of light rushed to him, and that Christ, descending to this world, first clothed his sister Sophia [with it], and that then both exulted in the mutual refreshment they felt in each other's society: this scene they describe as relating to bridegroom and bride. But Jesus, inasmuch as he was begotten of the Virgin through the agency of God, was wiser, purer, and more righteous than all other men: Christ united to Sophia descended into him, and thus Jesus Christ was produced. When Christ did descend on Jesus, he then began to work miracles, and heal, and announce the unknown father, and openly to confess himself the son of the first man.

When he was being led away for this purpose, they say that Christ himself, along with Wisdom, departed from him into the state of an incorruptible Eon, while Jesus was crucified. Christ, however, was not forgetful of his Jesus, but sent down a certain energy into him from above, which raised him up again in the body, which they call both animal and spiritual; for he sent the mundane parts back again into the world. When his disciples saw that he had risen, they did not recognize him-no, not even Jesus himself, by whom he rose again from the dead. Christ is now on sitting down at the right hand of his father Ialdabaoth, that he may receive to himself the souls of those who have known him. Such are the opinions which prevail among these persons, by whom, like the Lernaean hydra, a many-headed beast has been generated from the school of Valentinus. For some of them assert that Wisdom/Sophia herself became the serpent; on which account she was hostile to the creator of Adam, and implanted knowledge in men, for which reason the serpent was called wiser than all others. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas.

It was necessary clearly to prove that, as their very opinions and regulations exhibit them, those who are of the school of Valentinus derive their origin from such mothers, fathers, and ancestors, and also to bring forward their doctrines, with the hope that perchance some of them, exercising repentance and returning to the only Creator, and God the Former of the universe, may obtain salvation, and that others may not henceforth be drawn away by their wicked, although plausible, persuasions, imagining that they will obtain from them the knowledge of some greater and more sublime mysteries. But let them rather, learning to good effect from us the wicked tenets of these men, look with contempt upon their doctrines, while at the same time they pity those who, still cleaving to these miserable and baseless fables, have reached such a pitch of arrogance as to reckon themselves superior to all others on account of such knowledge, or, as it should rather be called, ignorance. They have now

been fully exposed; and simply to exhibit their sentiments is to obtain a victory over them. Wherefore I have labored to bring forward, and make clearly manifest, the utterly ill-conditioned carcass of this miserable little fox. For there will not now be need of many words to overturn their system of doctrine, when it has been made manifest to all. It is as when, on a beast hiding itself in a wood, and by rushing forth from it is in the habit of destroying multitudes, one who beats round the wood and thoroughly explores it, so as to compel the animal to break cover, does not strive to capture it, seeing that it is truly a ferocious beast; but those present can then watch and avoid its assaults, and can cast darts at it from all sides, and wound it, and finally slay that destructive brute. So, in our case, since we have brought their hidden mysteries, which they keep in silence among themselves, to the light, it will not now be necessary to use many words in destroying their system of opinions. For it is now in your power, and in the power of all your associates, to familiarize yourselves with what has been said, to overthrow their wicked and undigested doctrines, and to set forth doctrines agreeable to the truth.

END OF THE DOCUMENT FILLED WITH HATE AND BAD FAITH DUE TO THE PLUME OF THIS SAINT WHO HONOR HARDLY HIS NAME: IRENAEUS.

Reminder. The reading of this document in no way dispenses from referring to the original text by Irenaeus as it reveals the psychosis that has been transmitted from generation to generation on this subject in the religious ideology in question.

SOME FAMOUS GNOSTICS.

The early or Palestinian group includes therefore, first of all, as we have seen, the disciples of Simon the Magician, converted to Christianity by Philip (see Acts VIII).

Considered by Irenaeus as the father of all heresy, Simon the Magician, a native of Samaria, was indeed a contemporary of the apostles. It is difficult to distinguish between the legend and the reality about him. Having been influenced by the missionary preaching of the Hellenists expelled from Jerusalem after the year 35, he is also linked with Christianity.

His school is quickly divided into various sects (Gorthaeans, followers of Gorthaeus, Jewish and Christian Masbotheans, Menandrianists, disciples of Menander, Eutychians, disciples of Eutyches, Cleobians, disciples of Cleobius, Cerinthians, disciples of Cerinthus).

The Syriac group includes Saturnil or Saturninus of Antioch (early 2nd century). Dualist and pupil of Menander, Saturninus founded a School in Antioch in which he teaches that seven angels created the world, and fashioned man after seeing the image of God. The latter, having taken pity on the imperfect work of the angels, which is unable to stand, sends him a spark of life: the Spirit. And it is therefore this spirit which, at death, returns to his heavenly abode.

The Egyptian group offers more varied and more ambitious doctrines. He finds in the region of Alexandria a favorable environment, a philosophical culture more profound than in Syria, and a much greater freedom of teaching. Indeed, in Egypt there are, undoubtedly, bridges between Gnostic Christianity and philosophy. This can't be surprising if it is thought of Philo of Alexandria, whose work, essentially aimed at commenting on the Pentateuch, is not thinkable outside a philosophical environment (reflection on divine word, divine transcendence, divine wisdom ...). Here too, the link between Gnostic Christianity and philosophy is evident.

BASILIDES.

Basilides was the first Christian intellectual attested in Egypt around 110. The founder of a school located in or around the megalopolis of Alexandria, he was flourishing between about 120 and 150, and added to the already existing gospels his own revelation (got from two Apostles ignored by official history). His pessimism with regard to the human soul, defiled by sin and subjected to a punishment which is only the just reward of his faults, can be noted. This pessimism is also cosmic. God being infinitely distant from the world, the latter is the emanation furthest from divine perfection. Basilides denies the properly so-called incarnation of Christ, the man having suffered on the cross being for him Simon of Cyrene. He also denies the resurrection of the body, the latter being totally rotten. On the other hand, the soul of a small number of chosen men will be able to join the divine source, deceiving the Archons (who are the true creators of this world) by magic words and secret passwords. For Basilides, the Eternal God without name was manifested in 57 deployments, forming 365 series of beings corresponding to as many heavens, of which ours is the last one. The corruption of the angels creators of our universe requires the sending of a redeemer.

As we have already had the opportunity to say it, the discoveries made at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945; make us able to grasp directly and without passing through the distorting mirror of the Fathers of the Church (whose remarks on this subject are often incomplete and even partial); what was the intellectual reality of Gnostic Christianity.

It is about fifty texts, probably copied from Greek originals around the fourth century, and which represent in volume about the equivalent of two thirds of the Bible. Some of these texts are of the greatest interest; they come from a circle that the Pauline exegesis of the narratives of the cross has sought to fight in a very precise manner; and, therefore, the cross theology, as it emerges from the first epistle to the Corinthians. This environment is precisely that of the Basilidians.

It is the illustration, among many other possible, of a debate which was central for the original Christianity, in the middle of the second century. We will find again the terms of it with the Docetism, also foreshadowed in Marcion. It is the very example of a debate and a way of doing the exegesis of the biblical text; by reading it in detail (the story of Simon of Cyrene), but by refusing the crucifixion on the cross of a transcendent God, who can't be imprisoned in a body.

Here is a passage from the "Second Treatise of the Great Seth." It is a reflection on the baptism and the death of Jesus and, especially here, of the crucifixion (it is the Nazorene who speaks).
" And I was in the mouths of lions. And as for the plan that they devised about me to release their error and their senselessness, I did not succumb to them as they had planned. And I was not afflicted at all. Those who were there punished me, yet I did not die in reality but in appearance, in order that I not be put to shame by them because these are my kinsfolk. I removed the shame from me, and I did not become fainthearted in the face of what happened to me at their hands. I was about to succumb to fear, and I suffered merely according to their sight and thought so that no word might ever be found to speak about them. For my death, which they think happened, happened to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto their death. Their thoughts did not see me, for they were deaf and blind. But in doing these things, they condemn themselves. Yes, they saw me; they punished me. It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon (of Cyrene), who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over all the wealth of the rulers and the offspring of their error, of their empty glory. And I was laughing at their ignorance... This is a vision of the crucifixion to which 2000 years of official Christianity have not accustomed us. It is only found in Islam.

In the same codex, the apocalypse of Peter, we have a crucifixion of the same kind, with a laughing Jesus on the cross, or more exactly floating above the cross; And a carnal cover which is Simon of Cyrene (according to this doctrine, the one who was crucified is Simon of Cyrene, Jesus and Simon having had their features exchanged).

The "suffered under Pontius Pilate" of today's Christian prayers was introduced only to counter this Docetist design of the crucifixion, which persists nevertheless in the Quran and in Muslim theology.

NICOLAS (1st century).

After the (legal) assassination of Stephen, Nicolas will also be, as we have seen, forced to leave Jerusalem with the other Hellenists and to take refuge in Samaria north of Jerusalem (Acts of the Apostles beginning of chapter VIII) Then to Antioch. Nicolas (Nikolaos) was an active pagan sympathizer of Judaism. He therefore thought evidently that it was possible to live a Christian life while remaining among the pagans.

St. Clement of Alexandria tells us that Nicolas had married a woman of great beauty, of whom he was very jealous. When the apostles reproached him his jealousy, he would have brought his wife into the concourse and allowed anyone who so desired to mate with her. He then continued to live as before, but his disciples asserted that women, like all other goods, should be pooled. Saint Epiphanius adds that Nicolas preached that unless one copulates every day, he cannot have eternal life (this is also the version of St. Thomas Aquinas).

Here is how Saint Augustine (Volume 18, the Heresies, Chapter V) defines the Nicolaitans in the fifth century. " The Nicolaites are named after Nicolaus. He is said to have been one of those seven deacons whom the apostles ordained. It is reported that, because he was accused of being jealous with regard to his beautiful wife, he allowed anyone who wished to have intercourse with her as a means of purifying himself. This deed of his was transformed into a most shameful sect in which promiscuous intercourse with women is permitted. These people also do not keep their foods separate from those that are sacrificed to god-or-demons, nor do they reject other superstitious rites of the pagans. They also tell some mythical tales about the world, mixing in them some barbarian names of archons [...] These people are also understood to attribute creation, not to God, but to a certain power which they imagine or believe in."

In short, Nicolas attempted to achieve a compromise between Judeo-Christianity and certain pagan customs. The Nicolaitan current was therefore a representative of the Gnostic movement.

Editor's note. The name of Nicolaitism today refers to the medieval practice of the cohabitation or marriage of priests.

VALENTINUS (100-175). Poet, theologian, philosopher, Valentinus was born at Phrebonis in the delta of the Nile. He was brought up in the Greek way in the city of Alexandria, where he met the philosopher Basilides. He was converted to Christianity by a disciple of St. Paul called Theudas. He came to Rome at about the same time as Marcion, that is to say, before 140. Valentinus is the theologian of a succession of emanations, with a Pleroma of 30 Eons, a doctrine which will be

developed by his disciple Ptolemy who justifies it by an allegorical exegesis of certain passages of the Bible. The doctrine of Valentinus is undoubtedly a sketch of Christian theology. The first testimonies of an allegorical reading of the texts are found in the Valentinian gnosis of the second century; And the type of exegesis of biblical texts proposed in Valentinian circles, shows a use of allegorical methods quite characteristic of the "scholastic" philosophical background of antiquity. The link between Gnostic Christianity and Egyptian philosophical circles is more than likely. The emphasis is on the duality rather than the dualism: God himself is the transcendent unit of the primordial dyad, and the couple Christ-Sophia, momentarily separated, will finally be united again. Hence the importance of the symbolism of the mystical marriage between the Ego and the Self, as well as the validation of sexuality or marriage for the pneumatics. Who were able to experiment them as a mystery and a sacrament (and not just as satisfaction of the libido). Valentinus' thought will be developed and studied in two different schools.

The Western School.

The leaders of the Western school are Ptolemy and Heracleon. The doctrine of the first is the basis of Irenaeus' work against the Gnostics. The writings that have come down to us concern various passages of the Old Testament. As for Heracleon, he left us a long commentary on the Gospel of John. He also wrote about the distinction between the unknown God and the creating god, and about the division of mankind into three classes: hylics, psychics, pneumatics. There were also Florinus and Marcus the magician, whose influence was predominant in the Rhone-Saone area in Gaul.

The Eastern School.

The Eastern School is less known to us. It is represented by Theodotus and Bardaisan of Edessa (154 - 222) in Syria. Bardaisan. What does this name mean? Literally "the Son of the leaping river" the "fast." The doctrine of Bardaisan which still preserves the external respect of the biblical texts, but interprets them very freely, will become a school. Bardaisan seems to have been dualist and to have granted to the stars a great influence on human destiny. He made numerous proselytes, proposing a system combining theory and worship practice, and emphasizing the importance of hymns and songs. Of what later Christianity will remind.

The Valentinian Gnostic branch is the best known of the Fathers of the Church. Tertullian will write an *Adversus Valentinianos*. In the testimonies which belong to the gnosis of Valentinus, the ignorant demiurge, true creator of this world, repents and is forgiven for having done so.

Valentinian gnosis also divides classically in Gnosis mankind into three groups predetermined by their origin: the "spiritual ones" or "pneumatics," that is to say according to Valentinus the "true Christians" who will be saved; those who are the product of the Demiurge or "intermediate" god, called "psychics," to whom are identified the Christians of the future official Christianity (Catholic Orthodox) ; finally, the "materialS" or "hylics" who are excluded from any salvation. Let us note that human freedom plays no part in this salvation, and that predestination is absolute for the "spirituals" (reintegration in the Divine Pleroma) as for the "hylics" (eternal damnation).

It sounds like Hinduism or Buddhism. Initially, a reflection on a transcendent God or Demiurge, but a transcendent God or Demiurge having a companion, Silence or Grace. This primordial couple, previous to all the centuries, gives rise to Thought, who is not alone and has a sister, Truth. By this we see that the Valentinians wondered how to think of transcendence, and especially how to think of begetting within the transcendence? Whence comes the fact that the human intelligence can think the transcendence?

This pantheon or divine pleroma is reduced to a generation of pairs of male and female entities. There is in this cosmogony a series of successive apparitions, more than a dozen in total, finally producing some thirty entities, including the entity "Man" and the entity "Church". Which in turn will engender entities with various names, some referring to mythological or biblical characters. The Valentinians made of the biblical texts (for example, the prologue to the Gospel of John "In the beginning was the Word") an exegesis that made possible this kind of speculation. This model of engendering through successive pairs was certainly not new. It is found, in a much more personalized way, in several mythologies of the Old East. But here, behind the appearances of the system, we see people who reflect on the transcendence and ask themselves the question that all clear Christians of the second century had to face. How is it that the God or Demiurge of the Bible has a son? What is this begetting of Jesus in relation to a transcendent God or Demiurge?

Same questioning in lands of Islam for that matter. In other words, through the texts of the Fathers of the second century, there is a trace in the Christian Gnostics of a philosophical reflection which uses the sciences of the moment to build itself: cosmology, arithmology ... and even Tracts about passions. For all these characters of the pantheon or divine pleroma also is the proof, the echo or the trace, of a reflection about virtues. How to be virtuous when you use your intelligence in a sound way? In short, with Gnosis, we see the appearance of a circle of Christian intellectuals who question themselves, and who sought to get philosophy at the same time that they get the exegesis of texts.

CARPOCRATES (2nd century).

Carpocrates teaches a simpler gnosis, strongly influenced by Platonic philosophy, the transmigration of souls and the uselessness of morals. His son Epiphanius emphasizes this character and recommends the community of goods and women. For Carpocrates and his adepts, the Carpocratians, Jesus was revered not as the savior, but as an ordinary man who had not forgotten that the origin of his soul was to be sought in the sphere of the perfect, therefore unknown, God. The Carpocratian Christians will very quickly distinguish themselves by their indifference to acts which involve only the body. In his Mar Saba letter, Clement of Alexandria denounced the Carpocratians for having distorted from its sense the teaching contained in what is known today as the Secret Gospel of Mark.

CERINTHUS (end of the 1st century).

The disciples of Cerinthus were Judeo-Christians who denied the divinity of Jesus and waited for an earthly kingdom of Christ. For Cerinthus too, Jesus was only a man whom the divine Christ had left before his passion. It is this belief (that of the *angelos christos* or messiah angel) that many of the Essenes and consequently of the early Christians shared, and that later Christianity will call "Docetism"; the idea that the Son of God himself was not really incarnated as a man, but only took on a human appearance. Irenaeus of Lyons states that John met Cerinthus at Ephesus.

CERDO (Kerdon in Greek language, 2nd century). Native of Syria, Cerdo came to Rome about 135. He had no intention of founding a sect; he visited only the Christians who already existed in that town, and even went so far as to confess publicly (as it was used at the time), while dispensing to some believers a secret teaching. He has left us no writing. The group swarmed subsequently in the islands, Egypt and Persia. The thoughts of Cerdo are known only from his Marcionite successors. For Cerdo there were two principles, that is two god-or-demons; the one good and the other cruel. The good one is the higher god-or-demon; the cruel is ours, the creator of this world. Cerdo rejects the law and the Jewish prophets. He admits that Jesus is the son of Higher God, but he does not consider that he was really incarnated. For Cerdo, Jesus had only the appearance of a body, and consequently he had not really suffered from the crucifixion. He only looked suffering. He was not born of a virgin, for in his case there was not a birth in the true sense of the term. Cerdo admits only the resurrection of the soul; he does not believe in the resurrection of the body. He accepts only the Gospel of Luke and the first letters of the Apostle Paul. He rejects as false the Apocalypse as well as most of the other scriptures claiming to be gospels that circulated at the time.

Tertullian states that Cerdo accepted the gospel of Luke only partially and did not admit all the epistles of Paul or all their text. In spite of his competence in the matter of Holy Scriptures, recognized even by his opponents, Cerdo was excommunicated for heresy in 141 by the Bishop of Rome named Hyginus.

THE JOHANNINE CURRENT OF EPHESUS.

For Bultmann, the gospel according to John (which dates from the first half of the second century) would be quite gnostic. The Apocalypse too. These two texts are the work of an individual, or of a group of individuals, having, at least partially, ... GNOSTIC ideas.

The majority of the exegetes lean in favor of a collective work rather than that of a single and isolated author.

The Johannine Christian current undoubtedly appeared in Palestine, but its center of gravity then moved to Ephesus.

Paul was in fact preceded at Ephesus by a newcomer in the Acts of the Apostles, Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria converted. An intellectual, very conversant with the Old Testament Scriptures, and very skilled in public discussion. The evangelization of Ephesus is undoubtedly due to this Apollos since when Paul came, he found some Christians there, probably converted by him (Acts XVIII, 24-28). These first Christians were 12 and had never heard of either the resurrection, or the Holy Spirit or Pentecost.

Acts 19: 1. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God"

This Christian Gnostic sect seems to have been particularly competed by the Christian Nicolaitans that it does not cease to denounce in its texts. The disciples of Nicolas (Nicolaites), as we have seen above, gave an important role to a heavenly Mother, having procreated the demiurge and the other Christian branches regarded them as perverted .

In the relationship between Gnostic Christianity and future official, Catholic or Orthodox, Christianity, reciprocal accusations of heresy played a crucial role. All orthodoxy is defined in relation to one or more heresies. To tax a concurrent belief with heresy is at the same time to say what you claim to be orthodox.

In the case at hand, there were also, of course, Gnostic schools to accuse the official Church of heresy. What the future Catholic or Orthodox Christians or other Parabolani of Christianity could not help retort that the heretics they were rather them. To accuse the other, the neighbor, the competitor, of being a heretic, became fashionable among the Taliban of Christianity.

The first Christianity is therefore multifaceted and there will be for a long time interaction and mutual influence between these two leanings, the Gnosticism and the current which will produce the Churches that we know today. Since these two movements are at first two leanings partially interlinked one in the other.

The Church under construction will be determined in relation to its Gnostic or other rivals, by stigmatizing certain communities and their ideas as heretics, or by accepting some of their texts. The Book of Revelation which concludes the official New Testament, for example. It is also evident that the Gnostic notion of "monogenes" has produced or influenced the Christian concept (applied to Jesus) of "only son of God."

The idea of Trinity is perhaps also a borrowing from the Gnosticism of Valentinus. The discovery of texts such as those of Nag Hammadi shows clearly that the official canon of the Catholic, Orthodox, or Reformist Churches is in reality a selection of some writings among others. If some of Nag Hammadi's texts have a radically different content, others could well have been in this official canon of today, without much changing the ideas of it. One wonders why besides certain doctrines have been rejected from official Christianity while others have been accepted.

So the question is: what were the real reasons which make the future official Christianity to prevail? Is its triumph due to cultural or social contingencies? To chance ? To the intrinsic force of every Truth?

The Church claims to assert its authority over the apostolic succession, but Gnosticism also derived its authority from a succession attached to the apostles. Externally, there was no evidence that one or the other branch was more faithful to the teaching of the Nazorene new Joshua. We can, of course, invoke the many "non-Jewish-Christian" influences that have contributed to shaping Gnosticism, but this does not change the problem; for official Christianity, too, was already beginning to incorporate into its doctrine, or into its practice, elements which can be described as "non-Judeo-Christian." The future official Christianity was a "possible" among others, because it fought a little against everyone at first. The confrontation will be its second nature. It fights first against Judaism to find an identity, what

involves the establishment of a hierarchy. The very existence of the Gnostics shows, however, that from the end of the second century onwards, the hierarchical structure which was thus established is contested by a certain number of believers. It should not be forgotten that, until the 4th century, Christians will live without places of worship other than private houses. There are also internal doctrinal reasons. Around the 140s, a number of Christians also realized, to quote only this case, that even baptized; finally a man remains just as pagan as before. These Christians will therefore reflect on the notion of baptism and on its consequences, for example the confession of sins. They shall begin by admitting it only once (cf. the apocryphal text the "Shepherd of Hermas"); then two centuries later, it will be asked to be reiterated every Sunday. But among the Basilidian Christians there is, on the contrary, an explicit criticism of this baptismal hierarchy, and of all these practices of continual confession of sins after baptism.

THE SECOND OR THIRD ORTHODOX MISSIONARY WAVE? APOLLOS, BARNABAS, PAUL, AND OTHERS.

A REMINDER OF THE JEWISH RELIGION AT THE TIME.

Like all the peoples of the Empire, the Jews - or rather, for the Romans, the Iudaei, "Judeans," inhabitants of Judea - had the right to follow their customs and to practice their religion, when they were not in contradiction with the Roman laws. Peregrines - that is, the foreigners living in Rome - have the same possibility. In addition, certain derogatory measures allow Jews to respect the imperatives of their faith and religious practices.

Caesar and Augustus recognize an official status for Jews that guarantees them the freedom to worship and live according to their customs: they can meet, respect the Sabbath rest, collect a worship tax for the temple in Jerusalem, and are subject to specific measures when their religion forbids them to follow the Roman way of life - for example, for the free distribution of wheat on the Sabbath. Flavius Josephus specifies indeed...

"Caius Caesar, our imperator and consul, in that decree wherein he forbade the Bacchanal rioters to meet in the city, did yet permit these Jews, and these only, both to bring in their contributions, and to make their common suppers" (Jewish Antiquities XIV, 215).

He speaks elsewhere of the "benevolence of the Romans" of that time, which was manifested in numerous decrees. The Romans respect a religion whose antiquity they recognized. Suetonius confirms these remarks:

"Cuncta collegia praeter antiquitus constituta distraxit." (Life of the Twelve Caesars, Caesar, 42).
"[Caesar] dissolved all guilds, except those of ancient foundation."

And Philo of Alexandria emphasizes the benevolence of Augustus (Legatio ad Gaium, 154 - 158) and finds no incompatibility between Jewish religious practice and "piety towards the family of Augustus" (In Flaccum, 49). Jews are not obliged to worship the emperor in their own temples, but they make sacrifices in his honor.

Foreign policy concerns are no doubt not unrelated to this tolerance: respecting Jewish customs in Jerusalem, like those of other peoples elsewhere, makes it possible to avoid armed conflict and to extend the Roman peace, the Pax Romana.

According to Suetonius, the Jews publicly show their sorrow at the death of Caesar...

"In summo publico luctu exterarum gentium multitudo circulatim suo quaeque more lamentata est praecipueque Iudaei, qui etiam noctibus continuis bustum frequentarunt." (Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Caesar LXXXIV)." At the height of the public grief, a throng of foreigners went about lamenting each after the fashion of his country, above all the Jews, who even flocked to the place for several successive nights."

Of course, this official policy would fluctuate from an emperor to an emperor...

Emperor Claudius intervened, for example, with the Alexandrians, in conflict with the Jews of this Egyptian city. The emperor's letter aims to keep peace by preserving both the traditional practices of the Jews - while limiting the growth of their population in the city - and the interests of those who oppose them. In the same year Claudius issued a decree of expulsion, to which Suetonius and a New Testament text, the Acts of the Apostles, testify: "Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome." However, one wonders whether this decree did not in fact concern Christians of Jewish descent, and this decision seems to have had limited effect.

The multiple movements of revolt which bloodied Judea, the uprising of 66, the war which followed and led to the capture of Jerusalem by Titus in 70, have undoubtedly also had an influence on relations between Jews and Romans, and, it may be supposed, on the life of the Jews in Rome, but do not seem to have led to the immediate abolition of religious liberty, nor of the specific rights of the

Jews in force since Caesar and Augustus. On the other hand, their status became problematic, especially after the three Jewish revolts (in 66-74, 116-117 and 132-135).

THE PROBLEM OF THE MESSAGE.

The importance of the person of Christ among the early Christians, as well as his role, aroused a problem in relation to the strict monolatry of Judaism at the time and to its rather selfish idea, of course, of a salvation brought by the Messiah ... only to the chosen people in the strict sense of the term (i.e., by matrilineal filiation according to the rabbis).

If Christ is not God, from the point of view of Judaism Christians have no right to worship Him. If they do, then it amounts to purely and simply performing a pagan cult.

If Christ is not God, and is only a man, even extraordinary, then what does distinguish Christianity that is to say the adoration of Christ, from paganism (seen and caricatured by Judaism)?

If Christ is not God, he cannot be the revelation of God.

If Christ is not God, believers are not united to God through communion with him.

Athanasius insisted particularly on the fact that if Christ is not God, men were not saved by God, because he designed salvation as a theiosis ("deification in the pagan theologies").

"If the Son were a creature, man had remained mortal as before, not being joined to God; for a creature had not joined creatures to God, as seeking itself one to join it ; nor would a portion of the creation have been the creation's salvation as needing salvation itself" (Discourse II against the Arians,69).

"So also the man had not been deified, unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to Him. For therefore the union was of this kind, that He might unite what is man by nature to Him who is in the nature of the Godhead, and his salvation and deification might be sure" (Discourse II against the Arians,70).

Now the idea that Christ was a mere creature, even an exceptional one, was contrary to this doctrine of pagan origin, and which formed the core of Christianity, which radically differentiated it from Judaism.

CONVERSIONS TO CHRISTIANITY.

In the history of religions individual conversion has always been the exception, the rule being collective conversion. By collective conversion we mean the conversion of the head of a family, a clan leader or a king. The same process will be found at work in all latitudes, whether in Ireland in the 5th century or in Arabia in the 7th century. Individual conversions exist mainly in Hollywood movies.

The centurion Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer of Philippi, Stephanas of Corinth, are baptized with all their oikos.?

The word oikos in ancient Greek means "house" or "household." In Ancient Greece, each person was attached to an oikos, a set of goods and people depending on the same place of habitation and production, a "household." It is both an extended family unit - from parents to slaves - and a unit of agricultural or artisanal production.

It is a structure that can be mobile, as illustrated by the story of the workshop of Aquila, which we follow from the Pontus to Rome, then to Corinth and Ephesus, and back to Rome.

Lydia's business is perhaps another example: Paul meets in Macedonia this merchant from Thyatira in Asia Minor; as she is lost from sight in Philippi, she is perhaps the one the author of the Apocalypse attacks in Thyatira at the end of the first century, for having introduced there the practices (admitted by Paul) of female prophecy and the consumption of sacrificial meats (idolothytes).

On her return to her homeland, she is said to have extended the Pauline network there.

So there could have been churches without a territory at that time.

The first conversions to Christianity of non-Jewish elements were therefore family or even collective conversions, even if our texts know only the name of the head of the family or of the master.

Legend has it that Christianity first seduced women and slaves, more surely the proselytes of the gate called " God-fearers " but who were not themselves strictly speaking Jews... The reality of the first centuries seems to have been somewhat different. The oft-cited case of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius, however, should have alerted us already in this field, since the rank of a centurion in the Roman army was very broad, the primipilus centurion was already an officer, a junior officer but an officer nonetheless .

We must wait until the 2nd century to find certain cases of individual conversions when the family is divided by this kind of situation, for example. Case of the family of Perpetua in Carthage.

While waiting when a father converts, the whole household follows, including servants and even slaves. The phenomenon will not be without importance because it will have as a consequence that the first Christian places of worship will be individual houses, coming under the private life of individuals, that the authorities respected in principle and by tradition.

In antiquity, the public authorities did not intervene in the private sphere unless there was a denunciation, so that freedom of expression and freedom of assembly could only be contested in the public space.

Let us not forget, moreover, that the Jewish religion was one of the religions officially recognized by the Roman Empire and that the first Christians fully benefited from this status during the first decades of their development.

EPHESUS AND CORINTH.

"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John..."

Apollos was therefore a Hellenized Jew from Alexandria, doubtless close to the Gnostic circles, and his influence was considerable. Some even think that he was the first to introduce elements of Greek paganism into Christianity, some fragments of mystery worship, that Paul was forced to keep among his own. According to Otto Pfliederer indeed, between the first and the second epistle to the Corinthians, it happened in Paul a sudden change of ideas, in a very spiritualist sense. Under the influence of Apollos, Paul also admitted the idea of ??the stay of the soul after death in an immaterial divine home (2 Corinthians 5,1-4) what was not an orthodox Jewish idea, the Judaism of the time being silent on the lot of the soul disembodied after death and speaking only of the resurrection of bodies.

Apollos was probably a Nazorene, having chosen the camp of the new Joshua. He loved public spars where he knew how to confound orthodox Jews. He loved to demonstrate to them that Jesus was the Messiah announced by their prophecies, but that does not mean that he was speaking only to them. The Greek verb used by Luke about Apollos, in its most well-known uses, means to talk whatever comes into your head, rather than with moderation. But Luke adds that Apollos taught "accurately." Would not be this subtle contradiction the sign of a criticism disguised as praise? There would have been a rivalry between him and Paul.

Apollos had found a lot of credit among the local churches, and there was no question of openly criticizing him. But we may wonder whether it was not he who was involved in the implications of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1, 12, 19-20, 31) and the more than acerbic remarks of his second epistle (2 Cor. 10:12, 16, 11, 4-6, 12-15). 1 Cor 16:12 and Titus 3:13 are, on the other hand, favorable to the aforementioned Apollos.

The first to organize or structure the Corinthian region was probably also Apollos (he knew only the baptism of John) in the early fifties. (See Acts 18, 24-28, 19, 4 and 1 Corinthians 1: 11-12.) He had been commissioned for this purpose by the Christians of Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila.

Paul succeeded in pushing part of the latter to dissent, and they eventually turned their back on Apollos in order to follow him; But an important part of this first Christian population remained nevertheless faithful to the first apostle of the city (see first letter to Corinthians 1: 11-12).

ANTIOCH.

The metropolis of Antioch had one of the most important Jewish communities in the Empire. Fifty thousand souls, it is believed, that is to say the tenth of its population. The Christian community in Antioch was founded after the persecution of the Hellenists in Jerusalem, following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 11:20).

According to a tradition preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea (Ecclesiastical History IV, 6) Luke was a native of Antioch...

The word Christian is not a word of Christian origin. The disciples referred to each other as "brethren," "disciples," "followers of the Path," "saints," but especially not "Christians." It is in non-Christian circles, of course, that this word arose.

The word "Christian" comes from the Greek *christos* (messiah, anointed) followed by a suffix, hence *christianus*. Originally, he referred to the messianic Jewish unrests in the reign of the Emperor Caligula. There are traces of them in Alexandria and Rome, without any connection with Jesus. In the third capital of the Empire, Antioch, the principal testimony is furnished by the Acts. It was here that the disciples of Jesus the Nazorene were described for the first time as "Christians" by the population or by the Roman authorities; who wanted to make fun of this group following a *chrestos* or "anointed" of God or even of the Demiurge (the term anointed, from the verb *anoint*, is taken here in the vulgar sense of "smeared with oil"). It is doubtful that the faithful gave themselves this name derived from *christos* with an ending meaning "partisan of." The appearance in this city of the word *christianos* (Acts 11:26) expresses rather the importance of the community. The term shows that in the eyes of outside people, Christians formed a separate group, comparable neither to the Jews nor to the Greeks. Good reasons make it possible beside to specify the hypothesis and to place the cradle of certain Gospels in Antioch. What favors the candidacy of Antioch is that the Gospel of Matthew shows both a close proximity to Judeo-Christian traditions and a keen sense of the universal mission of Christianity. Alone to evoke the limitation of Jesus's mission "to the lost sheep of Israel" (10: 5 ff., 15, 24) it is also the gospel which ends with the most general order: therefore go and make disciples of all nations... (28, 19).

The American specialist of the Second Temple period and rabbinic Judaism, Anthony J. Saldarini, of Boston University, even thinks that this gospel was aimed at a first type of Christianity, which I have not without humor called the Jesus tendency of Christianity, situated between Pagan-Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity.

For them it is not a question of abandoning the Law of Moses as in the case of Pagan-Christianity, nor of following it literally, as Jewish-Christianity would like, but of interpreting certain points of it.

Not being a specialist in the matter I can only refer our readers to Anthony Saldarini's book entitled *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* published in 1994.

All the more so since this tendency seems to have disappeared very early on and faded away in the face of Judaeo-Christianity Judaizing although speaking GREEK and in the face of Pagan-Christianity THAT WAS SPEAKING AS FOR IT ONLY IN GREEK, with one exception.

The life of Saint Euthymius (5th century) mentions a monk named Procopius whose first language was Celtic. This is paragraph LV (page 77 of the edition of Edward Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig, 1939).

The exact phrase is "His language was bound, he could no longer speak to us. If he was forced to do so, he spoke in the language of the Galatians".

Some of the Hellenists indeed spoke only to the Jews, but others ALSO spoke to the Greeks (Acts 11:20). This remark is important, for we will note thereafter at Antioch a constant tension between Judeo-Christians and Pagano-Christians. It seems indeed that it is in Antioch that two of the three "Christian" branches, that of the Judeo-Christians, on the one hand, and that of the pagan-Christians on the other; undertook a struggle that lasted at least a century, before ending in the compromise that are our gospels. A Jesus therefore universal, but deeply rooted in the Jewish world and the Old Testament. What is certain in any case is that the conversion of many "Greeks" formed an event; The

community of Jerusalem sent a trustworthy man in order to see what was happening and to make sure of the seriousness of the thing: Barnabas, a Levite and Hellenist from Cyprus ...

Acts of the Apostles 13: 1-3 " Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Menachem (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13: 2-3) ...

The laying on of the hands shows that the whole community is committed to the mission. We guess that it will concretely provide the missionaries with the travel provisions necessary for the expenses of the journey. The same will apply to other missions. The text is very revealing of the mystical climate in which the liturgical life of these early Hellenist or of pagan origin Christians took place. During the vigil, the Holy Spirit seizes one of the women present and prophesies through his mouth. We are there very close to what will later be called "the New Prophecy" (Montanism).

BARNABAS.

The name Barnabas comes from the Aramaic "bar-nabi" which literally means "son of the prophet." But what prophet? John? Behind the name of Barnabas indeed we can guess a master, a spiritual father; especially as according to Peter, Barnabas was a disciple since the baptism of John, that is to say, since John had baptized in the waters of the Jordan.

"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barnabas (Barsabbas) also known as Justus and Matthias" (Acts 1: 21-23).

Barnabas was a member of a very ancient Jewish family who was able to prove its membership of the tribe of Levi. Among the liturgical functions assumed by the Levites was the recitation of the Psalms and the purification of the people before the great feasts. John the Baptist, as a cohen (priest), belonged to the tribe of Levi. That he drew on the banks of the Jordan, some Levites like Barnabas, would not be surprising. On the other hand, the Pharisees observed a certain distance with respect to him.

A year after his arrival in Antioch (Acts 11:26), Barnabas and Paul, another Nazorene activist, were sent by this young Church as missionaries to Cyprus (Acts 13: 1-12); then in several cities of the Anatolian plateau * (Acts 13, 13-14, 28). The cooperation with Barnabas enabled the young Saul to refine his method and particularly to learn how to use the framework offered by the synagogues to find an audience well prepared to receive his preaching. Their success also with the pagans, well received by the Christian Nazorenes of Antioch, having aroused hesitation from brethren come from Judea (Acts 15: 1-2); they went to Jerusalem to fight their case before the apostles and the elders (Acts 15: 3-4). The two accounts that the New Testament retained of this meeting (Galatians 2: 1-10; Acts 15: 4-29) present many contradictions. It is likely that a compromise was reached between those who wanted to impose on the converts of pagan origin the adherence to Judaism and those who, like Barnabas and Saul, considered that it was not necessary.

* Were these cities located south of the Anatolian plateau or further north?

The question may arise given the importance that the Galatian question would later take on in Saint Paul's life?

It is, in any case, impossible to suppose the epistle addressed to all the churches of Galatia at the same time, because those of the north and those of the south were not founded at the same time and presented significantly different physiognomies.

The meagre indications gleaned here and there do not tell us anything about the region in which to look for the Galatian churches. Paul, it is true, was in the habit of using the administrative names of the Roman provinces, but this habit does not allow us to draw any definite conclusions, for we cannot see which term other than Galatian could have designated the region of Ancyra alone. On the other hand, it would be strange if the name of the whole province had been used to designate only the southern parts of the province, when they had only recently become part of Galatia.

The Book of Acts never uses the term Galatia where the churches of the south are undoubtedly mentioned, and in the two passages where the term "Galatian region" is used (Acts 16:6; Acts 18:23), it is a country evangelized after the second visit to the churches of southern Galatia. There is, at least, a presumption in favor of the theory of Northern Galatia. Other indications point in the same direction.

a. It would be strange if Paul, writing to churches among which was the church of Antioch of Pisidia, simply said Antioch to refer to Antioch of Syria (Galatians 2:11) ;

b. in his allusion to the evangelization of Galatia (Galatians 4:13), Paul does not mention Barnabas, who in the first missionary journey had been his associate and not his subordinate;

c. at least the majority of the readers of the epistle are of Gentile origin, whereas, according to Acts 13-14, there seems to have been a noticeable proportion of former Jews in the churches of southern Galatia ;

d. Paul had been well received by the Galatians (Galatians 4:14); the account in Acts, on the contrary, gives the impression that he had encountered great difficulties in evangelizing southern Galatia.

The only objection that could be made to the theory of northern Galatia is the almost total silence of Acts on the foundation of the churches in this region. The difficulty would be serious if the Acts of the Apostles gave a complete and coherent account of all Paul's activity, but this is far from being the case. In these circumstances, we have no hesitation in considering the epistle as being addressed to the churches in the Ancyra region that Paul had founded during the first part of his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6), probably in the summer of 49 and that he had visited again at the beginning of his third journey (Acts 18:23), between the spring of 52 and the spring of 53.

MENACHEM.

A man named Menachem, name given by Jesus as being that of the Comforter to come (the very meaning of the name Menachem) in the Gospel according to John (the paraclete), is therefore mentioned by Luke among the prophets who came and founded the community in Antioch . He would even have been a foster brother of Herod. There are only two possible solutions.

- It is a misunderstanding and therefore a bad translation of the term meaning paraclete.

-It is indeed a flesh-and-blood man, but so named.

In any case, if the editor of the Acts mentions him thus, on an equal footing with Barnabas, it is because he recognized him as a very important personage, also associated with the spirit of truth.

ST. PAUL.

Paul was one of the principal propagators and theorists of incipient Christianity, and it is not for nothing that his letters are part of the New Testament on an equal footing with the Gospels. Nevertheless, after much hesitation, we resolved to devote a (sub) chapter to the work of this missionary annexed by the Hellenists of Antioch under the name of Saul / Paul. In spite of the doubts and the many uncertainties which weigh upon the life and the real work of this mysterious author of letters, of which we have only the versions disclosed for the first time by Marcion around 140.

We do not know much about his biography in reality, the only details we can have being either in the Acts of the Apostles or in his epistles and ultimately in the texts of which the future "heretic" Marcion was the first publisher (and manipulator?)

We may even wonder whether Paul was really Jewish, given the incredible anti-Semitism of some of his letters. For example, the first of these he wrote to the Thessalonians, and of which the verses 13-17 of his chapter II, are really shocking by their anti-Semitism (unless they were added after the fall of Jerusalem - see the wrath of God - after 70 of course). Nor are we sure of his status as a Roman citizen.

He knew, it seems, Aramaic and Hebrew. But his mother tongue was Greek, and it is in the translation of the Septuagint that he reads the Bible. He adds to his Hebrew name, Saul, the Roman cognomen of Paulus. He has been influenced, perhaps quite deeply, by the environment in which he grew up, and his Christianity bears the stamp of Hellenistic religiosity.

The conversion of Paul is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles:

" As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything "(Acts 9: 3-9). Then he was cured by a disciple living in Damascus: Ananias. He converted to Christianity and was baptized.

The admission of the future Saint Paul into the Christian community by Ananias at Damascus did not raise any objection of principle since he was Jewish, but it nevertheless aroused surprise and fear. Ananias was an early convert, but a divine order was necessary so that he decides to admit Paul, who will present himself as the beneficiary of the last apparition of Jesus and therefore the equal of an apostle. After his conversion, Paul stayed some time in Damascus, then in Arabia, then in Jerusalem, then in Tarsus, before being invited by Barnabas to Antioch.

The most confusing of all the enigmas aroused by the character (Saul - Paul) remains nevertheless that of his teaching. From where does he hold it? Not from Jesus, even indirectly, since Saul was converted only after the stoning of Stephen, that is to say in 32-34, therefore two to four years after the Crucifixion. Certainly not from the Gospels, which had not yet been composed on that date. From Luke, then, who will be an episodic companion? He meets him only fifteen years after his conversion. Was he then convinced by the preaching that the apostles dispensed throughout Palestine? Neither, since he will be very anti-Christian up to the so-called road to Damascus.

The exegetes only touched upon the subject, explaining the conversion by a long inner thought process, almost a kind of imperceptible infiltration of the word from Jesus. It will be admitted, however, that the affair is singular. Indeed, here is a man who goes all over the world, preaching, most often at the risk of his life, the rallying to a Messiah, of whom he knows only what is said of him, and still very little; for he is ignorant of him, and the parables and the attitudes, as well as the miracles ascribed to him by the preachers.

He himself blurs the tracks; he assures that the knowledge he has of Jesus he does not hold it from any man. We would readily believe him, if we were the slightest bit inclined to believe in supernatural transmissions of knowledge. The trouble is that this knowledge is very meager, as we have seen above. In other words, Saul preaches for a teaching that he misunderstands. This is a fascinating case. Why did not Saul clearly say that he really saw Jesus, and where? It is because, if he did that, he would cancel the object of the mission he had assigned himself: to conquer the Roman world. If he declares that he has met Jesus in flesh and blood, it is because this one had long survived the Crucifixion; what the Gospels besides imply (except the passage of the Ascension, added lately to Mark), when they describe the last meeting of the apostles with Jesus in Palestine. If Jesus was simply human, would he have been objected to, what do you come to tell us about his divinity and his resurrection? Here he is the prisoner of his secret. He draws his upper hand as an apostle from the fact that he has seen Jesus, but if he details his meeting, he loses it. It is therefore necessary for him to keep a certain chiaroscuro, which is well the case indeed, besides, of the Epistles.

Would Saul hold his teaching from Jesus personally ? If so, the problem did not go away for then Jesus would have very badly instructed him. And even would have instructed him wrongly unless he had changed his mind after the Crucifixion. The refusal to take care of the child of the Syrophenician woman expresses unambiguously the refusal of Jesus to preach to non-Jews: "it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (Mark 7:27) he said with a surprising contempt (cf. Matthew 7:6, "do not throw your pearls to pigs,") before yielding nevertheless to compassion. But Saul preaches obstinately to non-Jews. Obviously, as we saw above, Saul does not really know the teaching of Jesus.

In his Epistles (2 Corinthians 12: 2-9), Saul, speaking of himself, wrote: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but Elohim know— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be

speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord (Adon) to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

What emerges from this exceptional mixture of pathos and gibberish, quite comparable to the case of Muhammad ;in which Saul claims not to tell the truth because it would be too flattering for him, but in which he goes so far as to confess private interviews with God or the Demiurge; It is because Saul suffers from a mysterious illness, since it is defined only as a "thorn in my flesh."

Two deductions are nevertheless necessary: ??the disease is chronic and it is the mind of the apostle that it affects, since, according to the very terms of the text, quite immodest, by the way, it participates in the "power" of Saul. They are certainly not hemorrhoids or furunculosis, for example. The expression several times repeated " whether in the body or apart from the body ? " implies that the disease in question involves some blanks, during which Saul has these celestial visions. The hypothesis of epilepsy was rejected because it would explain nothing. It seems, on the contrary, that it would explain many Saul's traits, especially his irritability, which led him to different quarrels with Peter and James, and the religiosity, which is a notorious trait of epileptoid behavior. It is not, then, a disease without effect on the life of the apostle, but on the contrary a fundamental component of his life, and hence of his activity as a traveling preacher.

None of the gospels speaks of Paul, yet , even using official Christian chronology, they were written well after his epistles. What is also curious is that neither Justin, Hegesippus, Papias, nor Polycrates of Ephesus speaks of Paul. The Acts, on the other hand, speaks of him for a long time, but omit every reference to his letters.

The Paul of the Epistles differs greatly from the Paul of the Acts, who is much more conformist, and is ultimately a pious Jew, not very different from the others. This is probably due to the intervention of Marcion who had to select or rewrite his letters. Hence the increased gap between the Paul of the Letters and the Paul of the Acts. Paul was diehard when he persecuted Christians, including by collaborating in the death of Stephen: " The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. And Saul approved of their killing him " (Acts 7: 58-8,1). This martyrdom of Stephen had long haunted Saul and this remorse, aide by epilepsy, of course, prepared his later visions.

The leaning which will later be called Pauline is a moderate tendency of Christian Gnosticism, opposing the extreme or most radical forms of this Gnosticism, of which; however, it shares many ideas.

The very origins of these leanings are problematic, what is not the least difficulty to understand the birth of Christianity, since the work of St. Paul was precisely at the origin of it.

After getting rid of his competitors, Barnabas and Apollos, Paul will become a Spiritual Master of local Christian communities, where his knowledge, his gnosis, will be scrupulously studied, taught and distributed. Paul's letters were kept in the communities he had founded or which used his name, what explains the documentation that Marcion and his successors got. Tertullian knew this well because he called Paul "apostle of the heretics"; what is to admit that these "heretics" found their doctrines confirmed by the Epistles of Paul, which, on the other hand, contained no opinion or belief contrary to theirs, that is to say, no Judeo-Christian opinion. It is therefore not useless, in these conditions, before specifying the articles of faith of Marcion, to seek to know what this "heretical" teaching of Paul was

Paul, like the Hellenists before him, recruited mainly from the pagans "God fearers" gravitating around the synagogues of the Diaspora, but in Jerusalem the intervention of Barnabas was necessary so that the disciples agree. Paul will encounter the hostility not only of the non-Christian Jews, but of some of the Judeo-Christians, who will be called later "Judaizers." The latter will probably be at the origin of his arrests and consequently of his martyrdom (in Rome in 67 ???).

This hostility of the Judaizers Christians towards Paul originated in the difficult problem posed to the Church, almost exclusively composed of Jews in its beginnings, by the conversion of the pagans. The

Judeo-Christians of Jerusalem, while admitting the legitimacy of the conversion of the pagans, remained strictly attached to the Law. Even converted, the Jews of Jerusalem did not abandon their sense of being superior as a chosen people, and the belief in a Messiah named Jesus seemed to them inseparable from the integral practice of the Law of Moses.

Paul speaks "in the synagogues of the Jews" (Acts 13: 5): "Fellow Children of Abraham and you God-fearing Pagans." We see then that "God fearers" are, as it should be, present in the synagogue and the Jews do not seem to protest when Paul also speaks to them. When they leave (verse 43) many of the Jews and "devout converts to Judaism" follow Paul. The latter are undoubtedly "God-fearers," therefore some pagans.

But why does the situation change abruptly in the following verses? "Almost the whole city gathered" (it is not specified whether it is in the synagogue), and "when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying"

One thing to consider is that, as noted above, the notion of "God-fearer" is vague. Perhaps, instead of the habitual regular sympathizers, we saw the crowd of all the people with a certain curiosity for Judaism, coming, or, according to the Acts, "almost the whole city." Note also that the first speech of Paul, as reported, includes phrases difficult to accept by the Jews: "the justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses (verse 38), etc." When Paul proclaims "We now turn to the Pagans," he wants to say perhaps: I will now speak to them out of the synagogue, since you, Jews, "you reject the word of God."

In order to replace circumcision, Christians of the Pauline branch will come down very early to a baptism with the spirit or pneuma (in Greek language) instead of the simple baptism with water, of John. This design of the Pauline School of a baptism with the spirit makes it possible to see how the Sophia-Spirit of the Gnostics was gradually changed into a mother and a virgin; (let us point out that the only historical elements about the existence of Christ in the letters attributed to Paul are his birth, his life of practicing Jewish, and his crucifixion). All this has obviously been accompanied by an intense doctrinal work, especially in the translations or vocabulary equivalences.

The initial situation was very clear. (Unconscious?) Jesus's racism had caused him to care only about the destiny of the chosen people. (Matthew 10: 5-6): " "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans ... It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs " (Matthew 15:24).

The Christians of pagan origin therefore had to rewrite the facts and saying of Jesus by adding a slogan justifying their existence and their positions. If it is not Marcion who did, it can be any other of his predecessors in Antioch.

.....
The epistles of Paul that we have give to us only a mutilated Paulinism. When we read them as they are, we find such serious contradictions in the thought of Paul that we are led to conclude that they are the result of a certain rewriting.

If the word "monotheism" means that there is only one invisible being, having power over human beings, then we can say, as we have already seen in our essay on, or more exactly against, Judaism, that ancient Israel was not monotheistic. The majority of honest and serious scholars admit now that the Old Testament was not "monotheistic" but "monolatrous." Israel worshiped only YHWH, not because he was the only god-or-demon, "real" or "true" or "existing," but because he was the only god-or-demon to be honored for the sons of Israel under the contract or covenant concluded on the Horeb / ??Sinai.

The exclusive worship of YHWH for Israel resulting from this "contract" goes back (at least) to Deuteronomy and the reform of Josiah in - 621. This cult was based on the idea that YHWH possessed the territory over which Israel lived, so that "titles and offerings" were like a kind of "rent" due to the rightful owner. This idea is not exceptional in the ancient world and corresponded, for example, to the place gods of paganism.

The idea is widened in the Coronation Psalms calling all peoples to turn to YHWH in order to be saved, and / or to honor only him; and in "2 Isaiah" where the idea that YHWH is not only the Lord of the land of Israel but also the creator of the whole universe (demiurge) is developed. It then becomes the rational foundation of the hope of the "last day" when "all peoples" will submit to his authority, because they live and work on his land. As we have had the opportunity to write it in our paper about ,

or more exactly, against, Judaism, true monotheism, philosophical and well thought out, was a novelty among the Hebrews, and its diffusion therefore remained incomplete. See, for example, the case of the Samaritans. Judaism of the Second Temple is consequently more complex than it is generally imagined, and orthodox Judaism or Christianity will only be really separated in the second century of our era.

Some authors such as Daniel Boyarin go as far as to speak of Binitarianism to evoke the position of Philo and his relation to the Logos (God's word), but also that which is described in certain parts of the Gospel according to John. To suppose the present Judaism as a norm before 70 is a big mistake, it is to promote the anachronism up to the rank of scientific truth. The idea of a late "Christianity" genetically foreign to the Jewish world of the first century, and whose germ is to be found in Paul, is based on a simplistic view of the pre-Constantinian Judaism; distributed by a rabbinical theology that is more interested in making the Judeo-Christian current and all the Jewish diversity of the first centuries, non-Judaism, Hellenisms, treason, syncretisms. Judaism and Christianity of the first century remained closely linked, well beyond the first part of the second century; In fact, until rabbinical Judaism ended in persuading itself that it formed a community pure of all Hellenism.

The anthropomorphism of the Roman worship of the emperors is not the only cause of the deification of Jesus. This hypothesis is in fact based on the prejudice that none of the "pre-rabbinic" Judaism would be different enough from post-Christian rabbinism to authorize the "deification" of a man imagined as "son of El," "Messiah King" "High Priest" or "Lord." Now, as we have seen in our essay about Judaism, the world of ideas in the Palestine at that time was far from being so simplistic; there were many very various currents of thought within Judaism itself.

Was Paul a true monotheist? In some places he speaks of the "one god" (1 Cor 8, 4: there is no God but one); yet he knows that there exist "many gods and many lords" (1 Cor 8: 5), "a ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2: 2), "a god, who created all things" which, however, has ignored "the mystery of Christ, which for ages past was kept hidden" (Eph 3: 9). Does Paul speak of the creating demiurge of this wicked and plain stupid world or of the true highest god or demon father of Christ? Finally "the principalities and the heavenly authorities" (Eph 3:10). The question is not whether Paul preaches what our contemporaries understand through the terms God and Monotheism, but what could mean raising someone to the rank of "theos" in his day? The whole problem is therefore to understand the meaning of this Greek word (theos) for men of the first century of our era.

Apparently, "good Jews" (Philo) could speak of the Word (Logos) as a second God or Demiurge (deuteros theos); at least as what will be called later, following Plotinus, a hypostasis (Philo in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim* 2, 62).

Why is it that he speaks as if of some other god, saying that he made man after the image of God, and not that he made him after his own image? (#Ge 9:6). Very appropriately and without any falsehood was this oracular sentence uttered by God, for no mortal thing could have been formed on the similitude of the supreme Father of the universe, but only after the pattern of the second deity, who is the Word of the supreme Being.

In short, Philo, in order to defend the letter of his sacred text, came to postulate, like the Greek druids (or high knowers) of his time or before him, that between the ineffable unspeakable supreme being, etc. and man, there had to be intermediaries whatever their name (angel vyaah hypostasis). With the case of Philo the proof is thus made that certain currents of Judaism could consequently admit that there was a second "god" in the image of man in a way, when the points of view are reversed.

But had St. Paul read Philo?

As we have seen, we find in the 2 Isaiah the hope that a day will come when all the peoples / nations of the Earth will submit to the god-or-demon of Israel and will admit him as their "lord." We can therefore suppose that this is also the basic idea on which Paul founds his action. Such a step is still some "monolatry," not some philosophical and thought out monotheism.

In 1 Cor 8, Paul admits that there are "many gods" but that "for us" it is different. It also looks very henotheistic, if we take this literally. After this at first glance henotheistic statement, Paul clarifies his point of view on these "gods." They are demons (1 Cor 10,18 ff.), and not deities. But is this clarification sufficient?

A more acute exegesis of 1 Cor 8: 4-6 should be performed taking into account 1 Cor 10: 19-20. " Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. "

Paul is consequently well henotheistic; he believes that entities other than the god-or-demon of Israel have also power over men; he believes in the efficacy of the sacrifices offered to idols in order to put someone in touch with these supernatural entities; and that to eat the meat of these sacrifices would put his faithful in relation with these gods of others, renamed "demons."

The previous reflections, therefore, lead us to draw, in Paul, the outlines of a Christology that is not as ontological as it is generally thought ... If Paul used scriptural declarations to apply the word *theos* (god) to Jesus, it is by understanding this word as many passages of the Old Testament do, an angelic being, created and governed by YHWH. Verse 2, 6 of the letter to Philippians does not affirm the divinity of Jesus as it is generally believed, for the Greek expression "*en morpheï theou*" means in the strict sense of the term "in the form of God" in other words "in the image of God ."

Let us allow Paul that only the superior god-or-demon, unknown, and distant father of Christ, was important for him; and that as among the Gnostics, for him the other deities proved to be of secondary order since they belonged to the cosmos.

Sirach (24, 6-9) presents Wisdom as created by God before all things. The initial affirmation that Christ is "the image of the invisible god" is imitated from Wisdom 7:26: " She's a mirror that flawlessly reflects God's activity. She's the perfect image of God's goodness " . Identified with Wisdom, this means, in the mind of Paul, that Jesus participates in creation, and therefore that he is previous to all that exists. Verse 19: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell [*katoikesai*] in him " means that this Wisdom dwells in Christ in a supernatural way, just as God's Spirit dwells [*oikei*] in each of us (1 Co 3.16).

The difficulties concerning the edition of the letter to Romans (among others the probable addition of chapter XVI) and the letters to Titus or Timothy show that this doxology was introduced by later generations; and therefore that it corresponds to a later theology. The doctrine was constructed progressively, according to the reflection worked out by later generations.

The present text of Paul's letters mentions 200 times Christ and only 12 times Jesus, each time in an awkward way, by joining it to the word Christ (Christ-Jesus or Jesus Christ) as if the word "Jesus" had been added afterwards in his text by a foreign hand ...

Another example. In Ephesians 3: 9 : "to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms... »

What rulers, what authorities?

This sentence looks very gnostic.

Paul, on the other hand, never wanted to make a radical distinction between Judaism and Christianity. It is sufficient to be convinced of this to read the chapters IX to XI of the Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle dismisses the idea that the Covenant between YHWH and Israel would have been canceled because of the infidelity of the Jews. The hardening of the majority of the members of the chosen people facing the new Joshua is, according to Paul, only an episode of a long and lively history. The God or Demiurge of Paul wanted to allow the pagans access to this status, but the non-Jews won over to this ideology must be grafted onto the old tree that bears all the branches, whether old or new. Paul expresses besides his certainty that the partial hardening which has struck Israel is not definitive, and that one day "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 2: 25-26). If we take into account the fact that, almost everywhere, Paul began by going to the synagogue to preach the Gospel there (Acts 13,14;14,1; 16,13; 17,1-3,10,17 ; 18,4; 19,8); And left this favored place only under duress to go elsewhere in order to organize a Christian community where Jews and pagans would coexist; It will be admitted that the apostle of the pagans himself had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing or opposing Christianity and Judaism. In Damascus before becoming acquainted with Ananias, Paul had probably visited some Essenes from whom he would withdraw expressions such as "New Covenant." Thus communities of Jewish origin, always following certain precepts of Judaism, will ensure the relay between the initial message of Jesus and the first pagan expressions of Christianity.

As we have already seen it, Paul never speaks of the birth of Jesus the Nazorene (whom he never met). Ephes 3: 3: " the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly). He speaks of a timeless, ethereal, mythical Christ, not of Jesus true man, author of miracles before thousands of people, and crucified by Pilate. For Paul, Jesus is not a man who has lived or taught, he is an angelic or divine being.

Paul ignores all of the existence of the man Jesus of the Gospels, of his relationship with Herod or Pilate, of his death and resurrection. He knew only the supernatural descent of the heavenly Christ, and his temporary change into a man in order to speak with men. He never used the famous expression "Son of Man." Paul never uses the phrase "Jesus said" or "Jesus did" or "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Jesus of Bethlehem."

And for good reason ! The four gospels of Mark, Luke, Matthew and John (where the character of Christ will take shape) will be written later ... Paul never quotes places as essential as Nazareth, Bethlehem, the Golgotha ??... Paul never visits Bethlehem ,never goes in Nazareth and very late only in Jerusalem, where he does not bother to inquire about a certain Jesus. Paul thinks he will still be alive when Jesus comes down from heaven ... (1 Thess 4:15). There is, moreover, a great number of contradictions between the writings of Paul and the three synoptic gospels. Paul speaks of a cosmic Christ, without carnal existence. He anxiously expects his return, which is near. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tries to convince the reader that human beings can rise from death: why does he not speak of Jesus himself or of Lazarus? When Paul speaks of the baptism of Christians; why does he not speak of the baptism of Jesus and John?

Paul's letters contain some significant, though veiled as it should be, evocations of a certain Gnostic esotericism. " I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly..." (1 Corinthians, 3. See the concept of "hylic" in the Gnostics). Obvious influence of the mystery religions of the time, Paul also mentions (Ephesians 3: 4-5) " the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations." As for the Gnostics, the Christ of St. Paul is an "eon." It is an "eon" that appeared to him on the way to Damascus (and in no way the earthly Jesus of the Gospels, who is late to him) that's all! For the Greek word *aion*, of course, can mean something like "time, eternity, life," but its use in Paul's letters poses a serious problem of translation. With the word "eon," the Gnostics of the time, and God knows if there were any at that time, understood, in fact, systematically, "divine emanation, intermediary between the higher God-or-demon and the present world "(see Tertullian, Praescr. 7).

For example, Christ was considered an eon by the Gnostics named Saturninus, Basilides, Valentinus, and many others. Is the systematic translation of this Greek word by the Latin *saeculum* (century) or any other allusion to a question of time, really honest on the behalf of the Christians as regards the letters of St. Paul?

Romans, chapter I, 25. An interpretation in the sense "who is praised through these divine emanations" (eons) is very possible. This passage of St. Paul could very well be only a long polemic against certain Gnostic rivals and their manners.

1 Timothy 1:17. An interpretation of Christ as king of divine emanations - eons - is also very possible. What would give us: " To the King of eons, immortal, invisible, the only [true] God, be honor and glory for all his eons. Amen !"

2 Timothy 4,18. An interpretation in "To him be the glory of all these divine emanations –eons-" is also very possible.

Hebrews 5, 6. A Gnostic conception of the style "You are a priest in the manner of a divine emanation, in the manner of Melchizedek" is not to be excluded.

Philippians 4:20. A view of the kind, "To Our God and Father, be the glory of the divine emanations and the emanations of these emanations – eons- is also a conceivable Gnostic interpretation.

1 Corinthians 2: 6-8. Not the wisdom of this eon or of the rulers of this eons - would be a quite plausible interpretation instead of the word "age" and would place this writing in the context of a polemic against certain Christian Gnostics (Apollos??? It was a Jew from Alexandria who knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:24).

Galatians 1: 5. " To whom be glory through the eons" is a very plausible interpretation.

The allusion just after to the possibility that an angel would announce a gospel might very well make this passage a polemic against certain Christian Gnostics rather than against some Judeo-Christians, as we have long believed. The threat, a few lines later, of the use of anathema, which in principle could not apply to Jews, is consistent with this interpretation.

Moreover for some authors Paul's Epistle to the Colossians has also incontestable Gnostic leanings. The theology of the Colossians, that it is cosmology, Christology, soteriology, this way of thinking that Jesus is at the center of a cosmological and anthropological system that allows the salvation of the world; all that forms a system which, indeed, can be compared with the numerous Gnostic systems of the second century. In the writings of Paul, the gnosis is the knowledge of God; and it is opposed to the "ignorance of God" (agnosia theou, cf. 1 Thess 4: 5, 2 Thess 1: 8, Ga 4, 8 and 1 Tim 6: 20). God is known (gnotos) through his works (cf. Romans 1, 19-32). Generally, Paul's position, which was largely that of Marcion, may be summarized as follows. The apostle had the revelation of the salvation brought by Christ, either through enlightenment, vision, or initiation (Paul declares this mystery "for ages past kept hidden in God"); and has decided to reveal it in turn, in order to transmit to men "the mysterious wisdom of God hidden before time began."

" Being in the form of God, he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

He has been "habitu inventus ut homo" (Phil 2: 7), but Paul's Christ was by no means a man; He was before all things (Col 1: 16-17), He was the great god of the Christians and their savior (Titus 2: 13-14 and 3: 6). It was to him that their worship and their prayers were addressed. For Paul, Christ was the image of the invisible god; He called him Kyrios (Lord), a word which, in the Greek translation of the Septuagint, designated Yahweh. He declares that "the fullness of the deity" dwells in him (Col. 2: 9) and that all angels must worship him.

One of the essential points of his doctrine was crucifixion, but a crucifixion that was both celestial, mythological and symbolic (Gal 3: 1). And this spectacle must not be first and foremost terrifying, since on the contrary Paul boasts in that cross of Christ by whom the world is crucified (Galatians 6:14). Further, Paul asserts (Col. 2:15) that Christ abolished the Jewish Law by nailing it on the cross; we are very far from the sign bearing the words "Jesus the Nazorene, King of the Jews"; We are in another world, and Paul adds: " Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

These statements are absolutely incompatible with the classical evangelical account of the Passion. Paul knew only one gospel, that of Christ, and he did not know our four present gospels, those of Jesus. Despite the reworking of the epistles, we can realize that Paul knew only Christ, whereas the Gospels, instead, celebrate rather Jesus. The expressions "for Christ," "in Christ," "Christ," "with Christ," "the body of Christ," "the gospel of Christ" , " Christ is dead ." Paul never wrote, "Jesus said," "Jesus was born," "Jesus answered," "Jesus of Nazareth (or of Bethlehem)", "The Gospel of Jesus" Jesus is dead ." Jesus is named almost in every line of the Gospels while Christ is found only six times in Mark and ten to twelve times in Matthew or Luke. The fusion between Christ and Jesus could succeed only by the insertion in the Pauline epistles of the name of Jesus in a twisted form "Christ Jesus" first, "Jesus Christ" afterwards. Now, this name composed for the purpose in hand, is almost unknown in the New Testament outside the Epistles.

It is very probably through this artificial merger between Christ and Jesus that a part of the myth of Christ may have been mingled in our gospels with the more or less legendary story of a certain Jesus. Remarkable fact, while the central character of the Pauline religion is Christ, and consequently Christ should predominate largely in the Gospels (especially in that of Marcion-Luke), the reverse is true. Jesus is found there more than a hundred times, Christ a dozen times.

We have seen that there existed "a mystery of Christ" and that Paul was the dispenser of it (Romans 11:25, 16: 25, 1 Cor 15: 51, Eph 3: 3, 9, Col. 1: 27) among the Pagans. Did he intend to reveal to the common people the secrets of his initiation? Did he want, on the contrary, proportion the revelation according to the degree of science or wisdom (gnosis) to which his listeners had come? Perhaps he went to preach in the public squares of the pagan cities the principal points of his doctrine; But that did not prevent him probably from classifying his faithful into several groups, and to reserve his most secret teaching to the "spiritual" or "perfect" (1 Cor 3: 1, 2, 6). Following the example of the Essenes and of the Hellenists, his Jewish and Hellenized Christianity began by reserving the pistis (faith or belief) to his simple basic believers, and the gnosis (true knowledge) to the highest members in his hierarchy.

As we have seen, there have always existed in Christian Gnosticism two different types of moral behavior.

This of the hedonic Gnosticism. The superior souls, those of the pneumatics or spirituals, being predestined, in a way, to the heavenly higher spheres, they can do whatever they like with their bodies; this has no importance, and will in no way affect the salvation to which they are destined.

This of the ascetic Gnosticism. It is important to control and chastise the body to make the soul able to finally reach the higher spheres of heavenly type.

Paul must be a member of the ascetic sensitivity of the Christian Gnosticism, since in Corinth he will rise up against the conceptions of these Gnostic Christians of hedonistic leanings.

1 Corinthians 5: 1: " It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate."

N.B. The epistle of Jude in the New Testament targets certainly also the Christians of the same kind, subject to various ecstasies during their meal of commensality with the god-or-devils called the Eucharist. " In like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh" (Jude 8). " These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm" (Jude 12).

Let us make clear lastly that Paul, of course, did not know the mass; it was instituted by the Church very long after him. The worship of the Christians of the time of Paul was already only partly that of the synagogues. It included psalms, hymns, songs (Col. 3:16), but not the reading of sacred texts.

The end of the career of the Apostle of the non-Jews is very little known. He was escorted to Rome, where he remained under house arrest for at least two years, awaiting for his trial before the Imperial Court (Acts, chapters 27 and 28). The abrupt end of the Book of Acts does not allow us to say more. In other words, his great missionary career came to an end when he was arrested in Jerusalem around 58, and his action never had the same extent afterwards.

From the point of view of his participation in Christian expansion in the first century, the Apostle Paul was not the exceptional personage that it is sometimes imagined because of the place that his letters occupy today in the New Testament. His contribution to the spread of the Gospel remained regional and his own activity lasted only a dozen years. It would also be wrong to believe that Paul was the founder of Christian theology. His doctrinal contribution, which complements only that of the first Church in Caesarea or Antioch, deals only with two points: the appropriation of salvation and his conception of the local Churches. On these two subjects, the Epistle to the Romans is very clear. These two great ideas reflect the experience of a man anxious to make Jews and non-Jews, won over to Christ, coexist and co-operate daily.

At the moment when the apostle Paul disappears, the half-dozen of local Churches which are faithful to him constitute only a small isolated nucleus in the midst of fifty to one hundred local communities, all of them more or less dependent of Jerusalem; and consequently very cautious with regard to the ideas of Paul or his thirst for independence from the synagogues.

The early Church indeed was quickly divided into two currents.

- The initial current, that of Jerusalem, more formal, more attached to the letter of the Jewish Law, and to the prerogatives of the chosen people (Israel).
- That of Caesarea then of Antioch, more accessible to the universal idea, and more welcoming to pagans.

These churches did not return into the bosom of the synagogues, in which their Christian brethren of other obedience had remained. After a few years of self-effacement coinciding with the national catastrophe of Judaism in 70, and with its immediate consequences; we see them gradually becoming bold and presenting to their members, or to other Christians, an apology for the existence of Christian communities distinct from the synagogues. Circa 80 - 85, "the work for Theophilus," composed of the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, gives a new scope to the first outline of the Gospel, published thirty years earlier in the Hellenistic circles. Two great ideas preside over the composition of this work and especially the Acts of the Apostles. The first is that it is Paul - not James - who is the true continuator of Peter and of the Twelve. The second is that the teaching of Christ has deeply Jewish roots.

It is therefore a defensive strategy, and this argument reflects the inferiority complex of a minority faced with a huge majority, still closely linked to the synagogues. It makes a fanatic like Paul an almost

conformist Jew. The Acts of the Apostles speak more of the dreads and fears of the heirs to Paul who wrote this book than of Paul himself.

The memory of Paul, after his death, seems to have undergone, a kind of eclipse for a hundred years. In the years that followed the publication of this work (the book to Theophilus that is to say the Gospel according to Luke and Acts), the heirs to Paul will nevertheless be bold a little more. Even if some disagreements persist on this point, it can be said without imprudence that, about 85-90, the churches faithful to Paul's memory also dared to put into circulation some small writings placed under the name of their Master; although he is not the true author of them. In order to propagate ideas about the organization of the churches and the morals to improve in them. These themes are characteristic of independent groups, obliged to concern themselves concretely with their daily survival, whereas at the same time the Christians of the majority could be content themselves with accepting the rules received in the synagogues. The teachings formulated in these epistles described as "Deutero-Pauline" are in the continuation of those found in the authentic epistles.

These false letters from Paul are the two epistles to Timothy, as well as the one addressed to Titus, the Epistle to the Ephesians, and perhaps also the Epistle to the Colossians.

It was between the ages of 95 and 100 that the Pauline Churches decided to make a last step, made easier by the now general exclusion of Christians from the synagogues: the constitution and publication of the collection of all these epistles. For more than forty years, these letters addressed to this or that Church were sleeping in the archives of the recipient communities, perhaps re-read from time to time, but not at all distributed. The apostle of pagans had expressed himself in the most direct, frank, and sometimes most brutal, manner. Since Christians were now totally excluded from the synagogues, the disclosure of these explosive documents (very anti-Semitic for example) made them no longer risk something.

There is nothing to suggest, however, that this collection of Paul's epistles then had a considerable influence. The Christian second century quotes very little the Apostle of the non-Jews (Goyim) and has not read much him. It will only be when the necessity of an official list of new sacred writings (canon) has been felt, with Marcion, about 140, that Paul will take on importance. His letters will then emerge from the archives to become the basis of Christian theology. But if, for a long time, Paul was ignored by the early Christians, it was probably because they did not know him, or did not want to know him.

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS AND SLAVERY.

" Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col 3: 11).

A massive fact remains nevertheless, neither Jesus the Nazarene nor the first Christians explicitly asked for the abolition of slavery. There is not a single word about it in the four gospels, and there is even worse (the letter of St. Paul on this subject).

The epistle to Philemon, the shortest of the letters of St. Paul, tackles a concrete case where rightly, Paul has the opportunity to apply the theoretical considerations just read: an escaped slave is converted by Paul who writes to his master in order to intercede in his favor. But for what precise purpose? We search vainly in this missive an explicit request for freeing. As, on the other hand, Paul preaches to the slaves the upholding of their status (1 Cor 7: 21-22) and the obedience to their masters (Col 2: 22-25), one wonders: what is the value of these statements of equality based on a common belonging to Christ?

Before sketching out an answer, we must consider the epistle to Philemon with the appropriate attention.

Paul is a prisoner because of his apostolic activity ("a prisoner of Christ Jesus ... in chains for the gospel": see verses 1 and 9-13). The conditions of his captivity are relatively lenient, since disciples and collaborators have free access to him (see verses 1 and 23-24).

Many obscurities nevertheless surround the recipients of this epistle. Yet the name of Philemon is attested in Phrygia where is located the city of Colosse; add the similarities with the letter to Colossians, and you will understand that this city is most often thought of to place in it the residence of Philemon.

The letter is addressed not only to the latter, but also to the Christian community that get together in his house (cf 1 Cor 16:19, Rm 16 :5, Col 4:15). There is no evidence that Philemon was the president of this community. On the other hand, he is seen there as a public figure and a remarkable benefactor (verses 5-7). It was Paul himself who led him to Christianity, as he informs us in veiled terms (verse 19). To Philemon is associated "Apphia, our sister" who is accompanied by "Archippus, our fellow soldier," the two being perhaps respectively the wife and the son of the first.

The fact that caused this letter is as follows. Philemon had among his servants a slave named Onesimus. He fled the house of his master. We do not know why. It is not sure, despite verses 18-19, that he stole him. Nevertheless, this departure had to cause a serious wrong to Philemon. Onesimus, during his flight, randomly and in circumstances that cannot be determined, meets Paul in the city where he is incarcerated. Under the direction of the apostle, he converted to the Christian faith, becoming for him an authentic spiritual son.

This fugitive slave, Paul sends him back to his master (verse 12) with a missive, the letter to Philemon.

What did Paul hope to do by writing this word to Philemon? According to his own words, he counted well that, thanks to his recommendations and the new status of Onesimus (converted to Christianity), Philemon would receive him "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (verse 16). Does Paul hope more? Verses 13-14 are often understood in the sense that Paul would have liked to keep Onesimus with him, but that he did not want to impose this gesture on Philemon, leaving it at his discretion. It's possible. In any case, it does not appear that Paul solicits at the same time the freeing of the slave: this one, while returning to assist Paul, would have remained the property of Philemon.

This missive has only the appearance of private correspondence. No doubt it aims to settle a personal case. But the address, as we have seen, is intended to the community that gets together in Philemon's house and it is all that Paul salutes (verse 3) as he does in his letters to the communities. The problem is that nowhere in the letter to Philemon or in the rest of his correspondence Paul campaigns against slavery. His program does not imply the end of this institution. We must say the same thing of the New Testament in general, which gives no guarantee to the anti-slavery movements: on the contrary, we could say, since in the domestic rules it enacts (Col 3 :22-25; Eph 6:5-8, Tit 2:9-10, 1 P 2:18-22) it

considers slavery as "normal." Slavery remains a fact that is not discussed as such: it is simply subject, like other social relations, to superior rules. The "conquest" of minds by Christianity therefore caused neither slave revolt nor increase of their escapes, so many acts that put in danger the order and the economy of the ancient society.

The owners are only called for granting to their slaves that which is "just and equal" (Col 4: 1), terms which are taken from the ancient social morality.

WOMEN'S STATUS.

Some of Paul's texts thus reveal contradictions that the passage of 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16 on the veil for women IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES (during prayers) bring to light.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (11: 2-16) is indeed the first written article from the monolatrous religions to have linked the veil of women to their relationship with God. This passage, compared with other Paul's texts and with the pagan customs of his time, makes it possible to distinguish two streams: the theological tradition of Paul and the customs of the Mediterranean world. The veil for women being the visible sign of their subordination, Paul failed to reconcile the philosophical notion of fundamental equality between the sexes and the custom of the veil.

Of the three monolatrous mass religions, Christianity was the first to impose the veil on women IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES (prayers) by putting forward strictly religious arguments, that is, by including the veil in a theological demonstration. In the monolatrous writings - the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Quran - only Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (11: 2-16) justifies the wearing of the veil for women by applying it to the relationships that men and women have with God 1). The particular interest of this text is to have generated a whole speech about the dress of women and to have durably imposed on them to cover their head in all the Christian world whereas the veil of the women was previously only an item of clothing of pagan origin located in the cities around the Mediterranean both in East and West (cf. The Celtiberian women according to Strabo). At the end of the 20th century, in the Mediterranean countries, in Southern Europe and in the Christian East, as well as among the nuns of the three great Christian denominations, women still often wear a veil or a headscarf. Many Fathers of the Church both in the East and the West (cf. still Tertullian) have taken over and commented on Paul's text to ensure its universal legislative scope. The custom, urban and pagan, of the veil for women gets with Paul a religious and cult status, that Judaism has avoided 1).

Paul's text arouses a major problem. In writing his text on the veil for women, Paul openly contradicts his own theology. This passage shows us that legitimizing the veil of women with arguments as strange as each other weakens the religious message. Paul could not or didn't want completely get rid of the customs of the world to which he belonged marked by the submission of the woman. He recovers the custom of the veil for women to control the Christian women who could believe that freedom was offered to them in the same way as to men. He cannot admit that a theology can lead to practical consequences: equality between the sexes.

In Judaism men cover their head (Exodus 28:40, Leviticus 10:6, Ezekiel 44:18-20); the priests have an honorary headgear, in the 1st century, the synagogue's readers put on prayer veils; since the 4th century at least men cover their head to pray or read the Torah. In Rome having a bare head is not a sign of freedom for man, who prays and sacrifices with his head covered (devotio, oblatio). In Greece, if the woman often covers her head, both sexes pray bareheaded, except for a few specific cults (mysteries). As for Veleda, she prophesied bareheaded but wore a hooded cloak on rainy or winter days.

Paul in this case takes over only the article 40 of the code of laws of Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria from 1116 to 1077 before our era that specifies who should or should not be veiled.

Married women, widows and Assyrian women must not have their heads uncovered when they go out into the street. Daughters of status must be veiled, whether by a veil, a robe or a [mantle]; they must not have their heads uncovered.

A concubine on the street with her mistress is to be veiled. A hierodule who has gotten married must be veiled on the street, but a single hierodule must have her head uncovered; she may not be veiled. A harlot is not to be veiled; her head must be uncovered. Any man who sees a veiled harlot is to apprehend her, produce witnesses and bring her to the palace entrance. Although her jewelry may not be taken, the one who apprehended her may take her clothing. She will be caned (fifty stripes) and have bitumen poured on her head.

If a man sees a veiled harlot and lets her go rather than bringing her to the palace entrance, he will himself be caned (50 stripes). His ears will be pierced threaded with a cord tied behind him, and he will be sentenced to a full month's hard labor for the king.

Slave girls are not to be veiled either. Any man who sees a veiled slave girl is to apprehend her and bring her to the palace entrance. Her ears will be cut off, and the man who apprehended her may take her clothes (G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles "Assyrian Law Codes").

MIXED MARRIAGE.

Mixed marriages, although much discussed in the original Jewish communities, were admitted and even encouraged by St. Paul in the sense of pagan husband and Christian wife, since the children were then obviously Christian.

1 Cor 7:13.

And if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. If the unbeliever separates let him separate; the brother or sister is not bound in these cases. God has called us to live in peace.

But this state of mind will gradually change and from the middle of the 2nd century mixed marriages will be contested and then rejected. Justin of Nablus (the author of the dialogue with the Jew Tryphon) wrote to the Roman Senate to defend a convert to Christianity who wants to divorce her husband remained pagan (second apology) .

Around 200, Tertullian interprets mixed marriage as a desecration of the wife, the bishop Cyprian of Carthage (De Lapsis 6) puts mixed marriages in a long list of serious faults.

"Each one was eager to increase his goods; and forgetting what the believers had done before in the days of the apostles, or what they should always have done...They joined together in marriage with unbelievers; they prostituted members of Christ to the Gentiles."

And the martyrdom accounts provide quite numerous examples of desertion from home or family abandonment.

Let us not forget, moreover, the case of the Montanist deaconesses Maximilla and Priscilla "who had been married but had left their husbands and were given by Montanus the rank of consecrated virgins in his church."

1) As for the Quran, it is at first only orders concerning the wives of Muhammad. Only the Muslim dogma of Isma made this advice of Umar later extended to all believers. See our upcoming notes on the subject.

ON THE APPEARANCE OF THE FIRST CHURCHES.

Apart from the isolated cases of the deacon Nicholas, of the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia, and of the mythical Cornelius, there are no traces of converted pagans in Jerusalem or in Judea in the years following immediately the death of Jesus that is to say about the year 30 of our era. Nor do we see "Christians" and the modern terminology of "Judeo-Christians" to speak of them is not very good. It is difficult to fix the date of the separation that will take place later between the Jews and the Christians or between the synagogue and the Church, that is to say, concretely the moment when the Christians ceased to be expelled from the synagogues for the simple reason they have no longer the idea to go there. It can be located after 70 with the capture of Jerusalem and its immediate consequence the foundation of the rabbinic school in Yavne or Jabneh by Yohanan ben Zakkai; or before the year 135 with the end of the revolt of Bar Kokhba and the destruction of Jerusalem which is razed and renamed Aelia Capitolina. The Christians have indeed refused to take part in the defense of the city.

But the latter had joined the Christian community of the place, without breaking with the practices of Judaism, including synagogue worship. They had, of course, good reasons to do so because, as John Toland pointed it out, Jesus Christ "had not come to abolish the Law" (Mtt 5:17), but to fulfill "what he promised our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever"(Lk 1: 55). These Christians, perfectly orthodox, do not "Judaize," they are simply Jews, and remain so. They are the Church from the Circumcision, *Ecclesia ex circumcissione*, the Christians from among the Jews Toland says, just as the converted pagans for whom Paul claimed the right not to be subject to Jewish practices, are the Church coming from the pagans, *Ecclesia ex gentibus*. The Christians from among the Gentiles Toland says.

What is certain is that in the synagogues of Palestine, at the time, the so-called Eighteen Blessings prayer was recited, whatever besides the exact number; but in the 90s the rabbinical authorities added, in twelfth position, a "blessing" of heretics, in fact, a curse, which marked the break with the incipient Christianity.

The text of this twelfth "blessing" in its Palestinian version is as follows.

" For the apostates let there be no hope;
And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days;
Let the nozerim and the minim (heretics) be destroyed in a moment.
And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.
Blessed are you, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant."

This "blessing" was hammered three times a day, in the synagogues, as a leitmotif. It was directed against the Roman Empire (the arrogant government!), but also against all the dissidents from the rabbinic Judaism (apostates, heretics), among whom are named the Jews passed into the "sect" of the Nazoreans (nozerim).

Let us imagine the untenable position in which these Christians were then when they participated in the synagogue worship! How could they respond to the twelfth "blessing" (Blessed are you O Lord, who humblest the arrogant) without denying themselves? And the situation of the Nazorene was even worse when he was invited to read the eighteen blessings in question. Indeed, if he stumbled upon the twelfth "blessing," he was obliged to begin again; for people were then suspicious like of the plague of all deviant questioning the normative Judaism defined at Jabneh after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70.

The first Christians, however, remained predominantly Jewish until the middle of the second century.

Two different branches will gradually emerge among these various movements.

The one, which can be described as Nazorene or Ebionite, aligns itself with the authority of James, the brother of Jesus (executed in 62) and Simon Peter (put to death in 64). See on this subject the Nazarenus of John Toland and particularly its edition of 1710 titled *christianisme judaïque et mahométan*, dedicated to Prince Eugene of Savoy.

The other, referring to Stephen and the Hellenists, as Philip, the philosophic and pagan (payan in the text of Toland) Christianity.

These two different Christianities will coexist without intermingling that of Jerusalem and that of Caesarea, and when they meet (at Antioch) there will be conflict. This fact therefore is to be constantly in our mind when we speak of the beginnings of Christianity, of the worship, prayers or designs, of early Christians.

WORSHIP.

The very first Christians, of course, did not have specific sanctuaries and used synagogues or simple private places when this was not possible. The basic weekly ritual was that of the synagogues on the Sabbath Day.

Reading of scriptures according to the calendar; preaching; prayers and blessings. The Jewish festivals, especially the Passover, kept their place in the calendar of Christian Nazorenes, while getting, of course, a new meaning related to events. New texts of the midrash genre (for instance sketch of the messiah from the Scriptures) were written for the occasion, to be read and distributed on those days; and some were incorporated a few years later into what was to become the New Testament, thus contributing to a considerable change in its meaning.

Such is perhaps the case of the account of the passion. It is absolutely not a report of what has taken place then, but a new writing, carefully elaborated, in order to accompany the Christian celebration of the Passover. Other passages in the New Testament refer to hymns or confessions of Christological belief to be sung or recited at the ceremonies of worship (Hymns of Luke, chapters 1 and 2, Philippians 2: 6-11, Colossians 1: 15-20, 1 Timothy 6: 15-16, etc.). The person and work of the new Joshua are glorified in them. These hymns or professions of faith, elaborated several years after the events, were then, as we have seen it, integrated into what was to become the New Testament. Same thing for the shorter expressions summarizing the Christian belief in two or three words as "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10, 9; 1 Corinthians 12, 3; 2 Corinthians 4, 5; Colossians 2, 6, and others). Their degree of objectivity is evidently equal to zero, they reflect only the convictions of those who wrote them, have no historical value, and resemble autosuggestion (kerygma) or respond to polemics today forgotten.

Jesus is Lord, for example, wants to say that the man Jesus we know is the Christ - Messiah - announced by the Holy Scriptures, he is God and must govern our lives, not remain a mere abstraction (cf. the idea of Christ the king). This somewhat contradicts secularism as it is advocated by some people today.

The Christian worship, however, is not limited to a simple synagogue cult enriched with hymns or Christological profession of faith coming under the Coue method (autosuggestion). From a very early date (from the beginning?), baptism and Holy Supper are added to it.

The first Christian baptisms were very simple and intended to purify the sinner in water like that of John the Baptist (for Jesus himself never baptized, this is not the least paradox).

Christian baptism, offered to all who recognized Jesus as the Messiah, is the continuation of the one that John dispensed in the ford of Bethabara (or Aenon according to the fourth Gospel).

But later additions will change its meaning.

To the baptism of John of the first Apostles, Paul added another dimension, more Gnostic, that of the baptism by descent of the Holy Spirit on the baptized one (hence, perhaps, the subsequent addition, in the original texts, of the episode of the dove descending on Jesus during his own baptism).

"A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John....Paul said.....On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts of the Apostles, 18, 24, 19, 7).

Practice also attributed afterwards to John and Peter by the editor of the Acts, during the baptism of Simon the Magician (Acts 8:16). This baptism concerned, of course, only the adults at the beginning, the use of making the still infant children baptized, will come later (probably with the Montanists). The meal of commensality with the god-or-demons (the love feasts and the Eucharist).

The custom of the "Lord's evening meal" was very early considered as having been instituted by the new Joshua himself during his lifetime (though this remains to be proved); but it was nevertheless rather to the last meal taken by Jesus with his disciples, that it was referred (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; Mark 14: 22-25).

The sacrifice of Christ having redeemed once and for all those who believe in him, most total freedom is allowed to the believer because, whatever he does, he will be saved (Predestination).

This is what a good part of the Christians of the first or second century of our era thought. These visionary men had never known the Jewish law, and as for the liberty brought by Christ, they had an idea very different from that of the Puritan Saint Paul.

This Christianity of the first century ranged from Puritanism to extreme enthusiasm. Especially in Corinth, where the rituals had always been very spectacular. Notably those performed in honor of Dionysus, the famous redeeming god-or-demon, who saved his followers from the darkness of death by appearing to them during ecstatic trance, or by providing them with various visions of the hereafter. These early Christians too therefore had frequently ecstasies, or ecstatic reactions, during their meal of commensality with the god-or-demons, and more precisely during the administering of Eucharist.

As John Toland saw it very clearly in his book entitled "for a Christianity not mysterious," many of the Christians of that time spoke to Jesus by using the same terms as the bacchantes with regard to Dionysus. They also used wine greatly during the Eucharist, another of the characteristics of the Dionysian cult.

The love feasts or banquets of the Eucharistic communion of the Christians in Corinth (their meals of "devogdonion" commensality) were not binge drinks, and if the wine flowed freely among them; it was simply because it was, as blood of Christ, in the full sense of the term, and not merely symbolically, a genuine pledge of immortality (as in the case of Dionysus, let us repeat it once again).

In Jerusalem the very intense community life of the Judeo-Christians also included meals in common, but apparently more modest, called "breaking of bread" (Acts 2: 42-46). We do not know the frequency of these "Lord's evening meals" which may have varied from one church to another, or from one period to another. We also do not know whether the liturgical sharing of the cup and of the bread took place during a real communal meal like the "love feasts" condemned by St. Paul in Corinth. What is certain it is that the separation or distinction between the meal of "devogdonion" commensality (the "sacrament") and the brotherly meal took place only slowly; and that a true ritual of the Lord's Supper (later called "Eucharist," Greek word meaning "thanksgiving"), will appear only after this distinction has been made.

ORGANIZATION.

The Christian churches of the end of the first century, as well as they are very small, are very badly organized. The very centralized system that the Church of Jerusalem had made reign for thirty years will make way during the great crisis of 62-70 to a congregation regime, in which each local Church will enjoy complete freedom.

The only coordination between these independent cells was the exchange of visits; prone to a certain mistrust of too insistent visitors besides (cf. the Didache, a little writing dating from the very last years of the first century or of the beginning of the second century, chapters 11-12).

The churches come out of the synagogues around the end of the first century - the great majority - seem to have been led by a college of elders (in Greek "presbyteroi"), among whom some of them were more specifically responsible for material matters (finance and distribution of relief: the deacons). In the churches founded by Paul according to the mode of the organization of Essene communities, in every case themselves very close to the synagogues, people had rather episcopos associated with deacons of both sexes (cf Philippians 1: 1). The emphasis was on the visions or the particular charisms of the one or the other, which could encourage putting a faithful in the service of the community, according to his capacities; in order to respond to such and such, spiritual, social or religious, need (see 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 to 14).

Paul, 2 Corinthians 12: 2-4: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.... caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things."

Around the end of the first century, this somewhat "visionary " or "Pentecostal" side of the Pauline communities began to fade, and there was soon a certain standardization of the community organization. Ministries remain still a part-time volunteering, but became more specialized. Bishops gained increasing authority, since the churches gradually rallied behind the monarchical system, which allowed each community to have an authorized representative. There were, besides the bishop, elders and deacons, without any clear hierarchy between these ministries.

Preaching, present in the worship of all the churches, assumed perhaps different forms from one place to another. Speech inspired from the prophets or commentary on the texts of Scripture, as in the synagogue, it contained almost always a teaching of which the parts relating to morals in the Epistles give us some ideas (cf. For instance Romans 12: 1-15; 13). There are particularly the "domestic codes" (Ephesians 5, 21 to 6, 9; Colossians 3, 18 to 4, 1; 1 Peter 2, 13 to 3, 7 etc.) which call the various family and social categories for a mutual submission. These moral teachings were direct borrowings from popular Stoicism, then widely spread among the pagans of Greco-Roman culture, but these moral developments also contained many elements that came from the Judaism of Greek language.

Paul opposed his message simultaneously to Jewish thought and Greek thought (1 Corinthians 1: 18-25), but this option was not shared by the Christian preachers of the two or three following generations ; who hesitated between the Jewish model (Epistle of James, "The Shepherd" of Hermas, etc.) and the Greek model (Epistle to the Hebrews of the pseudo-Barnabas). Just like the heirs to the Pauline tradition themselves besides: their pastoral epistles (the two epistles to Timothy as well as the one addressed to Titus) are reduced to reasonably conformist practical advice for the life of the community.

It is not very surprising in these conditions that the refusal of the social and moral conformity, having no longer a place in the Pauline movement, found refuge in the Gnostic branches of the original Christianity (see the case of the Nicolaitans).

The first generation, with skeletal numbers, has made large efforts to make its message known around it. In Jerusalem, the first Christian expansion was made by the apostolate of the immediate disciples. This apostolate, which is not to be confused with the group of the Twelve (Paul's case shows it clearly) was during this period a capital institution, endowed with relatively precise customary rules (see 1 Corinthians chapter 9).

Later, even though these itinerant missionaries have not completely disappeared, their authority was considerably diminished.

The second and third generation Christianity relies primarily on the presence of communities and on individuals to carry out the spread of the message. For example, John 13: 34-35; 17, 20-23; 1 Peter 2: 11-12. The expansion initiated during the first generation continues.

The first phase of the Christian development is therefore characterized by a double grouping.

The grouping between the heirs to James and Peter, of Judeo-Christian leaning, and the grouping within the Hellenistic current, joined by the former Essenian sympathizer from Tarsus named Saul / Paul.

No statistic, even approximate, is possible, but we can risk some figures. Around 60-70 there were at most 10,000 Christians, divided among a few tens local communities, of which half a dozen were of Pauline obedience; facing several million Jews.

At the end of the first century, there were perhaps a hundred thousand Christians in the Roman Empire and in the Parthian Empire. The small Christian minority remained modest, but was now present all over the Mediterranean sea, or in vast parts of the Parthian empire, well beyond the limits of Mesopotamia.

This minority was too weak to draw the attention of external observers except in exceptional circumstances, such as the burning of Rome in 64; or the somewhat courtier zeal of the Roman authorities of Bithynia in 111. See the correspondence studied above between Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan concerning the Christians of that province.

It was only much later, in the second century, that Christianity became subject to public controversy, and incurred the virulent criticism from a Lucian of Samosata, a Celsus or a Porphyry, or even from a Julian.

The second century is therefore one of the key moments in the history of Christianity. The dogma, still hesitant in the first century, is formed, becomes precise. Jesus walks towards the divinity, he reaches it, and his metaphysics, his worship, the idea of his person that people imagine, are mixed up with the

Judeo-Alexandrian doctrines and Philo's theories of the word of God, the Greek "logos." But the term logos applied to the new Joshua is still very ambiguous. He can make Jesus either the word of God or a divine archetype (of the Ideal and Absolute Man, as in the Gnostic couple Anthropos/Ecclesia, Man / Church ?)

THE VERUS ISRAEL OR THE GREAT CHURCH.

As we have seen, the very first Christians were pious Jews who were assiduously attending the synagogue of their city. The rapid evolution of the content of their message, of their numbers and of their origins (more and more goyim among them) was not without causing upheavals in the Jewish communities of their time and tensions between Pharisaic, non-Messianist Judeans and Messianist Christians Judeans.

From what date is it reasonable to consider that Jews and Christians are no longer members of the same religious community and no longer practice the same worship? Difficult to say. Historiography hesitates between 70, the year of the crushing of the first Jewish revolt and the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, who caused the Temple to be set on fire, and 135, the year of the final and desperate revolt of the last Jews in Palestine led by the Messiah Bar Kokhba. Jerusalem will be razed and a new Roman city forbidden to the Jews, Aelia Capitolina, will be built in its place.

Depending on whether one approaches it from the Christian point of view or from the Jewish Pharisaic point of view, the phenomenon of differentiation which began in the 70s is seen for the former in terms of "separation," for the latter in terms of "break." This differentiation extends to all other Jewish groups, in a process which seems to have been completed between 135 and 150, whereas until then Christianity was not conceived as a religion independent of Judaism.

The opposition between Pharisees and Christians will form essentially on two points: the observances (e.g., circumcision or dietary prescriptions) of the Torah - which will be found compiled on the Pharisaic side in the Mishnah of the Talmud during the second century - and the interpretations of the Torah, compiled, on the "Pharisaic" side, in the Midrash. This second axis will be decisive in the second century in terms of differentiating between accepting or rejecting the messianity of the Nazarene Jesus, and the Talmud (Hebrew Talmud, "study") will be one of the fundamental texts of rabbinic Judaism.

Written in a mixture of Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic and composed of the Mishna and then the Gemara, it brings together rabbinic discussions on the various subjects of Jewish law as set forth in the Hebrew Bible and its oral aspect, dealing among other things with civil and matrimonial law, but also dealing with points of ethics, medicine, etc., N.B. There are two versions of the Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.

These divergences appear independently of those which already opposed Hellenized Christians to Judaeans Christians concerning also the observances.

The Christian communities (always included in Judaism) will thus gradually either almost disappear like the Judeo-Christians, or diverge more and more from Judaism in favor of different interpretations of Scripture, the integration of new oral and then textual traditions (paleo-gospels, epistles), historical factors (uprisings of 66-70 then 135), change of languages (from Aramaic/Hebrew to Greek/Latin), demographic center (from Palestine to the evangelized regions of the Roman Empire).

At the beginning of the second century, the process will be consummated and Christians will now consider themselves the only true beneficiaries of the covenant willed by God. In Latin VERUS ISRAEL.

In the middle of the second century, Justin of Nablus (100-114 - 162-168), in his Dialogue with Tryphon, a dialogue in which he defends Christianity against a fictitious Jewish interlocutor, will in fact affirm that the Church is the "true Israel" (cf. § 135). Some historians consider, therefore, that this Christian apologetic work is the first written testimony to the rupture between Jews and Christians.

Who will theorize the situation by developing a whole discourse on the subject, called "Theology of Substitution" which is still more or less in force today (the Catholic Church considers itself to be "a new Israel" or "a new chosen people").

This relentlessness worthy of the worst of autosuggestion methods to want at all costs to be recognized as the legitimate and direct heir to the Jewish religion and to Abraham; whereas it is obvious that only certain details of the veneer are so, and that the background is pagan (the notion of god-man in Christianity, the role of the kaaba in Islam, etc.). IS PITIABLE. It is at the same time the timeless manifestation of an incredible racism towards other religions coupled with an equally incredible inferiority complex. Not to mention a crass ignorance of historical science and of the discoveries of archaeology (the beginning of the Bible up to the episode of the Tower of Babel is borrowed from Sumerian myths, Abraham is a legend, Moses did not exist, neither did slavery in Egypt, etc.).

As for him Marcion, in the second century, advocated a wholesale rejection of the Jewish influence on the Christian faith.

GREAT CHURCH (the term "Great" is not to be taken in the numerical sense initially at that time, the Marcionite church was indeed more powerful. Great Church is the name used by Celsus to designate the current of non-Gnostic non-Marcionite Christianity which would later impose itself with the symbol of Nicaea, would call itself as "orthodox" and would therefore tend to call all competing doctrines as "heresies." Its heritage is claimed by the main Christian denominations today.

Below is the testimony of Celsus.

"It is certain, indeed, that the members of the great Church (apo megales ekklesias) admit this, and adopt as true the accounts regarding the creation of the world which are current among the Jews, viz., concerning the six days and the seventh;". Quoted by Origen, Against Celsus, V., 59.

We know no more than that except the term "Little Church" has sometimes been applied to Judeo-Christians in the strictest sense of the term, that is to say, to Jews who recognize Jesus but continue to follow the Law of Moses.

THE DOMUS ECCLESIAE.

Specialists call "Domus ecclesiae" from a Latin term meaning "meeting place" or "meeting house" the first Christian places of worship, i.e. the houses that were converted into permanent or temporary places of worship.

Two examples will be studied, one in Syria at Doura Europos and one in Egypt at Oxyrrhynchus, or Panopolis,

As we have had the opportunity to see, it results from the fact that the first conversions were not individual but family conversions that the first churches will be in fact particular houses more or less arranged.

There will not be specific places of worship before the 3rd century and it will be necessary to wait until the end of the 3rd century to see the first places of worship no longer serving as private homes during the rest of the time.

The church buildings are clearly identified in Egyptian papyrus cadasters from 250 and 300 (papyrus of Oxyrrhynchus and Panopolis), a period when imperial decisions of 260 (amnesty of Gallienus) and 272 (settlement by Aurelian of the Paul of Samosata case) took into account Christian buildings.

Much more information is available on the Syrian site.

Europos was a Macedonian colony founded around -300 by Seleucus I, king (basileus) of Asia, from Anatolia to India, and who was one of Alexander the Great's generals.

This military colony was originally located on a strategic site previously occupied by the Assyrians, as evidenced by the discovery of a tablet in the temple of Atargatis.

Its institutions are Greek: it has a boule (a senate of the city), a governor having the title of "strategus and epistate of the city" who was always a member of the same family until the time of the Severians. The art quickly testifies to the contribution of oriental elements. The city has the strategus' palace and the citadel palace, five baths, luxurious residences, an amphitheater, and an odeon-bouleuterion, located in the sanctuary of Artemis.

Between 116 and 110 before our era the city ceased to be under Greek domination and fell into the hands of the Arsacid Parthians; it then experienced its greatest expansion. It became a cosmopolitan city where, in addition to the population of Greek origin, Iranians and Semites mingled.

Between 114 and 116, Emperor Trajan occupied the city for the first time... The Romans returned in 170 and used the city as a starting point for the conquest of the territories of Osroene or as an outpost for expeditions against the Parthian Empire.

The military importance of the site was confirmed around 209-216: the northern part of the site was occupied by a Roman camp, isolated by a brick wall; the soldiers lived partly among the inhabitants, among others in the so-called House of the Scribes.

Around 256, the town was taken by the Sassanids led by Shapur I, who deported the entire population. The site will not be reoccupied afterwards and the city then falls definitively into oblivion.

The site was rediscovered in 1920 and then explored by a French-American mission led by Michael Rostovtzeff (1928-1937).

When he resumed the direction of the excavations for the fifth season in October 1931, Clark Hopkins decided to clear the last remaining buried remains of the house, on the west side, more out of scruples than with any real hope of making a spectacular discovery. But on the following January 17, the foreman in charge of the area, Abdul Messiah, came to warn him that the last remaining room to be explored, a small room in the northwest corner of the house, which had been left aside until then, had a painted plaster with well-preserved geometric patterns. C. Hopkins then decided to personally take over the direction of the trench.

Following the division of the finds between Syria and Yale University, its frescoes were deposited for display at Yale.

It was built in 241, shortly before the city was destroyed by the Persians in 256, and was the result of a simple redevelopment of a private residence. During the defensive preparations for the Persian siege, the inhabitants of the city raised an embankment doubling the entire length of the rampart, filling in the adjacent street up to the height of the parapet walk, as well as a large part of the buildings along it:

this operation resulted in the burial and preservation in an exceptional state of conservation of several cult buildings such as the synagogue, the Mithraeum, the Temple of Bel, and thus the Christian chapel.

This Christian chapel can truly be described as a *domus ecclesiae* insofar as it occupies a former private dwelling located in block M8, along the western rampart of the town, opposite Gate 17, a short distance south of the main gate. This house has a typical plan of the Dourean domestic architecture, with a square central courtyard around which the various rooms are arranged. It connected with the street through a modest door.

The dating of this construction is given by an inscription on a plaster coating in room 4B which shows the date 232/2331. In this hypothesis, the refurbishment as a cult building could only take place a few years later, around 240/241.

CONCLUSION.

These meeting places (or of the community of the faithful) are therefore not churches or establishments designed and built specifically for the development of liturgical celebration. When Christians gather for common prayer, the *synaxis*, they occupy all or part of a private room; they may adapt it to the needs of their meetings, but the constraints of the pre-existing building nevertheless limit this arrangement, especially since use for worship ceremonies does not necessarily imply a permanent and definitive occupation.

Christians have recourse to such places of worship because Christianity is still poorly established . With the period of peace for the Church which followed the Edict of Milan in 313, and perhaps even earlier, with Gallien's Edict of Tolerance, which in 260 established a religious peace of 40 years, a certain feeling of security combined with imperial or private euergetism will obviously favor the building of large churches which will triumphantly root the Christian presence in the landscape of the city. But it is possible that after the Constantinian peace the missions in distant and pagan lands continued to use *domus* during the time before the construction of a local church.

THE JOHANNINE SCHOOL.

The Gospel of John (80 to 110?) is a gospel apart ...

-Very different from the other three, called synoptics.

-Which was integrated only very late in the Christian canon because of the oppositions it raised.

-But which nevertheless seems to have integrated into its text elements that are just as old as the other three, EVEN MORE.

-In addition 4 other New Testament texts seem to belong to the same school. The three letters of John and the revelation.

According to Rudolf Bultmann, Johannine Christianity represents an older type of Christianity than synoptic Christianity.

Below are the four stages of the formation of this Johannine School according to Father Raymond E. BROWN.

But this is only a hypothesis elaborated from the crises evoked by the very text of this gospel.

The Johannine community would thus have gone through four phases.

1) A phase preceding the written gospel, but carrying out the maturation of its thought (until the years 70-80). In Palestine or in a nearby area, Jews whose expectations were about the same as those of all Jews of that time, and including even disciples of John the Baptist, were convinced that, despite appearances (the expected Messiah was not to end up on a cross like a vulgar homeless man) and by combining all sorts of other prophecies (such as those concerning the suffering servant or the Lamb of God) that this Jesus was indeed the Messiah or Christ announced by the (Jews, see Jn 1). Scriptures. To these first followers were added Jews opposed to the Temple who were converted in Samaria (Jn 4). They think about Jesus especially in a Mosaic context (distinct from the Davidic context): Jesus had been with God, whom he had seen and whose word he had brought into this world. The reception of this second group provoked the development of a Christology from the top of pre-existence (in a background of Divine Wisdom) which led to debates with the Jews, for whom these Johannine Christians abandoned Jewish monotheism by making Jesus a second God (5:18).

Finally, the leaders of these Jews had the Johannine Christians expelled from the synagogues (9:22; 16:2). The latter, far from their own, showed themselves very hostile towards "the Jews," whom they considered as children of the devil (8:44). To make up for what they had lost with Judaism, they insisted on the fulfillment of the eschatological promises in Jesus (hence the importance of the theme of the replacement in the Gospel). At the same time, Johannine Christians despised those believers in Jesus who had not, like them, publicly broken with the synagogue (cf. the parents of the blind man in 9:21-23; also 12:42-43). The above-mentioned disciple made this passage and helped others to do so, becoming the beloved disciple.

2) The phase in which the basic gospel was written by the evangelist. Since "the Jews" were considered blind and unbelieving (12:37-40), the arrival of the Greeks was interpreted as fulfilling God's full purpose (12:20-23). The community (in whole or in part) then apparently left Palestine for the diaspora to teach the Greeks (7:35), perhaps in the region of Ephesus - a move which may shed light on the Hellenistic atmosphere of the gospel and the need to explain Semitic names and titles (e.g., "rabbi," "Messiah"). This framework opened up universalist perspectives to Johannine thought, making it able to reach a wider audience. The gospel's insistence on the divinity of Jesus nevertheless led to rejection and persecution, which persuaded Johannine Christians that the world (as "the Jews") was opposed to Jesus. In their relationship with other Christians, they rejected some whose Christology was too poor in their eyes to be true believers (6:60-66). Others, like Simon Peter, truly believed in Jesus (6:67-69), but they were not considered as profound as the Johannine Christians, symbolized by the beloved disciple (20:6-9).

3. The phase in which the Johannine epistles were written (about 100) by another writer distinct from the evangelist. The Johannine community was then divided in two after the first and second letters were published.

a) Many seceded (at least in the eyes of the author of 1 John 2:18-19) and were considered antichrists and children of the devil, because they considered only or essentially the divine nature of Jesus Christ and did not give any importance to his human existence or to their own behavior in relation to Jewish law.

b) Others adhered to the conception represented by the author of 1 and 2 John, who had returned to the classical conception of Judaism by emphasizing the humanity of Jesus (who came in the flesh) and the observance of the commandments).

4 The phase during which 3 John was written and ch. 21 added by the editor (100-110?)

The disintegration of the Johannine community will finally bring some of its members closer to the "great" Church (neither Marcionite nor Montanist), which will preserve this Johannine heritage.

For their part, the sympathizers of the Christology described in 3b (perhaps the majority) came closer to Docetism (Jesus is not truly man), Gnosticism (the world is too corrupt to be the creation of the true God) and finally Montanism (Montan is the incarnation of the Paraclete charged with guiding the Church).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN.

The author of the Gospel according to John is recognized today as a Christian of Judean origin, born or having lived in Palestine - a minimal consensus which does not go beyond that.

Without really entering into the question, let us only observe that according to John 21, the author of the Gospel according to John is "the disciple whom Jesus loved," an eyewitness (eyewitness) whose attestation is true (John 19:35; 21:24). One wonders what value should be given to this statement, especially since it could be that John 21 was written to accredit the Gospel according to John in the Great Church - the editor, in designating as evangelist an eyewitness to the ministry and passion of Jesus, and, moreover, a disciple who was particularly close and loved by Jesus, certainly had an apologetic aim. The question is much debated and is not simple besides.

The compilation of the data makes it possible to sketch a first outline of the beloved disciple: a Judean of unknown origin and a disciple of John the Baptist, he joins Jesus at the same time as Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter (John 1:35-40), probably a member of the group of the Twelve, but he has some acquaintances in the house of the high priest in Jerusalem - which implies a certain attendance of the priestly class.

The author is fluent in Greek with Semitic turns and is of Judean and biblical culture, knowing the south of Palestine and especially Jerusalem and its surroundings (topographical accuracy).

If the author of the Gospel according to John was the beloved disciple, this would imply that it would have been written not around 90, but around 60 - which the present exegesis refuses to accept in any way, with rare exceptions.

The "Johannine question" is still unresolved. There is now a tendency to consider that the character of the beloved disciple, a disciple of Jesus' time, if not the author of the Gospel according to John, could be the bearer and guarantor of the tradition underlying the text - this is the hypothesis of Raymond E. Brown.

This text differs from the other three canonical gospels, known as "synoptic," in its composition, poetic style, theology, and probably in its sources.

In Trinitarian doctrine, the Gospel according to John is the most important in Christology because it implicitly states the divinity of Jesus, of whom he makes the incarnate "Logos."

Structure and plan.

The Gospel consists of a prologue - which begins with the famous, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." and an epilogue. This prologue and epilogue frame the narrative itself, which consists of two main parts: respectively the revelation of Christ before the world and the revelation of Christ before his disciples.

The first part (from chapter 1:6 to chapter 12) tells the story of Jesus's public ministry from his baptism by John the Baptist to his arrival in Jerusalem. This first part emphasizes seven miracles ("signs") of

Jesus. The second part (chapters 13-21) presents Jesus's dialogues with his chief disciples (13-17) and describes his passion, crucifixion, and apparitions to the disciples after his resurrection (18-20).

John's gospel is a gospel apart from what we have said. To say that the Gospel according to John is separate means that it does not share certain characteristics common to the synoptic gospels. The Johannine and synoptic narratives are so different, sometimes even contradictory, that historians for a long time accorded practically no historical value to the Gospel according to John, until Charles H. Dodd, in 1963, demonstrated the antiquity of its traditions if not of its redaction(s).

The most obvious difference is in the general framework of Jesus' ministry.

The synoptic scheme presents a public ministry of about one year, which takes place mainly around the Lake of Galilee and ends with Jesus's one and only ascent to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

The Johannine scheme is totally different. But it is not only the duration and the general organization of the ministry that vary, but also and above all the events that form it.

John does not possess the account of Jesus' baptism, does not know the transfiguration, nor the three announcements of the passion, nor the trial before the Sanhedrin. He places the purification of the Temple of Jerusalem at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and, even though he relates Peter's confession, the episode has no longer the same structuring function in him.

Most of the events recounted in John have no parallel in the Synoptics (for example, the wedding at Cana, the interview with Nicodemus, the meeting with a Samaritan woman, the healing of the blind man, the resurrection of Lazarus, etc.).

On the other hand, the Johannine and synoptic accounts of the passion offer several elements of comparison: which allows us to suppose that this part of the Christian tradition was formed very early and subsequently marked all the developments of Christianity.

The divergences also affect the person and mission of Jesus. Indeed, the Johannine Jesus, unlike the Synoptic Jesus, does not proclaim the Kingdom of God, does not speak in parables, does not pronounce ethical teachings, does not perform exorcisms. He is only there to reveal heavenly things, namely his own identity and his role as a savior. The same thing is true of the miracles of Jesus, which hardly overlap with those of the Synoptics because they are of a mystical order ("Christological" would say a theologian): they are signs that legally attest to his identity and anticipate salvation symbolically - the salvation that only he can offer.

Jesus is much more than a messiah or a prophet, he is the eternal Son of God, the divine Word creator of the world, the Son of Man who came from heaven to reveal heavenly things, but as a mystical being, in the manner of Enoch, and not as an ordinary human being - he is the Logos (according to the Greek) and the Memrah (according to the Hebrew).

His humanity and human origins, however, do not make it possible to define his true identity, which is mystical - no doubt a reason why John is not interested in the humanity of Jesus.

MARCION THE FIRST OF THE PROTESTANTS OR REFORMISTS.

MARCION HAVING BEEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN THINKER TO SPEAK OF BOOKS TO READ ABSOLUTELY (CANON) OF EVANGELION, GOSPEL, NEW TESTAMENT, OLD TESTAMENT, APOSTOLICON, PAUL'S LETTERS, ETC. ETC. THEREFORE IT IS WITH HIM THAT WE WILL START OUR BRIEF STUDY ON CHRISTIANITY ITSELF THAT IS TO SAY NOT JUDEO-CHRISTIAN.

Marcion, in Greek Markion (85 or 95 to about 160).

We have few sure elements as for his biography apart from his "civilian" trade ": shipowner (which explains his many journeys).in Sinope (currently Sinop in Turkey). Marcion was therefore entirely brought up in Christianity and got in it such a thorough knowledge of the Bible that St. Jerome calls him a true scholar (doctissimus). At the time, Christians had at their disposal only the Jewish Bible, and what is called today the New Testament did not exist yet since this concept will be invented later only, by Marcion precisely. As the Jews of the time, the early Christians therefore had for a "biblical canon" only a set which included "the Law," the "Prophets" and the "Writings," what we call the Old Testament. A set of which the perimeter besides, in the middle of the 1st century, was perhaps not yet fully specified. Around the end of the 1st century, indeed, is still discussed the question of whether the "Song of Songs" was a canonical text, if Ezekiel was a member or not of the list of the prophets, etc. As the early Christians spoke Greek, Marcion used the Bible which circulated in the Greek Jewish environment, in its different forms, the "Septuagint."

Marcion was perhaps the first author of a structured narrative combining logia or Wisdom words and biographical facts about Jesus, the whole called "good news": Evangelion.

Perhaps a primitive version of the Gospel according to Saint Luke, enriched with some elements due to his hand.

We have no direct or disinterested witness statement about Marcion; we know him - and very imperfectly - only by the attacks from those who called him a heretic. We know the time of his public life, but the dates that mark the stages of it are imprecise. Nothing precludes setting at 120 the beginning of his activities.

He was already at the head of a certain number of Christian communities, especially of churches founded or strengthened by Paul in Asia Minor and Greece. Other communities may have been founded by his father or by Pauline apostles who converted him. He presumably bore the title of bishop and appointed presbyters or deacons.

After the split with his father for doctrinal disagreement, Marcion chartered a ship and began traveling all over the Empire. He had to do numerous journeys before going around the year 138 in Rome where he naturally integrated the Christian community existing in the city. He met there for example Cerdon, who had arrived a few years earlier (about 135).

It is difficult to determine the exact nature of this first Roman Christian community.

Antagonistic groups existed there, as everywhere else; they had to bear each other more or less while the big names spoke up from time to time. This disordered situation lasted at least three centuries.

That Cerdon could have been a member of it would tend to prove that it was undoubtedly strongly marked by Gnosticism. Marcion having joined the Christianity of Cerdon, he inherited his disciples and took the lead in this movement of ideas, which was to be very close to his own opinions. For Marcion indeed, Christ has not been embodied in this world by being conceived by a woman, but he came down to Earth by being incarnated in an existing adult, around the thirties, around Capernaum . Hence the absence in his texts of any narrative concerning Christ before (birth, childhood, etc.).

Nobody at that time will refute this thesis ... the Gnostic design (Docetism) of a Jesus having not a true human body, only an ethereal body, was then admitted throughout Christendom without distinction (of course with the exception of the Judeo-Christians who saw him only as a super-prophet, a Messiah in the strictest sense of the term). No one asks Marcion to go to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to see where Jesus is born, since the myth of the birth and the Nativity stories do not yet exist ... Note: Marcion begins nevertheless, apparently, already, to give up the Pauline concept of timeless Christ, to speak of a Christ actually descended on Earth, sent by God the father, persecuted crucified and resurrected. In 144 Marcion was excommunicated by the bishop of Rome, a named Pius I., who is hardly known to us only by the Taliban of Christianity (Parabolanus) St. Irenaeus. A Part of the Christian community in Rome remained faithful to Marcion, but another detached itself from him and followed Pius I.

Marcion did not leave Rome, however. He was still established there as master teaching his own doctrines during the episcopate of Anicetus (154-166), and Jerome describes him as *ardens ingenii et doctissimus*. Marcion probably died between 161 and 168. In any case, we no longer hear of him in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. After his death a whole succession of bishops continued his work.

The originality of Marcion laid in the fact that he did not present himself as a prophet this time, but that he brought a work, a doctrinal corpus; and that he had behind him, for the first time in history, a constituted and well-organized Church. The coherence of this first Christian church was based:...- on the respect with which Marcion was treated. His disciples even believed him ascended to heaven in order to at the savior's left after his death while Paul himself was sitting on his right (Origen Homilies on Luke).

- On the joint practice of an ascetic life.
- On a collection of new writings to read absolutely apart from all others (the canon).
- On the universality of his reception. In his church, the women could occupy certain functions, for Marcion, like Paul, thought that there was "neither male nor female in Christ." Women could, for example, baptize. The members of this early Christian church used psalms different from the psalms of David. Those of Syria turned to the west to pray God (Muratorian fragment 82-84, confirmed by Maruta).

The ideas of Marcion. Christianity became official having immediately done a merciless censorship of the Stalinist type, as usual therefore no work by Marcion has come down to us directly, we know his ideas in matters of worship or theology only through the criticism or the more or less intellectually honest refutations which were formulated, beginning with those of Tertullian, a fervent Montanist and, in a way, one of the Fathers of the (proto) Catholic Church of his time. NB. We say well in a way because he was not officially admitted as belonging to the Fathers of the Church in the strictest sense of the term, although he was a considerable influence over that of his time.

Tertullian writes expressly in his "Against Marcion" that he had made bread the representation of the body of Christ.

Marcion ascribes to Paul the idea of ??incorporating God by making bread and wine the flesh and blood of Christ; and around 140, relying on these letters, he introduced in Rome the meal of "devogdonion" commensality called Eucharist.

According to John Toland (second edition of his Christianity not mysterious) Tertullian himself acknowledged that the fear of making bread or wine fall on the ground, or of not receiving them from the very hand of a priest, during such ceremonies; had no semblance of a precedent in the Holy Scriptures. The future official Christianity which, following Irenaeus and Tertullian, will reject Marcion, nevertheless will keep his meal of commensality with God or the Demiurge called Eucharist, while developing at the same time numerous scholastic quarrels as absurd as bloody (real or symbolic presence? See the chapter on Reformation). According to some people, the Marcionites used water instead of wine for this meal of "devogdonion" commensality (Epiph. Pan. XLII, 3), they accompanied it with an oil anointing, and offered to the newly baptized a mixture of milk and honey. Their baptism was considered valid by the "Great" Church when it was constituted in turn and did not need to be reiterated. Marcion probably used the expression "in the name of Christ Jesus" and not the Trinitarian formula which is later to it (Rom.6,3).

His disciples also practiced, according to Chrysostom, the baptism for the dead (1 Cor 15:29). Like the current Mormons therefore! They fasted on Saturday. They followed Paul's advice "not to eat meat or drink wine" (Romans 14:21) and eat fish like Christ (Luke 24:42) and the apostles. Fish, moreover, was almost a sacred food for them (Tertullian 1, 14).

According to Marcion, having children helped to perpetuate this world, bad by definition, and so it was something to avoid. The Cathars will maintain the same thing many centuries later. No candidate was admitted to baptism if he was not ready to lead a life of absolute continence. For the Marcionites, marriage had to be with Christ, and a true JOINT life of the spouses was therefore considered a divorce from Christ. But those who complied with this advice were probably not the majority.

Marcion was or wanted to be a disciple of Paul; he considered the proclamation of the latter as the only one which was truthful, that is to say, identical with that of Christ. We may wonder, however, whether the Pauline sects had not changed much between the death of Paul (around 64) and the time

(about 120) when Marcion undertook his mission of evangelization. In any case, it was perhaps because a part of the Judeo-Christian communities rejected Paul, that Marcion rose up against the Judaizers, and took him as the supreme witness of the truth. For Marcion, Paul is the only one who has understood Christ by opposing him to Jewish belief. He is the first to have distinguished, and opposed, an Old Covenant (the Old Testament) and a New Covenant (the New Testament). When Marcion wanted to replace the Jewish Scriptures by an authentic Christian Scripture, he thought of a collection of Epistles by Paul. Before 144 and Marcion, no one knew Paul and his epistles.

We do not have a single copy of the texts published by Marcion. We can only reconstruct them from what his (late) opponents tell us; therefore we are not sure that the passages or quotations reported, or discussed by them, are faithfully reproduced. Moreover, only a part of the Marcionite texts was conveyed to us, which means that another part escapes us. Marcion certainly wrote in Greek, and used Greek texts. Not only was he of Eastern origin, but when he arrived in Rome, the Christian community of that city was still entirely Greek in language: the Mass was still not celebrated in Latin, but in Greek. Therefore it could not come to Marcion's idea to take as a basis for his critical work a Latin version of Paul or of the Gospels, since it did not yet exist. On the other hand, at the beginning of the third century, it is probable that Tertullian, writing his tract against Marcion, had before him a Latin version of the Evangelion, and of the Epistles of Paul. It is not known, however, whether this Marcion's Latin translation came from him or from his adversaries. Marcion had gathered in his Apostolicon only ten letters from Paul. To this collection the future official Christianity added four other epistles; two to Timothy, one to Titus, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. And changed the title of the Epistle to the Laodiceans in Epistle to the Ephesians. The order of the letters in the Marcionite edition was about the following one. Galatians, I and II, Corinthians, Romans, I and II Thessalonians, Laodiceans (Ephesians), Colossians, Philemon; but the two letters to Corinthians were united in one, as were those to the Thessalonians. It would also seem that Colossians and Philemon did originally constitute only one epistle. In reality, there were seven letters to which the seven churches of the Apocalypse correspond exactly. Besides his Apostolicon and his Evangelion, Marcion had composed another work, to which his disciples attributed a considerable importance. We shall give an overview of it in order to further our knowledge of the first true Christian doctrine (from the Christians of pagan origin).

The Evangelion.

Marcion, together with the Epistles, the Evangelion and the Antitheses, formed a first real corpus of Christian writings. But he proclaimed neither the canonical authority of it, nor its divine inspiration, nor gave any name of author for the Evangelion. Let us remind that initially this "good news" was only the announcement that the messiah had arrived to save his people, the Jewish people.

The last Marcionites affirmed that this gospel had been written by Christ himself, and that Paul added in it the details of the crucifixion. This seems somewhat doubtful, but what can be retained from this tradition is that the narrative of the Passion did not appear originally in the Gospel; and that Paul knew only a mythical and cosmic crucifixion, in total opposition to the ignominious execution that is told to us in the official narratives prevailing today.

Marcion did not know these other gospels besides and the Fathers of the Church never affirmed that he knew them. He proclaimed only one of them, the one that Paul had preached. Our main sources of information about his Evangelion come from the worst enemies of Marcion, Tertullian and Epiphanius, who wrote long after him. The work of Tertullian against Marcion was composed about the year 208, that of Epiphanius a hundred and seventy years later.

The criticism of these adversaries is far from being objective; they are Christians often of bad faith who disguise the texts or interpret them wrongly, in order to reduce to nothing absurd opinions that Marcion never professed himself. They fought therefore the doctrine of Marcion by opposing to him texts which did not come from him.

The martyrs were numerous among the Marcionites. There was even among them the presbyter Metrodorus of Smyrna, who underwent the fire torment, and during the same persecution a woman who was killed during the reign of Valerian at Caesarea. And a bishop called Asclepius, who, in the reign of Diocletian, was also burned alive, always at Caesarea. Marcion had as disciples Apelles, Lucanus, Potitus and Basilus, Syneros, Prepon, Pitho, Blastus, Theodotion, Ambrosius, and Tatian.

Apelles was a contemporary of Tertullian. His adversaries, to denigrate him, related that he had attached himself to a virgin named Philomena, who had become, in their imagination, a prostitute. It was in reality a clairvoyant who received revelations from an angel and performed miracles. A child shaped spirit appeared to her and sometimes declared that he was Christ, sometimes Paul (Augustine, On heresies). Her visions were written down in a collection entitled "book of Manifestations" which was read publicly. Apelles died at an advanced age about 185-190, what suggests that he may have been born about the year 110.

He rejected the Jewish Law and prophets; declared that Christ had formed for himself a body as he descended from heaven, by borrowing substance from the stars. His body was therefore very true, but his flesh was astral, ethereal, not human, it was the same as that of angels. When he ascended to heaven, he restored to the stars the elements which had temporarily formed his human body, and only his spirit therefore reached Heaven. There was no resurrection of the flesh; salvation only concerned souls (Tertullian, De Carne Christi 6).

Justin tells us, about 155 (Apol. I 26) that the influence of this Christianity extended over the whole Empire; they were numerous in Rome at that time. Around 208, Tertullian confirms to us that the tradition of Marcion "filled the whole world" (C.M. 5, 19), which was not the case of its competitor, the not yet "Great" Church of the future Orthodox Catholics ... or Reformists

In 1870 an inscription was discovered in Syria at Deir Ali, south of Damascus, on what was probably the lintel of the entrance door, which read: 'Meeting room [synagoge in Greek] of the Marcionists in the village of Lebaba, of the Lord and Savior Jesus the Good [Iesou Chrestou]. Erected by the forethought of Paul a presbyter in the year 630 "[of the Seleucid era = 318 of our era].

NB. It is not the word Christos that has been engraved but the Greek word Chrestos.= good.

It is the oldest Christian church inscription that we possess.

From the third quarter of the second century, a number of polemicists of the future "Great" Church, from Justin to Tertullian (Dionysius of Corinth, Philip of Crete, Theophilus of Antioch, Philip of Gortyn, Modestus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Meliton of Sardis, Miltiades, Proclus, Clement of Alexandria, Rhodo, etc.) thought themselves obliged to write books against this first Christianity and against its doctrine. Around the end of the second century, even Bardaisan of Edessa wrote Syriac dialogues against him, which were added to the attacks launched in Greek language and soon would be in Latin. In the 4th century, the Syrian Ephrem added his name to the list.

In the fourth century, Epiphanius mentioned among the places "infected" by Marcionism, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Syria, Cyprus, Persia (Haer 42: 1). Therefore it may be logically inferred that the Marcionite Church had faithful in Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Syria, Cyprus, and Persia for several centuries. In Syria the Marcionites survived until the 5th century. The gospel of a disciple of Marcion, called the Diatessaron (of Tatian), was used as the official gospel by the Syriac Church until the fourth century.

Under the blows of its rivals, this first Christianity began to decline in the western part of the Empire in the third century.

For the Christians of the time not did each other any favors, hence the policy of "divide and impera" of the Emperor Julian towards them, according to his biographer Ammianus Marcellinus Book XXII chapter V).

"He summoned to the palace the bishops of the Christians, who were of conflicting opinions, and the people, who were also at variance, and politely advised them to lay aside their differences, and each fearlessly and without opposition to observe his own beliefs. 4 On this he took a firm stand, to the end that, as this freedom increased their dissension, he might afterwards have no fear of a united populace, knowing as he did from experience that no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another. And he often used to say: "Hear me, to whom the Alamanni and the Franks have given ear".

But it was a wasted effort if we believe what the Emperor Julian wrote to the citizens of Bostra Syria on August 1st, 362.

"I thought that the leaders of the Galilaeans would be more grateful to me than to my predecessor in the administration of the Empire. For in his reign it happened to the majority of them to be sent into exile, prosecuted, and cast into prison, and moreover, many whole communities of those who are called "heretics"[2] were actually butchered, as at Samosata and Cyzicus, in Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and among many other tribes also villages were sacked and completely devastated; whereas, during my reign, the contrary has happened. For those who had been exiled have had their exile remitted, and those whose property was confiscated have, by a law of mine received permission

to recover all their possessions.[3] Yet they have reached such a pitch of raving madness and folly that they are exasperated because they are not allowed to behave like tyrants or to persist in the conduct in which they at one time indulged against one another, and afterwards carried on towards us who revered the gods. They therefore leave no stone unturned, and have the audacity to incite the populace to disorder and revolt, whereby they both act with impiety towards the gods and disobey my edicts, humane though these are. At least I do not allow a single one of them to be dragged against his will to worship at the altars; nay, I proclaim in so many words that, if any man of his own free will choose to take part in our lustral rites and libations, he ought, first of all, to offer sacrifices of purification and supplicate the gods that avert evil. So far am I from ever having wished or intended that anyone of those sacrilegious men should partake in the sacrifices that we most revere, until he has purified his soul by supplications to the gods, and his body by the purifications that are customary."

Marcionism, on the other hand, remained active in the East for much longer. In the fifth century, Theodoretus, writing to Pope Leo, boasts of having converted more than a thousand Marcionites living in eight different villages during his career, but Marcion's followers generally joined the Manichaean groups.

Two things can nevertheless be held against Marcionism.

Marcionism was, at least theoretically, extremely puritan, going so far as to condemn sexuality and procreation.

The Marcionites had a suicidal attitude in the face of persecution and indulged in martyrdom. The supporters of the current which would give the future Catholics or Orthodoxes even Reformists will not fail hypocritically to oppose them the arguments used by the Roman magistrates against themselves. Clement of Alexandria, for example, in his *Stromatae* Book IV chapter IV: " Those who have rushed on death (for there are some, not belonging to us, but sharing the name merely, who are in haste to give themselves up, the poor wretches dying through hatred to the Creator) -- these, we say, banish themselves without being martyrs, even though they are punished publicly."

Marcion's ideas can be deduced by contrast from the hateful and hostile presentation made by the big names of another great sect of Christianity, Tertullian. (See his book IV against Marcion) as well as from the work of Saint Epiphanius entitled "Panarion "

Some of these ideas are not attested directly in the work of Marcion, and are due to disciples, but can give an idea of ??them. For more details see the works of Adolf Von Harnack.

I THE CREATING GOD OF THE BIBLE (the demiurge) AND THE REAL HIGHER GOD.

I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster....(Isaiah 45, 6-7...) Yhwh therefore is the author of evil ...

As the tree is recognized through by its fruits, consequently there is to be another God. We find in Christ indeed a very different characteristic: he is pure and simple goodness, in what he is completely different from the creator of this failed world called YHWH. With Christ another god was manifested. The Creating God is the law incarnated, he is hard and it is a powerful warrior. The true higher God himself is gentle. He is the goodness by definition.

N.B. The term "God" is indeed a somewhat vague term applied to many other entities in the Jewish Bible translated into Greek. Example.

Psalmody of Asaph.

God presides in the great assembly;

He renders judgment among the "gods":

I said, 'You are "gods"; sons of Elyon (Psalm 82: 1-6).

Just as it is inappropriate to attribute this title to the beings in question (even if they are called gods - elohim - literally in the Torah); so it is inappropriate to use this term for the creator of this world according to the Bible. Demiurge is a title better fitting to him.

Christ came to speak to us about another god, a god of whom no one had ever heard till then in the reign of the ancient god; a god buried and hidden, totally unknown by men until now, despite their innumerable lists of names of gods. This god has nothing to do with the creation of this world, and the creating god of this world, according to the Jewish Bible, even didn't know that there existed such a

higher Being above him. But this foreign and new for us, god, was revealed in the Christ associated with the name Jesus.

This world is certainly a considerable work, but the higher god also has his creation, another world a thousand times better than this one, another world and another heaven. A single work is enough for his glory for us. Driven by his immense goodness, he saved mankind by sending it Christ, and it matters more for us than the creation of locusts, flies, or earthworms. A so essential, so perfect, kindness, that it also concerns the foreigners, even those who are not our friends, for we must love our enemies.

The higher God in no circumstances can be affected by human feelings such as rivalry, anger, or suffering due to wounds. He does not punish or offend anyone, he does not know what fear is, for an essentially good being has nothing to fear from anyone; unlike a Being incarnating the law like the god of the Old Testament, who has all the reason to fear what the law often implies: judgment, condemnation, severity, anger, and ultimately vengeance.

II THE VACUITY AND INCONSISTENCY OF THE CREATING GOD IN THE JEWISH BIBLE.

The God creator of this world, at least according to the Jewish Bible (the Torah) is inconsistent in his actions, and disrespectful of his creatures. He sometimes disapproves certain actions, whereas on the contrary he should approve them. He does not know how to show foresight, and grants his blessing to men who should rather be blamed for their cowardice or evil deeds, thereby invalidating his own judgments, or showing himself unable of knowing the future.

"I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions" (1 Samuel 15:11).

This god, then, acknowledges that he was mistaken, or at least missed his intervention in the affairs of men. Same thing about the inhabitants of Nineveh in the book of Jonah (3,10).

"When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened."

This god creator according to the Jewish Bible also, one day, called Adam, by shouting, "Where are you? ." As if he could not know where Adam was. And when Adam mentions his nakedness to justify the fact that he was hiding; this creating God asks him whether he has eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as if he did not already know it (Genesis 3: 9-11).

In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, he says "I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me" (Genesis 18:21).

Another proof that he is in no way omniscient.

This creating God according to the Torah will be besides of an unworthy ferocity against his own people when he worships the golden calf; since he will then say to Moses, "Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation!" (Exodus 32:10).

Moses will prove to be better than his God, and he will try to turn away his anger by answering "Please forgive their sin, but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Exodus 32:32).

These are therefore the main points of Marcion's doctrine, but, thanks to the polemics it provoked, details have also been preserved to us.

About 208, Tertullian wrote: "Marcion lays it down that there is one Christ who in the time of Tiberius was revealed by a god formerly unknown, for the salvation of all the nations and another Christ who is destined by God the Creator to come at some time still future for the restoration of the Jewish kingdom. Between these he sets up a great and absolute opposition, such as that between justice and kindness, between law and gospel, between Judaism and Christianity."

These two Messiahs, Paul himself, already spoke of this: "For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, a different gospel from the one you accepted...." (2 Cor 11: 4) and anathematized "Anybody is preaching to you a gospel other" (Galatians 1: 6-9).

Tertullian nevertheless acknowledged: "So we must follow, then, the clue of our discussion, meeting every effort of our opponents with reciprocal vigor. I say that my Gospel is the true one; Marcion, that his is. I affirm that Marcion's Gospel is adulterated; Marcion, that mine is. Now what is to settle the

point for us, except it be that principle of time, which rules that the authority lies with that which shall be found to be more ancient; and assumes as an elemental truth, that corruption (of doctrine) belongs to the side which shall be convicted of comparative lateness in its origin ?
(Against Marcion, Book IV, Chapter IV.)

Editor's note. It is not without reason that the Marcionites accused the Judaeo-Christians of having " intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Savior" (Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III, 2, 2) and time had already done its work at the time of Tertullian since the latter wrote more than sixty years after the publication by Marcion of the epistles of Paul and of the Evangelion. The theme of the two Christs or of the two messiahs is therefore the last great idea forming part of the Marcionite preaching. The Christ that an unknown god, hitherto at least, revealed in the reign of Tiberius, for the salvation of all men; is different from the one who was announced by the creating god mentioned by the Torah in order to restore the Jewish state (and which still remains to come besides). The Messiah of this Jewish creator must be a warrior, must bear arms, and must be a military power. The Messiah of the Good God , who has made himself now known on Earth, is a Being very different from the Messiah evoked by the Torah, and the portrait of the messiah that Isaiah outlines fits in no way with the Christ of this Good God.

For example, the messiah according to Isaiah was to be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7,14); or "Hurry to the spoils, make haste to the plunder (Maher-shalal-hash-baz)" before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria" (Isaiah 8: 4). But the Christ who came, never bore this name and never entered such a warlike enterprise. The Christ who came was not announced by the prophets and the one that was prophesied by the Jewish Bible is yet to come.

It is also evident for the Jews themselves that Christ was not the Messiah they were expecting. That is why they did not follow him and treated him with suspicion and then as an enemy. While if he had been well the messiah they were expecting, they would have recognized and followed him with fervor. The difference between the two messiahs is that the Messiah of the Creator according to the Torah is supposed to act only to save his people, the Jewish people; while the other Christ was sent by the higher God in order to save the whole human race.

Who among the nations can truly devote oneself to this Jewish Creator, except for a few converts for different reasons? It is therefore the Christ of the other God, the Higher God, that the authorities as well as the forces of the creator god of this failed world have nailed on the cross. The sufferings of the cross have never been prophesied for the messiah of the creating god according to the Jews. It is obvious that there has never been a question for the god creator according to the Torah to expose his son to a kind of death which he himself reprobates " anyone who is hanged on a pole is under God's curse" (Deuteronomy 21 , 23, Gal. 3,13).

Marcion professed the following opinions.

Only the Gospel brings the teaching of the true higher Being. The Jewish Bible is to be relegated forever in the oblivion. But the evangelical message itself has not reached us while remaining intact, it has undergone additions or interpolations of all kinds. To be sure of accessing the true divine word, it is necessary to purify the evangelical texts in circulation at the time; and to seek, through the distortions they have undergone, the authentic text, the only canonical text, which can be used as a foundation for true doctrine.

1. The higher god and the god creator of this world, who is inferior to him, must not be mixed up.
 - a) The superior god, the good god and the god of love, has remained hidden from the evil one, who is the true creator of this failed universe, until he is revealed in and through Christ. Until then, he was a god who remained unknown to men or stranger. He does not direct the material world; his salvation applies only to the eternal life of the soul, not to the physical body. He is not a judge who punishes, but a merciful god. This higher god of Marcion, hidden until his revelation by Christ, is also an idea attributed by Irenaeus to the disciples of Marcus and Cerinthus. He is outside our imperfect universe, but that does not prevent him from healing men and reminding them that there is a "hereafter" from which their souls come.
 - b) The god who created this world is not a good god; he is a judge. He directs the material world; his promises are valid only for this world and for the Jews. His judgment applies only to Jews. His justice is contrary to the law of love and forgiveness of the good god.

2. Like his master St. Paul, Marcion emphasized the opposition between Law and Grace, that is, between the doctrines of the two gods mentioned above. In his eyes, two principles were at work in

the universe; the one of the Law, the organizer of the world and of human nature, who imposes his duties without always providing the means of them, and another principle superior to the first, grace or saving love. It is by placing himself under the authority of this second principle that man can escape the slavery of the former.

3. The Jewish Bible, the book of the god creator of this failed world, must be rejected. The biblical prophecies do not concern what was accomplished by Christ; it is necessary to take the Jewish writings in their literal sense, they were considered as authority neither by Christ nor by St. Paul; They announce neither the Savior nor the Apostles.

4. The god creator of this evil world is not the father of Christ; the latter is the son of the good god, but the son in the figurative sense of the term, that is to say, not different from the Father, even if he is considered his son. Christ is a mode of manifestation of God in this world, the only mode, it is the very revelation of God.

Marcion called Christ "saving spirit" (*spiritus salutaris*). For Marcion, Jesus is the good god in a human appearance, and the good god is Jesus stripped from his assumed name and then returned to his original state. To believe that Christ was born from a woman and that he really took on a man's body made of flesh and blood is a mistake. These are earthly elements that a god could not assume, especially as he could give himself a human appearance by other means. This doctrine, the Docetism, was not peculiar to Marcion, it was on the contrary very widespread at the time as we have seen. Toland notes in his *Nazarenus* of 1710 that many people in the early days of Christianity denied that Christ was truly crucified. Many, that is to say, for example, the Basilidians, the Carpocratians, the Cerinthians and, of course, the Marcionites. From where it passed into Islam.

5. There is no liberation of the flesh, but a liberation of the soul from the world and its creator.

Tertullian (*De Resur.*) claims that Marcion's dualism came from his opinion about the flesh that he considered unworthy of redemption. He needed a god who save only the spirit, essential part of Man. For Marcion indeed, the resurrection of the flesh, far from being a redemption, would have been a continuation of the evil of the "material" life, a new creation therefore from the demiurge author of this failed world.

Therefore there could be no resurrection of bodies, according to him.

6. The revelation of Christ neither completes nor fulfills Judaism, it supplants it; it has no common point with it. The canon of Marcion opposes the Jewish Bible; It included the Evangelion, the Apostolicon (a collection of ten letters from Paul) and the Antitheses. It was this distinction that he established between the "false" and "true" scriptures that forced the Church to formalize "new" scriptures facing the "old" ones. According to Marcion, Christ indeed revealed the antinomy that existed between the Law and the Gospel; he abolished the Law of Moses; he has released man from the power of matter and from that of the sorcerer's apprentice who created this world; he made him somehow a child of a new god, follower of the law of love, unknown and foreign until then.

7. On the last day, Christ will not judge men, but will only separate those who worshipped the creator of this failed world from those who have prayed to the truly good God. The evil god creator of this world will disappear with the world he has made, since this god is not truly eternal. In the end therefore, only the higher god, who is all goodness, will reign.

N.B. For Marcion, the Jewish Messiah who was to come was therefore in fact an antichrist.

8. The only true apostle to whom Christ entrusted his gospel is Paul. He revealed to him that salvation was gotten by faith and not by the works of the Jewish Law. Unfortunately, false apostles came to mislead the Church so that it betrays the doctrine of the true Christ. For the Marcionites (Origen, *Comment. De Luc*, Homilies on Luke 25) Paul sat on the right hand of God and Marcion on his left. See above.

THE ANTITHESIS.

Marcion's philosophical work entitled "Antithesis" was probably a New Testament commentary emphasizing the many oppositions between the god of the Jewish Bible (of the Torah) and the other God, the one of the New Testament. Either by putting side by side some passages of the two

corpuses in question (hence the title "antithesis"); or by direct insertion in the text of the four Gospels, of his comments intended to underline these contradictions with the Old Testament. There were remarks like if the god of the Jewish Bible is really good and knows the future, if he is really capable of avoiding evil; why, then, did he allow man, made in his own image, to be deceived by the devil, and fall into sin or death? How the devil, origin of the fall, could exist? Why was man condemned to die and woman to become a slave? Why did this god become such a severe and wicked judge? Why the law of retaliation? Contrary to his own Decalogue, this god urged the Hebrews to strip Egyptians and steal their gold and silver. He urged them to work on the Sabbath Day by making them carry the ark for eight days around Jericho. He violates the second commandment also by allowing the manufacture of a serpent of brass and of golden cherubs. This god is inconstant, he chooses men like Saul and Solomon, whom he rejects then. He calls Adam by these words: "Adam, where are you ? As if he could not know where he was, and so on.

Christ on the contrary knows all the thoughts of men, he rejects all massacres and preaches mercy and peace. He restored sight to many blind people, while the demiurge of the Jews did not even cure Isaac from his blindness. The true Christ sent by the Good God certainly did not experience the sufferings of the famous Servant of God cannot be mixed up with the Immanuel of Isaiah, and so on. It is understandable that a work so polemical towards Judeo-Christian beliefs was systematically destroyed. Marcion vigorously denounced the heap of absurdity contained in the sacred texts which the Jews attribute to Moses or to other visionaries of this kind.

Editorial Note.

Let us be more Marcionites than Marcion!

Besides the fact that there are many, but now then many artifices, in the New Testament, we also think that there are in it too, many morally or ethically unacceptable statements (the many evocations of the hell for example). It is therefore unnecessary to follow in a more detailed way the evidence that Marcion accumulates by quoting the Torah to support his antithesis. What is important it is their explicit consequence that Marcion proposes, given the evidence of the existence of two such different messages.

It is in this that his attempt was particularly innovative, and it is precisely in this that he was judged heretical and excommunicated. For having wanted to wrest the teenage Christianity from the envelope of the Old Testament, and to break with a Judaizing tradition, that some people believed to be indispensable; to open up new ways, to rethink the relevance of the schemes proposed by the Bible completely ... By dismissing from the minds the image of the false God, that of the Jews.

" Cain, and those like him, and the Sodomites, and the Egyptians, and others like them, and, in fine, all the nations who walked in all sorts of abominations, were saved by the Lord, on His descending into Hell, and on their running unto Him, and that they welcomed Him into their kingdom. But Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and those other righteous men who sprang from the patriarch Abraham, with all the prophets, and those who were pleasing to God, did not partake in salvation. For since these "righteous" men, knew that their God was constantly tempting them, so now they suspected that He was tempting them, and did not run to Jesus, or believe His announcement: and for this reason their souls remained in Hell. "

Buddhist humor or antisemitism? This is in any case a speech attributed to Marcion by Irenaeus in his book I against heresies, chapter 27, 3.

For Marcion, the problem fundamentally is very simple. The reading of the Old and New Testaments (now common terms, but which we owe justly to Marcion) shows clearly that there are two different universes, two incompatible orders. The Gospel reveals a God of love and goodness, whose Son came to earth to save men by teaching them fraternity, mercy and love of the neighbor. The Jewish Bible, on the contrary, reveals a God of rigor and punishment, who fights against Mankind and appears only surrounded by bolt, lightning, or thunder. He doesn't know generosity, tolerance, clemency. The history of the world and that of mankind, as they appear in the Bible, are made up of crimes, blood, massacres, and betray an intrinsically flawed world, an unquestionably missed universe, a failed man. Something creaks in this creation that the Jewish god is forced to constantly correct and in which man lives under the constant terror of the prohibitions, fulminations, or threats of its Creator. It is impossible, thinks Marcion, that Jesus - who is the Son of the Good God - is the Son of this exterminating Jewish God; that the latter is the Father of whom Christ uses the name. Marcion ends

up with the same conclusions as Simon the Magician: the god of the Jews is not the true God. The true God is an unknown God, a stranger to this world, and he is the true father whose Christ is the Son.

The merit of Marcion's system-in comparison with that of Simon the Magician-is that it is infinitely more rational; and that it is based, to be defined, on a rigorous interpretation, as well as on a meticulous and almost philological knowledge - of the biblical or evangelical documents.

This revolutionary Christianity therefore admitted, as we have seen, three principles.

- The Good one (the good God, author of the Good).

- The Evil one (also called the demiurge, inclined to evil), who is the God of the Old Testament.

- The Neutral (the Matter, subject to Good, but showing as for it a great force of inertia).

The universe and man are a mixture of Good and Evil, the Evil resulting from the struggle attributable to the action of the Demiurge and to the inertia force of matter.

The implication of Marcion's ideas is therefore simple: the Bible cannot be, could not be, a revealed book, nor a holy Scripture. There is total opposition between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and it is expressed at all levels. That of the genesis of the universe, just like that of the eschatological texts. What the Bible describes is not the immense and grandiose work of God, but the idiotic creation of evil. The ancient Law of the Jews comes from the principle of Evil and the new one emanates from the Good. The Redemption comes from the Good God who gives us the example to follow, through the life and passion of the Christ-angel having taken possession of Jesus's body, died - but apparently only - nailed to the Cross.

The Law of Moses must therefore be rejected, and the evangelical message must be purified from the additions which have begun to distort it. Dualism and demiurge aside, this is what appears in the letters of St. Paul.

Marcion died about 160..

This courageous and lucid attempt did not disappear with him, but the search for an adult Christianity, confronted with the problems of his time, freed from the eternal references to the Genesis and the Mosaic Commandments, will take more than a thousand years to manifest itself again.

Interrogation shaped conclusion.

Was this first great Christian exegete Gnostic?

In part only. He was Gnostic only on two points: the dualism and the notion of demiurge. And his dualism was only a dualistic or monarchian dualism, and not a radical dualism like that of the Manichaeans who had influenced St. Augustine.

We call dualistic or monarchian dualism the dualism which does not challenge the monarchy of a higher creator. In such a system, the second principle, that of evil, appears later, and generally derives its origin from a mistake in the system set in motion by the first principle. In this sense, we can consider Marcion as the founder of the Proto-Catholic current, even if he will then evolve towards more radical ascetic Gnostic positions. For example, by identifying the god of the Jewish Bible with the evil god of this failed world: the Demiurge. These extreme positions will cut him off from the Judeo-Christians who had followed him in the beginning. And the moderate wing of the Pauline movement will be recovered by the new emerging current, which will be therefore behind the Christianity as we know it today.

But Marcion at the end of the first century was the first to rely on Paul's writings and to make him known, what will be decisive for the expansion of the Church in the Roman world.

At the time the New Testament did not yet exist. Gospels and Epistles circulated freely among the Christian communities.

But the Old Testament was the reference book which announced the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus while prefiguring his teaching.

But Marcion probably lived a spiritual experiment very similar to that of Luther.

Reading Paul's epistles, especially that of the Galatians, he understood that man is saved by grace, independently from the works of the law (Galatians 2:16 and 20-21).

Giving way to an imperturbable logic, Marcion will therefore establish an absolute distinction between law and grace.

The law it is the Jewish Bible that we call the Old Testament. It is the circumcision, the Sabbath and other ritual dictates that the Judaizers wanted to impose on the Christians from pagan origin. It is the law of retaliation, the vindictive justice preached by Moses.

These are also the orders that Yahweh himself gives to his people, urging them to massacre without mercy all his enemies in the wars of conquest. While grace, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness" (Galatians 5:22). Conclusion: The God of the Jews is another God than that of Jesus. The Old Testament is obsolete.

To give a solid and unequivocal foundation to his Pauline Christianity, Marcion chose among all the Gospels circulating at the time that of Luke including the Acts of the Apostles and a dozen epistles (the letters of Paul).

Paradoxically, this very arbitrary selection had incalculable effects. For the apparent coherence of Marcion's message earned him a considerable impact in the early days. At the time of Tertullian, about 200, there were well-organized Marcionist churches, with clergy and places of worship, in almost all the provinces of the Roman Empire.

This obliged the Catholic Church (which can already be described as "Roman") to put forward also, among all the writings that circulated in Christendom, the 3 other gospels: Marc Matthew and John.

Marcionism will be therefore a very important theological current of thought in the early Church, and a belief with dualist tendency resulting from the Gnosticism according to which the gospel of Christ is a gospel of pure Love, which is not the case with the ancient law of Moses and of the people of Israel. As a result the Old Testament will be rejected: the creating God present in the Old Testament has nothing to do with the love God of the New Testament. Fervent Marcionist Christian communities survived until the end of the third century when they gradually melted into the Manichaeism movement.

P.S. It is impossible to imagine what would have become the history of the Church if it had followed Marcion's antitheses. It goes without saying that its evolution would have been totally different and that it had, since the second century, joined the positions which, nineteen centuries later, become gradually its own. But unable of tearing itself away from a tradition and a theology which provided it at the same times the ethical frameworks of his message and the emotional visions without which they would have been merely abstract principles; it had to drag along for centuries and centuries images, geneses and apocalypses which, in fact, were foreign to it. Marcion of Sinope came too early (second century) in a world which was not ready to accept his liberating break.

ON THE SLOW PROCESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.... IN THE MINDS.

It is obvious that for the Jews of the time the Messiah should take the form of a savior and redeemer of the Jewish people. It was necessary to be pagan to design that a god could be embodied or to take a human form. It was this pagan psychological base by definition that made Christianity, and not a Jewish sect more, destined to return sooner or later within the synagogue like the Judeo-Christianity of the time. As Simone Weil (the philosopher not the politician) summarized it very well: the Christian is a bad pagan, converted by a bad Jew.

The god of the Christians always claims to be the god of Abraham Isaac and Jacob with all what that implies of particularism (it is not the god of the philosophers but that of a new chosen people, the Verus Israel) however what we can say is that the characteristics of his worship and of his theology result from his acclimatization in pagan land, otherwise there would have been no Christianity. In short, what in Christianity cannot be explained by Judaism necessarily comes not from the Holy Spirit, but from the Eastern paganism of the first centuries.

As Henry Lizeray saw it very clearly, this compassion religion was not a novelty in the religious landscape of the time. "The cults of Attis, Adonis, Hyas, among many others, also taught to pity the fate of the in the great national festival of the Eleusinian mysteries, the Athenians women wept together on the misfortunes of Iacchus as Christians lament at the same time of the year the punishment of Christ, followed by his resurrection, that is to say, on the end and renewal of the sun path in the sky.

To this hybrid composition at once terrifying and sentimental, the Greeks added their two cents of salt. The latter professingmade the new religion a tall story dangerous for the reason. They completed their fault by personifying numerical abstractions after the prohibition of Druidism by the Romans, Europe received as it was the imported religion Another disturbing element, a consequence of Roman Catholicism, was the establishment of Latin; the thought of Charlemagne was overstepped. Although in our country the people have never spoken Latin, language reserved for churches and faculties.

Notes by Peter DeLaCrau: Let us notice that in what follows from his hand there is perhaps a beginning of contradiction in the thought of Henry Lizeray who gives too much confidence to the myth or the received idea of ??the forty words of Celtic origin only (in our language). Cliché of all the ignoramus who want to be peremptory in the field of the History philosophy. Despite what Henry Lizeray said in his time, our current dictionary of the language spoken by Boudica and even by Calgacus, amounts to much more 40 words (800 entries in that of Xavier Delamarre).

Coming back to our Master Henry Lizeray, it should be noticed that it is interesting to compare the myth of Mithras with that of Jesus Christ according to D.M. Murdock (Acharya S).

-Mithras was born in a cave on December 25th.

-He came from heaven to be born as a man, in order to redeem the sins of men.

-The sacrifice of Mithras had as its purpose the redemption of the human race.

-The sacred day of Mithraism was Sunday.

-He was buried in a tomb from which he rose from the dead.

-Mithras was called Light and Truth

-He was known as "Savior."

-He was commemorated by meals of devogdonion commensality. The sacred meal of bread and water, or bread and wine, symbolizing the body and blood of the sacred bull

-Jesus was born on December 25

-He came from heaven to be born as a man, in order to redeem the sins of men

-Jesus sacrificed himself (or was sacrificed) to redeem our sins.

-The sacred day of Christians is Sunday.

-Jesus's body was placed in a tomb from which he rose from the dead.

-Jesus is considered light or truth.

-He is "Savior."

- He is commemorated by a meal of commensality devogdonion, this sacred meal of bread and wine symbolizing the body and blood of Christ.

ON THE PAGANIZATION OF NAZORENE JUDAISM.

The essays of this author...

-The Christ Conspiracy 1999.

-Suns of God 2004.

Being very controversial....

We will give the floor to another, more consensual one.

In his preface to the history of Christianity Edward Gibbon writes: "If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first Christians ... was changed, by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the Trinity. Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief." As being worthy of belief by the first generation of Greek-speaking Christian polemicists, whose production extends over the whole of the second century, from the reign of Hadrian to that of Commodus. The principal Greek Apologists are five; in the chronological order: Aristides, Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus.

ARISTIDES.

Unable to tackle the whole of apologetic literature in this study, we shall content ourselves with studying two examples, by beginning with the Apology of Aristides, which is the very first Christian apology which we have preserved almost entirely, and the first Christian writing likely to be dated very precisely (i.e., 124/125).

Editor's note. Rather strangely this apology was included in the novel of Barlaam, derived from the legend of the Buddha, and which tells of the spiritual journey of the son of the King of India Abenner, called Josaphat in the Latin tradition and particularly in the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine. The first Christian version of the legend seems to have been written in Georgian language (the Balavariani) from an Arabic version of the Buddha's legend (Kitab Bilawhar wa-Yudasaf, Yudasaf being an Arabic transposition of the Buddha's name, Budhasaf).

What is troubling at first in this work is that only two chapters (out of seventeen) concern Christians directly, and we can still think, of course, that they were added artificially to a previous book of Jewish origin, with some additional changes in the other chapters.

This book in any case is fundamentally derived from two types of borrowing.

The first type of borrowing was perhaps made from a theological tract giving a definition of God according to strictly philosophical criteria. This source, which is used independently by Gnostic authors and a Christian author, can only be of Jewish origin, even if the influence of Greek philosophy, particularly Middle-Platonic, is strongly felt there, would it be only through its many apophatic definitions of God.

But Aristides also used to compose his apology a handbook of practical life of Judeo-Hellenistic origin in order to report the life of the ideal Christian. It is natural to think that Aristides drew from the same source, that is to say, a Jewish disciplinary textbook, what refers to the Jews, and that he then freely inspired himself from it to depict the Christians in such a flattering light. Whatever it is, it seems unquestionable that the portrait of the pious Jew in Aristides depends on a Jewish source, and that Aristides built his portrait of the ideal Christian on the same model. It is clear, indeed, that this portrait of the perfect Christian is a development of that of the perfect Jew. Are evoked successively the philanthropy (or love of the neighbor) of one or the others, their mercy towards the poor, their solicitude towards the captives (but, as far as the Christians are concerned, this attention is limited here to the victims of persecutions), or again the concern they show to honor the dead (with a new limitation to the deceased Christian only, in Aristides).

Aristides will present his essay to the Emperor Hadrian during his visit to Athens in 125 and the latter seems to have welcomed it. But this book with a childish anthropology (4 races of men) does not tell us much about the subject, since before morality there is a certain ethology even among animals, and because it is essentially question here of commonplaces linked to the very definition of Philanthropy, a

notion familiar to Greek philosophy, and of which we find many parallels in different Greek authors entirely foreign to Judaism as well as to Christianity. So let's go to the next author, Justin.

JUSTIN.

Justin, born about the year 100, converted to Christianity around 150, died about 167. He wrote his first apology around 150, a work that was preserved in one manuscript of the fourteenth century. Justin quotes the Old Testament copiously and draws his information from a book called *Memoirs of the Apostles* (or *Memoirs*) that we do not know, and which apparently disappeared. On the other hand, his "life of Christ" written about 160 shows us that he has apparently never heard of the four Gospels at the time. His quotations from the Scriptures differ more or less from the corresponding passages of our present editions, and he mentions facts or events that contradict them. Justin certainly did not know our modern gospels, at least as they are today. On the other hand, he knew the Marcionism; it is he who drafted the first refutation of it, very briefly besides (*Apol. J, XXVI and LVIII*). He ranked Marcion among magicians worshipping a god other than the creator of this world, but he acknowledged that Marcion got the adherence of many people.

In the chapter VII of the same book, Justin writes that some of the Greek philosophers of his time were Christians. Perhaps was he talking about Peregrinus, but given Justin's nasty tendency to see witnesses of his God everywhere, even before the birth of Jesus, we can doubt. Justin will go so far as to explain that the Dionysian mysteries are only a perverse distortion of the embodiment of Christ. According to him, the demons, aware of the prophecies announcing the coming of the Messiah, would have invented a mystery in which Dionysus, son of Zeus and born of a virgin, ascended to heaven after being smashed to pieces and eaten. The Christian mystery therefore would have been thus, according to him, previous to all the others. Perhaps did he simply want to say that certain philosophers famous in his time had a message that was already very close, but without knowing? Justin speaks to the Emperor and the Roman senators by making an apology for Christian belief in the name of reason. It is not reasonable, in his opinion, to persecute Christians. "Hence are we called atheists. And we confess that we are atheists, so far as gods of this sort are concerned, but not with respect to the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues" (*I Apol. VI, 1*).

Justin develops the doctrine of the "seeds of the Word," present in all peoples even before Jesus. He was the first to systematically parallel the philosophical and well thought out monotheism of the Greeks and the texts of the Bible, which were nevertheless in reality only monolatrous, acting as if they were the same thing. He maintains that the Greek philosophers have borrowed from the prophets who are their predecessors, what is, of course, once again completely false. But completely in line with the Jewish falsifications of history, made in the city of Alexandria, as we have already seen with some Hellenists like Aristobulus, the Sibylline oracles, and the pseudo-Hecataeus of Abdera. See the work of Frenchman BERNARD Lazare on the subject.

Below are some excerpts.

In which Justin gives the reason for this family resemblance between certain myths and Christianity. Unlike Aristide, Justin bases his presentation of Christian doctrine on his understanding of the Scriptures on the one hand, and on Christological reflection on the other.

First apology..

21. "And when we say also that the Word, who is the first birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter. For you know how many sons your esteemed writers ascribed to Jupiter: Mercury, the interpreting word and teacher of all; Æsculapius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Bacchus too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Hercules, when he had committed himself to the flames to escape his toil; and the sons of Leda, and Dioscuri; and Perseus, son of Danae; and Bellerophon, who, though sprung from mortals, rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus..."

22. "If we assert that the Word of God was born of God in a peculiar manner, different from ordinary generation, let this, as said above, be no extraordinary thing to you, who say that Mercury is the angelic word of God. But if any one objects that He was crucified, in this also He is on a par with those reputed sons of Jupiter of yours, who suffered as we have now enumerated. For their sufferings at

death are recorded to have been not all alike, but diverse; so that not even by the peculiarity of His sufferings does He seem to be inferior to them; but, on the contrary, as we promised in the preceding part of this discourse, we will now prove Him superior — or rather have already proved Him to be so — for the superior is revealed by His actions. And if we even affirm that He was born of a virgin, accept this in common with what you accept of Perseus. And in that we say that He made whole the lame, the paralytic, and those born blind, we seem to say what is very similar to the deeds said to have been done by Esculapius."

This argument is nevertheless double-edged, for it sets us on the path of syncretism, or at least of the assimilation of Christ as a mythical figure among others. Justin thus specifies.

23. " And that this may now become evident to you that whatever we assert in conformity with what has been taught us by Christ, and by the prophets who preceded Him, are alone true, and are older than all the writers who have existed; that we claim to be acknowledged, not because we say the same things as these writers said, but because we say true things":

Let us finally add that Justin explains this family resemblance by an intervention of demons who would have blown these ideas to the pagans while distorting them in order to fool them better.

54. " But those who hand down the myths which the poets have made, adduce no proof to the youths who learn them; and we proceed to demonstrate that they have been uttered by the influence of the wicked demons, to deceive and lead astray the human race. For having heard it proclaimed through the prophets that the Christ was to come, and that the ungodly among men were to be punished by fire, they put forward many to be called sons of Jupiter, under the impression that they would be able to produce in men the idea that the things which were said with regard to Christ were mere marvelous tales, like the things which were said by the poets. And these things were said both among the Greeks and among all nations where they [the demons] heard the prophets foretelling that Christ would specially be believed in; but that in hearing what was said by the prophets they did not accurately understand it, but imitated what was said of our Christ, like men who are in error, we will make plain."

There we find...

A) The pride or claim to exclusivity of the truth of the first Christians.

B) Their racist contempt for non-Jews and non-Christians.

The theory of the diabolical counterfeiting of Christian truths is Justin's only answer to a real objection. Christians face the accusation of imitating and counterfeiting pagan myths even though they absolutely denounce these myths. This work of intellectual sapping, somewhat sickening, will only succeed with Constantine.

JUSTIN AND THE THEME OF THE "VERUS ISRAEL OR TRUE ISRAEL."

Justin will call Orthodox the thinkers whom he kept, heretics those he had decided to reject.

Christianity had just invented a new meaning for the old Greek word *haireisis*.

In the middle of the second century, about 150, during the reign of the Emperor Antoninus, there will be henceforth an explicit discourse on heresies. The first author attested-what doesn't mean that he is the first historically speaking-is this Justin: "I have a treatise against the heresies that have existed already composed, which, if you wish to read it, I will give you" (first apology, chapter 26). In the middle of the second century, however, the early Christians no longer content themselves with observing the existence of different doctrines; they fight them, in writing. Although Justin's work against "all heresies" is lost, there are precise traces of it in the rest of his work.

First Apology, Chapter XXVI: an entire paragraph about Marcion.

" And there is Marcion, who is even at this day alive, and teaching his disciples to believe in some other god greater than the Creator. And he, by the aid of the devils, has caused many of every nation to speak blasphemies, and to deny that God is the maker of this universe, and to assert that some other being, greater than He, has done greater works. All who take their opinions from these men are, as we before said, called Christians; just as also those who do not agree with the philosophers in their doctrines, have yet in common with them the name of philosophers given to them."

The Dialogue with Trypho, chapter 35 about the heretics (brrrrr!)

" Some are called Marcians, and some Valentinians, and some Basilidians, and some Saturnilians, each called after the originator of the individual opinion, just as each one of those who consider themselves philosophers, as I said before, thinks he must bear the name of the philosophy which he follows, from the name of the father of the particular doctrine."

These two quotations point to a Justin who takes over the classic usage of the word of Greek origin "heresy" but makes it shift progressively to another meaning: heresy in the present meaning of the word. This is in fact the birth of a new literary genre, the heresiography or drafting of tracts against heresies, the author of such books being a "heresiologist."

Justin therefore will be the first to change slightly Marcion, of whom he disapproved the radicalism, of course, in order to make him somehow more presentable in the eyes of a Greco-Roman public opinion hostile to so much fanaticism. The compromise advocated by Justin was that of the Verus Israel or True Judaism.

Neither rejection of the Jewish Bible in the manner of Marcion.

Neither Bible in the Jewish manner.

A third way...

- The Bible interpreted differently.

- And in a more enlightened way.

Justin, through his Dialogue with Trypho, is the principal inventor of this third way between Marcion and the Judaism. The Christian reading advocated by Justin indeed sees in Jesus the Messiah predicted by the Holy Scriptures, when the Jewish reading sees in it only a still unrealized expectation. Justin is the first witness of a scriptural argument organized on this subject. This implicitly anti-Semitic manipulation of the texts (the Jews did not understand their own sacred texts and these now belong to Christians); will lay the foundations of a Hellenized Christianity, a religion worthy of the Empire, and whose beliefs will seek more and more in Greek philosophy the foundations of a new theology. This Greek philosophy nevertheless never constitutes an end in itself, but only a means, subordinate to the defense of the biblical texts, contrary to what Marcion wanted. To note. In this famous Dialogue with Trypho, Justin, like Montanus, affirms that the saints will soon live and for a thousand years in a new Jerusalem still more spacious and more beautiful than the old one.

But he will also be the author with this essay of value judgements which will be at the origin of the Christian anti-Semitic theme by definition of the deicidal people. BERNARD Lazare, one of the most lucid experts on the subject, author of the book certainly showing the most high-minded viewpoint on the history of anti-Semitism, has moreover devoted a whole sub-chapter to it.

Below are some excerpts from this Dialogue with Tryphon. It's up to our readers to get an idea.

XVI.

For the circumcision according to the flesh, which is from Abraham, was given for a sign; that you may be separated from other nations, and from us; and that you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer; and that your land may be desolate, and your cities burned with fire; and that strangers may eat your fruit in your presence, and not one of you may go up to Jerusalem.' For you are not recognized among the rest of men by any other mark than your fleshly circumcision. For none of you, I suppose, will venture to say that God neither did nor does foresee the events, which are future, nor foreordained his deserts for each one. Accordingly, these things have happened to you in fairness and justice, for you have slain the Just One, and His prophets before Him; and now you reject those who hope in Him, and in Him who sent Him--God the Almighty and Maker of all things--cursing in your synagogues those that believe in Christ. For you do not have the power to lay hands upon us, on account of those who now have the mastery. But as often as you could, you did so. Wherefore God, by Isaiah, calls to you, saying, 'Behold how the righteous man perished, and no one regards it. For the righteous man is taken away from before iniquity. His grave shall be in peace, he is taken away from the midst. Draw near hither, ye lawless children, seed of the adulterers, and children of the whore. Against whom have you sported yourselves, and against whom have you opened the mouth, and against whom have you loosened the tongue?'

XVII.

For other nations have not inflicted on us and on Christ this wrong to such an extent as you have, who in very deed are the authors of the wicked prejudice against the Just One, and us who hold by Him.

For after that you had crucified Him, the only blameless and righteous Man, through whose stripes those who approach the Father by Him are healed, when you knew that He had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the prophets foretold He would, you not only did not repent of the wickedness which you had committed, but at that time you selected and sent out from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up, and to publish those things which all they who knew us not speak against us. So that you are the cause not only of your own unrighteousness, but in fact of that of all other men. And Isaiah cries justly:

CONCLUSION.

The apologies of Aristides, Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus are neither theological tracts nor dogmatic works. Nevertheless, in their desire to explain the Christian faith to "those from outside," the Apologists had to state in words comprehensible by their audience, and, consequently, to clearly design the message ("kerygma") peculiar to the Christian religion; that is, how God could be both One and Three, the transcendence and immanence of God in this world, and eschatology (Heaven Last Judgment ...); they are therefore valuable witnesses to the elaboration of Christian dogma in the second century, but also favored actors of this shaping by adaptation to the Greek culture of that time.

The theology of the Apologists is as much a theology in accordance with reason as in accordance with belief. The importance of the reason of "Greek" type in the matter of religious beliefs can be explained by the fact that, for the large majority of them, they were trained in Greek philosophy of which they have retained the methodological and epistemological principles; and that they speak to a pagan audience, supposed to be little receptive to an argument based on the Scriptures or the faith, by definition; but sympathizing, on the other hand, with the conformity of the doctrines with reason as it was designed at that time in that region of the world. The God of the Apologists is therefore (at least in appearance) as much the God of the Greek philosophers (among others that of Plato) as that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The definition of God according to the norms of philosophy (uncreated, not begotten, impassive, incomprehensible, inaccessible to senses) is everywhere present in them; it makes possible both to satisfy Hellenic philosophy, to deny any true divinity to the god-or-demons of paganism; and to distance oneself from the anthropomorphisms of Judaism, that the pagan polemicist Celsus paralleled with those of Greek polytheism.

The God of the Apologists is "Father, Son, Spirit"; It is the baptismal formula, repeated several times in their works, and thus promoted to the rank of a dogma. But, beyond the expression, the role and distinction of the three divine entities seem uncertain. On the one hand, the Father and the Son are sometimes mixed up (the Word being then no more than a "power" of the Father), sometimes on the contrary distinguished to the point of speaking of "another God" next to the first (The expression appears in Justin). In a way, therefore, a bi-theism. And similarly, the existence itself of the Spirit and its divinity are not the subject of an unequivocal affirmation. The Spirit often seems mixed up with the Son, through the concepts of Word (logos) or Sophia (it is the case in Theophilus, for example), and he is never called God as the Son.

The "trinitarian" theology of the Apologists is essentially a theology of the Word (Logos). Most Apologists do not mention Christ as a historical personage, but evoke the Son only as the Word (Logos) of God. This term, borrowed, it seems, from the Johannine tradition - even if only one of the Apologists quotes verbatim the prologue of John - makes possible, by its very ambiguity (it means both "word" and "reason"), to reconcile two different functions. Inspiration and revelation, on the one hand, creation, cosmic animation and Providence on the other. It makes it possible therefore to make the Christian doctrine compatible with the common ground of Greek philosophy. Justin and Athenagoras present the Christian Word as a duplicate of the Stoic Logos, organizer of the world, that it enters as a principle of universal life, or of the soul of the Platonic world.

To what point went the feeling of a "division" or of a "distribution" of God? If a Tatian strongly refuses any idea of ?? "division," Justin, on the other hand, in his polemic against Judaism, does not hesitate to use the expression "another God" to designate the Word.

This extreme distinction is explained both by Justin's desire to show the presence of the Word in the Scriptures, "next" to God, of course, but as full God ; and by the concern to report the reality of the divine theophanies, God being present in the world below without having deserted the higher world . Some expressions go nevertheless in opposite directions, especially when the term Word, to designate the Son, is placed on the same level as the term Wisdom or Angel; what tends to make the Word a simple "power" of God, and not a full being or existence. Only the appearance of the words "person" and "hypostasis," combined with that of "Trinity," will make it possible to find an escape from this dilemma, not without long debates ...

The angelology of the Apologists is used as a link between their monolatry and the polytheism as professed by the different Greek philosophical schools. The angels and their opposite doubles, the demons, get into the hierarchy of the heavenly beings that can exist between God and men, like the daimones of the Platonism. This characteristic is particularly evident in Athenagoras, who does not

hesitate to place on the same level the Platonic hierarchy: God, "demons," men, and that of the Christian tradition: God, angels or demons, men. This is clearly a legacy of the Judeo-Hellenistic inheritance. Athenagoras, by identifying the demons (daimonia or ponera pneumata, "evil spirits") of the Jewish tradition, with the gods of paganism (called daimones); admits explicitly both their existence and their power - not only a malignant power, such as the incitement to evil or even the orgiastic explosions that accompanied certain worships, but also a beneficent or simply useful power, at least in appearance; the one which is in the pagan shrines, particularly the phenomena of miraculous healing. Athenagoras, on the other hand, does not hesitate to call the Egyptian god-or-demons Isis and Osiris "heavenly beings," notwithstanding the earthly existence that he also recognizes for them, since he makes them the first kings of the country; thus mingling the Euhemerist tradition, which makes the god-or-demons simple human beings honored after their death for their benefits; with that of Platonism which places the "demons" (i.e., the gods of paganism) in an intermediate position between the higher Being and men. Thus is explained, at least partially, if not their worship, at least their insertion in the hierarchy of the divine one.

This hierarchy is well documented in the Middle-Platonism-a current which at that time under the influence of Eastern demonologies began to distinguish between beneficent demons and maleficent demons, equivalents of the angels and demons of the Jewish tradition.

Tatian is not very representative of the dominant beliefs within the great Church. The other Apologists; - who ignore largely the notion of original sin handed over at birth, the fault of Adam having simply led to corruptibility and death for the man-; agree on the existence of three main causes for the existence of sin.

The first is that of free will. God, when he created man, subjected him to the obligation of choosing between good and evil. It is man himself who is responsible for the evil that prevails in this world, and not God, according to an expression borrowed by Justin from Plato. But, of course, freedom is not enough to explain the presence of evil; it is also necessary that he desires it. This is a second cause of the origin of evil: man, through his fleshly nature, is subjected to desires, to bodily needs, even, in a still more pessimistic design, to the attraction of matter, considered, if not bad, at least corrupting. The third cause is the influence of the demons. Not content with having shown themselves unfaithful to their mission, which was to govern men in the sense of the good, the rebellious angels showed themselves corrupting. They taught men the corrupting sciences. Such is the action of Satan and of his troop of demons, that the first Christian theology often designates as the Adversary by definition, that is, the one who opposes God for the possession of souls. This type of explanation is largely developed in Justin, but it is also expressed in Athenagoras, perhaps the most "Hellene" of the Apologists.

Such, then, are the essential characteristics of the theology elaborated by these pseudo-intellectuals, the first Christian writers to have tried to present the Christian religion coherently, if not systematically; since their talks are scattered, closely adapted to the needs of their argument or of their polemic, and that they were first drafted in order to enlighten the pagan audience to whom they spoke. They probably did not innovate in their expression, and probably only gave their personal interpretation of the beliefs and reflections that prevailed in their communities. But the necessity of presenting in a manner acceptable to the Greek reason the rudiments of the Christian kerygma led them to choose a terminology adapted to the culture of their time and to conform their beliefs to the demands of Hellenistic culture.

TATIAN AND HIS DIATESSARON (GOSPEL HARMONY).

Born in Syria (Mesopotamia) around 110/120. A heretic for the Greek and Latin churches, he was the author of an apology (Address to the Greeks) which earned him almost the same status as a Father of the Church.

Tatian thus presents himself in his "address to the Greeks." I Tatian, a disciple of the barbaric philosophy, I was born in the land of the Assyrians, having been first instructed in your doctrines, and afterwards in those which I now undertake to proclaim.Wherefore, having been admitted to the mysteries, and having everywhere examined the religious rites performed by the effeminate and the pathic, and having found among the Romans their Latiarian Jupiter delighting in human gore and the blood of slaughtered men....and one demon here and another there instigating to the perpetration of evil....“

This shows well that the order of ideas that led Marcion and Apelles, went out from Judeo-Christianity by a kind of necessity, it is that Christians of all origins come to return to the same dialectical solutions without their antecedents could have predicted it. Such was, particularly, the fate which was reserved to the apologist who had twenty times played his life for his faith, Tatian.

Was Tatian heretical?

The question is important because behind it there is another one: that of a possible influence of the heterodox positions of Tatian on the composition of the Diatessaron or Gospel harmony.

Marcion's real influence on Tatian's thought remains a debated problem and remains only based on his dream of a single gospel, which was indeed an idea of ??Marcion. Our main source is Irenaeus of Lyons.

What is called encratism in the early centuries is the ascetic extremist tendencies of certain communities which prohibit their members from all sexual relations, as well as all consumption of meat and intoxicating drinks. But the concept is difficult to grasp, for the encratites that are denounced are almost always presented, moreover, as dogmatic deviants, most often "Gnostic."

But of Tatian, did Irenaeus know anything but his "Address to the Greeks?" However it is not Tatian's text that is a problem in this case, but that of Irenaeus. How can Irenaeus come to call "blasphemy" and to decree heretical, the assertion that Adam was not saved, when the hypothesis of Adam's salvation has no scriptural basis? Subsequent authors add little. Hippolytus, Eusebius, and Jerome, depend on Irenaeus.

The testimony of Eusebius is interesting. In a chapter on Justin, he speaks only well of Tatian, and even praises his knowledge (IV, 16, 7). In the extracts of Rhodo, of which we are told twice in succession that he was the pupil of Tatian; It appears not only that Rhodo, a great sworn opponent of heresy, never spoke of that of his master (or then Eusebius would certainly have reported it), but it seems even to be emphasized from it that in the Tatian School they led the war against the Marcionites.

In the final analysis, we may wonder whether the accusation of encratism is not entirely based on the second part of the Address to the Greeks in which Tatian establishes the necessity of mortification in order to attain salvation. Gnosticism might be found in a pinch in some ambiguous expressions, especially insofar as redemption apparently plays no part in it.

At a date that can't be fixed precisely, Tatian, who was still basically an Assyrian at heart, and who much preferred the East to Rome, returned to his native Adiabene (modern Arbil), where the number of Jews and Christians was considerable. There his doctrine became more and more precise. Detached from all the churches, he remained in his own country what he was already in Italy, a sort of solitary Christian, member of no sect, although approaching the Montanists by asceticism, the Marcionites by doctrine and the exegesis. His ardor for work was prodigious; his ardent head could not rest; the Bible, which he read incessantly, inspired him with the most contradictory ideas; he wrote endless books on the subject.

After having been, in his apology, the fanatical admirer of the Hebrews against the Greeks, he fell into the opposite extreme.

The exaggeration of the ideas of St. Paul, which had led Marcion to curse the Jewish Bible, led Tatian to sacrifice the Old Testament to the New one. Like Apelles and most of the Gnostics, Tatian admitted a creating God subordinate to the higher God. The Jewish Law was the work of the Creating God; only the Gospel was the work of the higher God. An exaggerated need for moral perfection did that, after having repulsed the Hellenic antiquity as impure, Tatian also rejected Biblical antiquity. Hence an exegesis and a criticism very different from those of the Marcionites. His Problems, like the Antithesis of Marcion and the Syllogisms of Apelles, had perhaps as a goal to rove the inconsistencies of the old law and the superiority of the new one. He presented in it, with a rather lucid common sense, the objections that can be made against the Bible, placing himself on the ground of reason. The

rationalistic exegesis of modern times thus finds its ancestors in the school of Apelles and Tatian. This school was certainly, in exegesis, more sensible than the orthodox doctors, with their allegorical and typical interpretations quite arbitrary.

The official list of the sacred books of a religion is called CANON (from the Greek canon = tablet). The existence in the Christian canon of four gospels, three that can be put in parallel and one that keeps itself to itself, the gospel of John, is a consequence of the trial and error that presided over the elaboration of the Christian canon.

Let us, first of all, remind of the fact that at the time there were more than four gospels in circulation, there were dozens of them (the Gospel of Thomas, the proto-Gospel of James, the Gospel of Judas, etc.).

The difficulty was to eliminate as many of them as possible.

And the mystery is the reasons that led to the elimination of some texts or the recovery of others.

The criteria for a selection.

It can be assumed that each gospel corresponded at the time to a particular religious community or sensibility and that therefore there were arbitrations.

The selection criteria are neither the date (the Didache and the Letter of Clement are from the same period as John's letters), nor the supposed author (the Gospel of Peter and Thomas were not selected) nor the fact of being an apostle (Mark and Luke are not among the Twelve).

On the other hand, one of the selection criteria was certainly the concern to fight against the other currents of Christianity.

The ecclesiastical polemic against the Gnostics obviously led to the rejection of the Gospels, or of texts related to the disciples of Jesus, which were in use among them. The same was true of writings that were the expression of Jewish-Christian currents, in the strictest sense of the term. Henceforth, association with a group whose doctrine and/or practice was suspect became sufficient grounds for rejection.

An obvious example is provided by the fate of the Gospel of Peter: Serapio of Antioch sees nothing to reproach it with until he is convinced that it is read in Rhossos by people accused of heresy and until he finds that in Antioch itself it is in the hands of Docetist Christians. Still, he contents himself to say, in substance, that he has found there, "for the most part, the right doctrine of the Savior, with a few different additions." The fact that he can be classed among the pseudepigrapha under the name of Peter and the other apostles becomes a defect only because of the first suspicion.

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The method of selection therefore in practice will be not to include but to exclude. The resulting selection will take some time to impose itself. The case of the Revelation of John is exemplary in this respect. It was included in the list of writings recognized fairly early in the West, despite signs of hostility in Rome at the beginning of the third century, and for a long time it remained disputed in the East, after the criticisms of Dionysius of Alexandria, prompted by the strength of the millenarian movement in Egypt. Amphilochius of Iconium, at the end of the fourth century, would even write: "The Revelation of John is approved by some, but the most say it is spurious. This is perhaps the most reliable (lit. most unfalsified) canon of the divinely inspired Scriptures (sic)

N.B. Another of the key men in this process was Irenaeus of Lyons. He seems to have opted for a relative diversity of points of view, but was obviously keen to have 4 gospels and not more (and not less).

The thought which dominated Tatian, in the composition of his celebrated Diatessaron, or Gospel harmony, could not therefore win him the approbation of the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists. The discordance of the Gospels shocked him. All that, in the life of Jesus, according to him, brought the god too closer man, was sacrificed without pity. The copies of the Diatessaron were therefore destroyed by the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists. The principal adversary of Tatian, in this last period of his life, would have been it is said to us, his old pupil Rhodo. Resuming one by one the Problems of Tatian, this presumptuous exegete would have made a point or answering all the objections aroused by his master. He also wrote a Commentary on the six days of the creation.

No doubt, if we had the book that Rhodo composed on so many delicate questions, we should see that he was less wise than Apelles and Tatian; the latter confessed cautiously not knowing how to solve them.

Gnosticism was still flourishing in the East. Combining Valentinus, Saturninus and Marcion together, Tatian could not endure the idea that Christ would have had the slightest contact with matter. Sexual intercourse between men and women is an evil. In his Diatessaron, Jesus has no earthly genealogy. He even came logically enough to maintain that the flesh of Christ had been only an appearance. The use of meat and wine classed in his eyes a man among the impure ones. In the celebration of the mysteries, he desired that only water should be used. At least, according to Epiphanius, what remains to be proved, for Tatian was never a priest.

He thus was considered as the head of those many sects of Encratites or Abstainers, forbidding marriage, wine, and meat, which arose on all sides, and pretended to draw the rigorous consequence of the Christian principles.

From Mesopotamia these ideas spread to Antioch, Cilicia, Pisidia, all Asia Minor, Rome, Gaul. Asia Minor, especially Galatia, remained its center. The same tendencies occurred on several points at once. A series of false ideas, very widespread, led people to believe that the evil coming from concupiscence, the return to virtue implies the renunciation to the most legitimate desires.

Tatian offers, we see, much resemblance with Apelles. Like him he resolutely attacked the Jewish Bible and became a free exegete of it. He also gets closer to the Protestants of the sixteenth century and particularly to Calvin. He was, in any case, one of the most profoundly Christian men of his age, and, if he became heretic, it was, like Tertullian, by excess of severity.

In his Apology addressed to the Greeks, Tatian doesn't refer to Jesus when it is a question to convince his interlocutors. It is only question of God and of the "Word."

He even confesses in this Apology (chapter 21) that Christianity also includes its own myth, similar to the Greek myths, which is strange enough for a Christian, but could be an argument of a nature to reassure the pagans skeptical before this new philosophy .

But Tatian was especially famous for having tried, like Marcion, to base his preaching on a single gospel, the Diatessaron. This work contains no text relating to the human and earthly origins of Christ, no childhood narrative, no genealogy, and began directly with the phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." Back to the East, aged and perhaps chastened, Tatian undertook indeed to write a concordance of the Gospels, the first of its kind. Almost immediately translated into Syriac, this Diatessaron is a collection of great importance for the Eastern churches and it had, quite beyond Syria, an extraordinary fortune, until the Middle Ages. It is a bold effort to find a solution to the divergences and differences that appeared in the Gospels, the life and words of Jesus, by trying to harmonize them in a single writing. It is still impossible to determine whether Tatian composed his work in the West, or after his return to the East. Nor do we know whether he composed it in Greek or Syriac, even if the Syriac seems most likely. We know from his commentary that St. Ephrem commonly used the Diatessaron, who, in the middle of the fourth century, in Edessa, was the "gospel" by definition, the Holy Scriptures used exclusively in the liturgy. This situation lasted for more than three centuries. According to J. Hamlyn Hill, this Diatessaron was even known in Northern Europe (cf. the Codex fuldensis and the Heliand or life of Jesus in Old Saxon). That is to say the incontestable influence and the influence of this original work. Who would've believed that?

FASHION PHENOMENON CHRISTIANITY.

The context of the emergence of Christianity in the Roman world is, more broadly, that of the diffusion of the religions known as "Eastern religions" or "mystery religions" (that is to say with initiatory rituals). Mithra (Persia), the Great Mother Cybele (Asia Minor), Isis (Egypt), the Syrian Goddess-or-demon, or fairy, Atargatis, and others ... These mystery worships are salvation worships that is to say that the faithful, through some rituals of initiation, seek in them the comfort, a promise of healing, or of wealth. A very material salvation therefore. In the third century, under the influence of the Neoplatonism, these worships became spiritualized. In other words, if there is well originality of the concepts of the early Christians within this background, it is to be evaluated in a very nuanced way. Was the attractiveness of Christianity fundamentally different from that of the mysteries of Mithra or of the cult of Isis? Not necessarily, and even, in most cases probably not. There is no doubt that for some, becoming believer in Jesus Christ was accompanied by no exclusiveness. The Fathers of the Church are obliged to battle against the Christians who continue to visit the temples.

In the early days, the diffusion of Christianity took place within the Jewish community of the Diaspora, in the synagogues, since disciples and apostles are of Jewish origin. Peter, before his meeting with Christ, is called Simon, and Paul comes from a Jewish family of Tarsus in Cilicia. The Romans equate the Christians with the Jews, Christianity being for them one of the multiple spiritual currents that cross the Jewish communities - one among others. But according to what is happening elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, the relations between Jews and Judeo-Christians quickly became problematic; especially when Christians began to welcome among them uncircumcised pagans who did not follow the Jewish Law, including its food bans. The apostle Paul, who through his travels and letters distributes the Christian belief, advocates the proclamation of Christ to all indiscriminately.

" For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, III, 27).

Little by little, according to a chronology that is difficult to determine, Christian communities get their own autonomy and identity, and a hierarchy is set up within them.

What are the means of distribution of Christianity? Exactly the same as those of other Eastern worships. Above all, the merchants of the eastern provinces. The case of the Montanist martyrs of Lyons in 177 (of whom Blandina) is exemplary. Lyons is a big river port and commercial center, home office of many Eastern settlements. The other conveyor, the legions, has perhaps less played for Christianity.

In Asia Minor, Christianity has an early and important spread in rural areas. Two factors may have intervened. On the one hand, the native religious substratum, willingly ascetic, formed a suitable ground; on the other hand, the still strong structures of the village community in this part of the world may have resulted in collective adherences to the new religion of a certain number of communities. This is in addition to the very strong presence of Jewish communities, themselves also rural.

The notion of "persecution" has to be qualified. During the first two centuries of the Empire, to speak of religious persecution would be a mistake. Christians are prosecuted (when they are, what is far from being systematic) for crimes under common law. The letter of Pliny in 111/112 illustrates the concrete motive of the condemnations: the refusal to obey the emperor, the insubordination. In this case, the refusal to obey the order to sacrifice. Nothing of a religious persecution in itself.

We must also put in perspective the idea of a generalized hostility. To the invectives of Tacitus responds the placid attitude of Pliny. Popular hostility, in a universe where the religious dimension is closely linked to municipal life, is due to the fact that Christians seem to refuse to meddle in public life and to stay away from others. Hence a fundamental misunderstanding. What for Christians is a refusal of pagan worship is, for their fellow citizens, generalized misanthropy. In the Hellenistic period, the Jews had been the subject of similar accusations of *amixia*, of refusal to mingle with others.

Christianity in the middle of the second century of our era was also marked by the astonishing figure of Peregrinus this Christian prophet, founder of a religious fraternity; but whose career was turbulent and whose end resembled rather that of a Stoic philosopher, a little like Tertullian (who returned to

paganism in his old age). The importance of the role of Peregrinus in the diffusion and consolidation of Christianity is to have prepared the ground for Montanism.

Aulus-Gellius says that he met him several times in Athens and finds that he is a character who demonstrates seriousness and constancy (*uirum grauem atque constantem*), able of saying useful things. Lucian of Samosata who denounces him as an impostor says he was considered "a second Socrates" or "a second Epictetus."

Peregrinus was a remarkable exegete of the Old Testament, the author of excited sermons and preaching, which earned him to be one moment equated to a new Jesus (a new prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit and the Paraclete?)

This Christian preaching of Peregrinus led him to be thrown into prison, but this imprisonment gave him considerable notoriety in Christianity at the time, so much so that some people came from certain cities of Asia Minor to help him. Faced with his obstinacy not to abjure his belief, the governor of Syria, Julius Severus, finally released him.

Back in Parium (Parion, a town of Mysia, on the Hellespont, today Kemer in Turkey), Peregrinus was nevertheless not warmly welcomed by his fellow citizens, who thought for a moment suing him, because of a dreadful family history badly settled (not a parricide in any case).

In 135, he left his hometown again to resume a wandering life, from a Christian community to another Christian community. It was during this first phase of his life that he got acquainted with a young mystic just as thrilled as himself, native of Ardabau in Phrygia, Montanus, and of whom we will speak later. Around 140 he returned to Parium to demand the restitution of the inheritance that he had formerly offered to the Christian community of the city.

There he met Agathobulus, a cynic philosopher, whose way of life he adopted the most complete destitution.

This passage from Christianity to cynicism is not improbable. Later, it will be, in the other direction, without difficulty. One mentions cites the case of the cynic Maximus, who, becoming a Christian, kept the habit of the sect, and became bishop of Constantinople.

As for Peregrinus, it was doubtless the cause of his separation from Montanus.

This conversion of Peregrinus to cynicism is very crudely summed up by Lucian (paragraph 16).

Peregrinus' consumption of meat offered as a sacrifice to the god-or-demons was perhaps less a mistake from him than a manifestation of his will to give up Christianity; this food being at the time strictly forbidden in the Christian sect (Acts 15, 20 and 29, 21, 25, 1 Cor. 8), where still prevailed Jewish Christians eager to continue to follow Jewish Law.

Peregrinus then went to Rome, but was banished for having insulted the Emperor Antoninus Pius. The last stage of his wanderings brought him back to Greece, where he delivered speeches exhorting to revolt against the Roman power, and attacking the extremely rich Herod Atticus. It was at Olympia that he ended his life during the games of 165. In accordance with the rules of Brahmanism, he immolated himself by fire before an immense crowd.

N.B. Brahmins, also called gymnosophists (literally "naked sages." Perhaps in this case some sadhus) were known by the Greeks since the expedition of Alexander. They are found, for example, in texts by Diogenes Laertius on philosophy.

Diogenes Laertius. Lives and opinions of eminent philosophers. I Prologue 1.

" There are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians ... The Indians have their Gymnosophists; and among the Celts there are the people called druids."

Prologue 6.

"The advocates of the theory that philosophy took its rise among the barbarians go on to explain the different forms it assumed in different countries. As to the Gymnosophists and druids we are told that they uttered their teaching in riddles."

The suicide of one of these gymnosophists, Calanus, had greatly struck the imaginations at this period. He was imitated by another Hindu, Zarmanochegas, who immolated himself by fire in the heart of Athens. The authors agree on the immobility held by these Brahmins once they have climbed the pyre after building it themselves. According to Ammianus Marcellinus (XXIX, I, 39) and the chronicle of Eusebius, Peregrinus did the same. This unexpected disappearance earned him a true worship. According to the testimony of the Christian apologist Athenagoras, a statue which had the reputation of predicting was erected in his honor in his native town. It attracted en masse the pilgrims, and a devotee bought even his walking stick to offer it to admiration or veneration (Lucian Adv. Ind. 14). Some relate the suicide without comment. Tertullian (Ad mart. 4) and Eusebius in his chronicle. Ammianus Marcellinus (XXIX, I, 39), about the execution by the flames of the philosopher Simonides, on the orders of the Emperor Valens, delivers an emphatic eulogy of the death of Peregrinus. Tatian

also reported us a rather favorable anecdote. But he had not only admirers: Pausanias (VI, 8, 3) about Timanthes of Cleonae, evokes the suicide of Peregrinus, and declares that it was more madness than courage. In short, Peregrinus, discussed during his lifetime, was also discussed after his death.

The end of Peregrinus according to Lucian is evidently a parody of that of Christ and of the worship which ensued (contradictory eyewitness accounts, etc.); but in choosing the only end worthy of the great heroes of cynicism, Peregrinus perhaps wished also to show how much he disdained death and suffering.

For the record, here what Lucian wrote exactly about this first great eulogist of Christianity.

DOCUMENT.

BEST WISHES FROM LUCIAN TO CRONIUS.

Unlucky Peregrinus, or, as he delighted to style himself, Proteus, has done exactly what Proteus in Homer did. After turning into everything for the sake of notoriety and achieving any number of transformations, here at last he has turned into fire; so great, it seems, was the love of notoriety that possessed him. And now your genial friend has got himself carbonified after the fashion of Empedocles, except that the latter at least tried to escape observation when he threw himself into the crater, while this gentleman waited for that one of the Greek festivals which draws the greatest crowds, heaped up a very large pyre, and leaped into it before all those, witnesses; he even addressed the Greeks on the subject not many days before his venture.....

It was then that he learned the wondrous lore of the Christians, by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. And—how else could it be?—in a trice he made them all look like children, for he was prophet, cult-leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many, and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world. Then at length Proteus was apprehended for this and thrown into prison, which itself gave him no little reputation as an asset for his future career and the charlatanism and notoriety-seeking that he was enamored of. Well, when he had been imprisoned, the Christians, regarding the incident as a calamity, left nothing undone in the effort to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, every other form of attention was shown him, not in any casual way but with assiduity, and from the very break of day aged widows and orphan children could be seen waiting near the prison, while their officials even slept inside with him after bribing the guards. Then elaborate meals were brought in, and sacred books of theirs were read aloud, and excellent Peregrinus—for he still went by that name—was called by them 'the new Socrates.'

Indeed, people came even from the cities in Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to succor and defend and encourage the hero. They show incredible speed whenever any such public action is taken; for in no time they lavish their all. So it was then in the case of Peregrinus; much money came to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a little revenue from it. The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody; most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.

However, Peregrinus was freed by the then governor of Syria, a man who was fond of philosophy. Aware of his recklessness and that he would gladly die in order that he might leave behind him a reputation for it, he freed him, not considering him worthy even of the usual chastisement. Upon returning to his home, he found that the matter of his father's murder was still at fever heat and that there were many who were for pressing the charge against him. Most of his possessions had been carried off during his absence, and only his farms remained, amounting to fifteen talents; for the entire property which the old man left had been worth perhaps thirty talents, not five thousand as that utterly ridiculous Theagenes asserted. Even the entire city of Parium, taking along with it the five that are its neighbors, would not fetch that much, including the men, the cattle, and all the rest of their belongings. However, the charge and complaint was still aglow, and it was probable that before long somebody would appear against him; above all, the people themselves were enraged, mourning over a good old man (as he was called by those who had seen him) so impiously slain. But observe what a plan our clever Proteus discovered to cope with all this, and, how he escaped the danger. Coming before the assembly of the Parians—he wore his hair long by now, dressed in a dirty mantle, had a wallet slung at his side, the staff was in his hand, and in general he was very histrionic in his get-up—manifesting himself to them in this guise, he said that he relinquished to the state all the property which had been left him by his father of blessed memory. When the people, poor folk agape for largesses, heard that, they lifted their voices forthwith: 'The one and only philosopher! The one and

only patriot! The one and only rival of Diogenes and Crates!' His enemies were muzzled, and anyone who tried to mention the murder was at once pelted with stones. He left home, then, for the second time, to roam about, possessing an ample source of funds in the Christians, through whose ministrations he lived in unalloyed prosperity. For a time he batted himself thus; but then, after he had transgressed in some way even against them—he was seen, I think, eating some of the food that is forbidden them, they no longer accepted him, and so, he was being at a loss" (LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA).

THE MONTANISM.

Heresy is a religious doctrine that differs from the official doctrine known as orthodoxy. The schism is only a refusal to recognize the authority of the local bishop or of the bishop of Rome, it is only a question of discipline.

For example, Marcionism was a heresy, but according to some authors such as David F. Wright, Montanism was only schismatic, or more exactly more fanatical than heretical. " The conclusion imposes itself that 'in the early Montanist controversy scriptural or ecclesiastical criteria for condemnation of the movement were not easily to hand' (Vokes, op. cit., p. 320). In a nutshell, the New Prophecy was fanatical rather than heretical."

Hence the perplexity of one Origen: "Some have asked whether those who are called Cataphrygians should be called heretics or schismatics" (Commentary on the Epistle to Titus).

The most illustrious representative of Montanism, Tertullian, is, moreover, like Origen, a NON-CANONIZED Father of the Church.

FILE.

Millenarian movement of the third century very close to the Egyptian Parabolani and called New Prophecy by its members, heresy of the Cataphrygians or Phrygians by its adversaries, especially directed by women and by the Holy Spirit.

This first Christian tendency, finally independent of Judeo-Christianity (neither for nor against), appeared suddenly in broad daylight in the middle of the second century in Central Anatolia. And produced numerous writings based on the "oracles" of his inspired prophets (same situation today in Catholicism with the proclamation of the pope infallibility in dogma or with the notion of isma among Muslims) .

We have little information on this first mass Christianity of Asia Minor, but as nothing can arise from nothing, it is probable that the ground had been prepared there by the action of the famous Peregrinus, who was once a Christian.

Started in any case by a certain Montanus (or Montan), either in 156 (according to Epiphanius) or in the early 170s (according to Eusebius). Hence its name in history. His preaching indeed was successful, announcing the end of the world and the advent for at least a thousand years of the reign of a New Jerusalem in this region of the Empire and quickly converts two wealthy women Prisca (or Priscilla) and Maximilla, who prophesied in turn. They left their husbands, and Montanus promoted them among the prophets of the Bible. They were also very successful; people came from afar to witness their prophecies. They were, of course, called "insane women or madwomen" causes of many scandals by the future Catholics Reformists or Orthodox. For example, St. Jerome.

As for doctrine Epiphanius in his Panarion states : « These Phrygians too, as we call them, accept every scripture of the old and the new Testament and affirm the resurrection of the dead as well...they agree with the holy catholic church about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but...».

On the other hand, there is a trace of minor writings of the "oracle" type among them. These Montanist writings having been burned by Christianity, the main sources of the history of this first popular evangelization are the Church History of Eusebius of Caesarea, the writings of Tertullian and Epiphanius, and some inscriptions, notably in central Phrygia.

Pentecostalism was the first form naturally taken by Christianity after the death of the new Joshua. We will find again this phenomenon in Montanism.

Let us remark that the Gospel of John was also born in Asia Minor at the end of the first century, in a Jewish-Christian community. Here only appears the Paraclete, whose nature and precise identity remained for a long time vague. It will be only the Trinitarian theology of the 4th century which will identify it with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, and make it one of the Persons of the Trinity.

This Johannine current of Ephesus was so popular at that time in Asia that Gaius in Rome tried to counter it by attributing the Gospel and the Revelation of that name to Cerinthus (pseudo-Tertullian, 10). He nevertheless had heirs. "The new prophecy" is part of them. The essential principle of Montanism was indeed that the Paraclete (the Greek word for advocate, defender, counselor) that

Jesus had promised in the Gospel according to John, was manifested to the world through a named Montanus (born in Asia Minor in the first half of the century) and the prophets or prophetesses associated with him.

Was Montanus heretical or only schismatic?

The relations between Montanism and Marcionism seem rather loose and hardly evident, even if according to Clement of Alexandria, who is indignant with that in his book entitled *Stromata* (IV, 13, 93, 1), the sympathizers of Montanus called Pneumatics or spirituals the followers of their own branch and psychics, in other words, less spiritual, the other Christians; who did not have like them the spirit (who therefore were not pneumatics), and were satisfied with a blind faith (*Pistis* in Greek).

The first to react vigorously against Marcionism and against a rather too gnostic view of the character of Christ, was on the contrary Montanus. He was particularly well placed for this, having begun by being a priest of Cybele, or Attis, that is to say, a pagan familiar with the notions of man-god, but inspired by the teaching of John (Gospel, Revelation).

Phrygia was traditionally the center of the mystery religions of Cybele and her husband Attis, whose faithful devoted themselves to ecstatic dances. Hence the fact that Montanus and his disciples were also called Phrygians, even Cataphrygians.

We have kept very little of Montanus' teaching, in view of the censorship exercised by the other Christians towards it. All we know is what his opponents have said about it, but that is enough to give us an idea of ??what his movement was.

Unlike the Gnostics and their too much intellectual elitist teaching, on the other hand, Montanus himself avoided too complicated principles or too philosophical speculations. He viewed his action only as a charismatic renewal. As the voice of the Holy Spirit, he announced the fulfillment of the promise of a new covenant, made on the day of Pentecost, and the imminent return of the Messiah Christ. There is indeed in the Gospels (Matthew 24: 34, Mark 13: 30 Luke 21:32) the very precise sentence: " Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." Montanus therefore preached a kind of religious awakening in a community that tended to become bourgeois. He claimed to make the purity of the early Church live again.

Ethics. The Montanists were not monks or hermits living apart from the world, but in order to minimize contact with this world their way of life was very spartan.

Convinced that the end of the world was near, Montanus developed morality destined to purify the faithful inwardly and to detach them from their material desires.

He advocated therefore continence in order to prepare the millennium of the New Jerusalem. In the expectation of the end of the present world, we must redouble our austerity. Austerity of manners: arts and entertainment were forbidden.

Many bishops imposed a lent and various fasts. Montanus recommended three lents, fasting at work, many extraordinary fasts, as well as two weeks of abstinence.

Hence there were rigorous lents where prayers were recited together by fasting until the evening, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, and during Holy Week (three Lents and two weeks without meat).

Very severe and at the limit of the hunger strike seems to have been the fasting of the Montanist martyr Alcibiades, in the prisons of Lyons (Eusebius, H. 5, 3, 2). It is true that he seemed to place some hubris in it, in any case it is of what his captivity companions accused him. In short, institution of new fasts and aggravation of the old ones.

The end of the world being close, this new asceticism went as far as the renunciation to marriage, later softened in prohibition of remarriages. For Montanism will not prohibit marriage and procreation in the end, but will tolerate them, in order to avoid libertinism and passionate adventure. On the other hand, although many Christians did not condemn the second marriages; Montanus, as for him, will always equate them with disguised adultery. Prohibition of second marriages and valorization or extolling of virginity. The women had to renounce all adornment, the youths could only appear veiled.

Some bishops pardoned those whose sin caused a scandal when they had accomplished the imposed penance. Montanus declared that there were unforgivable malpractices. Prohibition therefore from

absolving certain sins, especially recidivism. So life excommunication for any serious fault. Those who are no longer touched by grace can't be saved.

For the Montanists, sanctity consisted essentially in imitating the life of the new Joshua. Research and extolling of martyrdom therefore. In any case, you must not flee from persecution or martyrdom. Some bishops did not consider it a crime to flee from persecution. Montanus, on the other hand, considered as apostasy, cowardice, or treason, any measure intended to escape from it. The Montanists will be the first to consider that martyrdom is the guarantee of a posthumous heavenly glory, and will equate with an angelic becoming the sufferings of persecutions aroused by their fanaticism of true Taliban of Christianity (called Parabolani in Egypt). This thirst for martyrdom explains many things.

Theological notions.

-The Parousia. The return of Christ is imminent. Everything is subordinate to this expectation. Most of the Christians of the second century indeed still believe in the imminent return of the Christ Messiah, proclaiming the end of time and the reign of the saints. The Montanists, like many other Christians of the time, therefore expect each day this Parousia.

The belief in an imminent return of the Messiah Christ was certainly not limited to the Montanists, but with them it assumed a special form which consequently gave to their activities the nature of a true charismatic renewal of Pentecostal type. They thought that the New Jerusalem would soon descend on Earth in the Phrygian country (at Pepuza). Many of their disciples went there and many churches were consequently abandoned.

-Charisma. The gift of prophecy remains one of the highest charisma of their church (see Joel 2, 28: "And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy"). Corroborated by: the daughters of Philip (Acts 21: 9) ; the prophetesses of Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:5) , not forgetting Ga 3,28.

-Paraclete or Holy Spirit. The revelations are given by God gradually, according to the needs and scope of the intellect of the humans to whom they are destined. Same reasoning in today's Islam about abrogated or abrogating verses. Montanus' insistence on the notion of paraclete also implied, of course, that something could be added to the teaching of Christ and of the apostles, and that Christians therefore had to accept to evolve through supplements of revelation. Cf. the role of the pope in Catholicism.

From these progressive development of the revelation, the Montanists deduced a similar development and perfection in the means of grace and discipline, the institution of new fasts, the aggravation of the old ones, the extolling of virginity, the prohibition of second marriages, the defense of fleeing from persecution, the prohibition against sins, especially recidivism. One of the most powerful stimulants of their zeal was the expectation of the coming return of Jesus (millenarianism), an expectation not very favorable to marriage and practical activity.

-Distrust of the religious authorities. Though in principle they did not attack the authority of the Scriptures, unlike the Marcionites, nor the church hierarchy, in fact, their doctrine nevertheless induced to subordinate them to the recent manifestations of the Paraclete and to the decisions of the prophets whom he chose as the spokespersons of his oracles. It is also said, and it is probable, that they preserved in writing these prophecies from Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla, in a collection entitled "Book of Manifestations," which was read publicly. Some of them have come to us, in spite of the censorship and of the public burnings performed by the Christianity which will become institutional (the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists). They testify to the ecstatic nature of this form of worship, for the prophet or the prophetess never speaks in his or her own name. The speaker is directly the spirit of God or the Holy Spirit or the Paraclete as in the case of Muhammad some centuries later. E piphanius evokes the voice coming out of Montanus' mouth and declaring

FRAGMENTS OF THE TEACHING OF MONTANUS, PRISCILLA AND MAXIMILLA. (according to the web site of Dieter Mitternach)

1. Montanus: I am the Lord God, the Almighty, dwelling in a man. (Epiphanius, Haer, XIVIII.11.)
2. Montanus: Neither angel nor messenger, but I the Lord, God the Father, have come. (Ibid.)
3. Montanus: I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete. (Didymus, De Trinitate III, 41. 1.)
4. Montanus: Why do you say, 'the superman who is saved?' Because the righteous man will shine a hundred times brighter than the sun, and even the little ones among you who are saved (will shine) a hundred times brighter than the moon. (Epiphanius, Haer, XLVIII, 10.)

5. Montanus: , Lo, the man is as a lyre, and I fly over him as a pick. The man sleeps while I watch. Lo, it is the Lord that distracts the hearts of men, and that gives the heart to man. (Ibid., XLVIII.4.)
6. Montanus: You are exposed to public reproach? It is for your good. He who is not reproached by men is reproached by God. Do not be disconcerted; your righteousness has brought you into the midst (of all). Why are you disconcerted, since you are gaining praise. Your power arises when you are seen by men. (Tertullian, De fuga 9).
7. Montanus: Do not hope to die in bed nor in abortion nor in languishing fevers, but in martyrdom, that he who suffered for you may be glorified. (Ibid.)
8. Montanus: For God brought forth the Word as a root brings forth a tree, and a spring a river, and the sun a ray. (Tertullian, Adv. Prax. 8.) . (Tertullian, Adv. Prax. 8).
9. Montanus: The Church is able to remit sins; but I will not do so, lest others also sin. (Tertullian, De pudic, 21.)
10. Maximilla: After me there will be no prophet more, but the consummation.(Epiphanius, Haer, XLVIII, 11.)
11. Maximilla: I am driven as a wolf from the sheep. I am not a wolf; I am word, spirit, and power. (Eusebius, H. E v 16-17).
12. Maximilla: Do not listen to me, but listen to Christ.(Epiphanius, Haer, XLVIII, 12).
13. Maximilla: The Lord sent me as a partisan of this task, a revealer of this covenant, an interpreter of this promise, forced, whether I will or not, to learn the knowledge of God." (ibidem).
14. Prisca: "For continence brings harmony, and the y see visions, and, bowing their heads, they also hear distinct voices, saving and mysterious.(Tertullian, De exh. cast. 10.)
15. Prisca: They are flesh, yet they hate the flesh (Tertullian, De res. carn. 11.)
16. Prisca: Appearing as a woman clothed in a shining robe, Christ came to me [in sleep]; he put wisdom into me and revealed to me that this place is sacred and that here Jerusalem will come down from heaven. (Epiphanius Haer. XLIX.
- 1).....
.....

GLORY AND FALL OF MONTANISM.

Montanus does not seem to have long presided over the work he had undertaken. It is known that Prisca died in 179, and that Montanus was probably already dead at the time. Orthodox accounts cause him to die of violent death, hanged like Judas and similarly for Maximilla. Maximilla had survived Prisca, and thought she was the last prophetess. Themiso succeeded Montanus at the head of this Church, after him Miltiades. Their principal seat was at Pepuza, the holy place where the new Jerusalem was to descend from heaven, the place where Montanus had taught, where Priscilla and Maximilla had prophesied.

About the same time, the Montanism, released from the most shocking peculiarities of its origin, had already spread nevertheless to Lyons (Martyrdom of Alcibiades) and to Africa, where it had still more illustrious martyrs (Perpetua and Felicity) as we will see it.

Epiphanius (died in 403) observes that in his time Montanism had still many adherents in Phrygia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia and even Constantinople.

The expansion of Montanist Christianity in the large towns of the East, in Asia Minor, in Thrace, and even in North Africa (Carthage), at length aroused such opposition that several synods were summoned against it. A number of Syrian and Anatolian bishops (such as Avircius Marcellus) attacked it on several occasions, notably because of his "feminism" (or more exactly of the role of women in their churches), what Paul's epistles condemned categorically. Some future Orthodox or Reformist Catholics even accused it of having been aroused by the devil, and used exorcisms against it. Sotas of Anchialus, Zoticus of Comana and Julian of Apamea. Others attacked it in a more literary manner, like Claudius Apollinaris of Hierapolis and Miltiades.

Given their weak political or economic weight, it did not go much further, but they continued their work of sapping. Tracts were written against it, sermons pronounced, and the Christians agreeing with Montanism were harassed or ostracized, even in the death, according to Eusebius. All Montanist books were burned by imperial decree in 298. The rise of Christianity among public figures in the 4th

century was such that there began to be Montanist churches razed and Montanist people expelled from their homes.

In order to destroy it in the East, especially in Phrygia and neighboring countries, it was necessary to use until the end of the reign of Justinian (527-565) and of his antimontanist legislation a pitiless persecution which gathered all the anathemas that the love religion can pronounce, all the degradations and all the spoliation that the laws can enact, all the devastation and all the abuses that violence can generate.

Procopius *Historia arcana* or *anecdota* Chapter XI.

" 14 There are in the whole Roman Empire many rejected doctrines of the Christians, which they are accustomed to call "heresies" — those of the Montani, the Sabbatiani, and all the others..... All these heretics he commanded to change their earlier beliefs, threatening many things in case of their disobedience, and in particular that it would be impossible for them in the future to hand down their property to their children or other relatives. Now the shrines of these heretics, as they are called,.....

The Emperor Justinian began by confiscating the properties of these sanctuaries, thus stripping them suddenly of all their wealth. From this it came about that thereafter most of them were cut off from their livelihood.

And many straightway went everywhere from place to place and tried to compel such persons as they met to change from their ancestral faith...

The Montani, whose home was in Phrygia, shutting themselves up in their own sanctuaries, immediately set their churches on fire, so that they were destroyed together with the buildings in senseless fashion, and consequently the whole Roman Empire was filled with murder and with exiled men.'

In 550 Emperor Justinian commissioned John bishop of Asia in order to strike a fatal blow at the movement not only by burning its churches to the ground but also by digging up and burning the relics of Montanus Maximilla and Prisca.

Conclusion.

After a brief attempt at resistance at the end of the fourth century, as we have seen it (the Julian letter to the citizens of Bosra: " I thought that the leaders of the Galilaeans would be more grateful to me than to my predecessor in the administration of the Empire. For in his reign it happened to the majority of them to be sent into exile, prosecuted, and cast into prison, and moreover, many whole communities of those who are called heretics were actually butchered, as at Samosata and Cyzicus, in Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and among many other tribes also villages were sacked and completely devastated; whereas, during my reign, the contrary has happened". Ammianus Marcellinus book XXII, 5, 4: " no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another"); the Montanists continued their worship secretly or clandestinely in the shadow of the dominant Christianity, but the movement, in the 6th century, died out in the rural areas of the region where he was born.

NB. Apparently, there were still a few Montanist villages in the 8th century, but Emperor Leo III having learned of it ordered the conversion and baptism of its inhabitants. They refused, took refuge in their churches and set fire to them themselves. This time there were no survivors. Montanism had lived.

ANALYSIS.

MONTANISM WILL NEVER BE HERETICAL, BUT ONLY SCHISMATICAL: IT CAUSED ONLY A BREAK WITH THE OTHER BISHOPS (SCHISM) NOT A HERESY (See, for example, the case of its most illustrious representative, Tertullian, the only father of the Church with Origen not to have been canonized).

There were in the Bible many arguments to affirm a continuous, gradual, revelation, according to the needs and scope of the intellect of the human beings to whom it is destined. Not to mention the sleep of Adam evoked in Genesis 2:21, and the phenomena through which the divine spirit manifested itself, acting in the prophets of the Old Covenant, it is incontestable that Jesus promised his disciples to send after his death the Paraclete, the Comforter who was to remain eternally with them (John XIV 16), to teach them things which they could not understand during his life (XVI, 12); the Spirit of truth, which would lead them in all truth. This promise had received a first and striking accomplishment on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples, who still knew only their own language, expressed themselves in all the languages spoken at the time (Acts of the Apostles, 11, 4). Similar facts had taken place in the assemblies of the first Christians (Glossolalia).

Montanus therefore presented himself as the voice of the Paraclete. He did not claim to be the Paraclete himself; but the man in a prophetic ecstasy being only an instrument by which the divine Spirit acts (as a musician on an instrument of music), the words he uttered were therefore not his own but those of the Paraclete.

The criticism of Montanus and his millenarian movement by the future official Christianity will emphasize especially the unorthodox and not very Catholic ecstatic forms of the new prophecy and its rejection of the bishop hierarchy. Without forgetting, for some ones, the criticism of its "feminism." The result of these anti-Montanist campaigns was, besides that a growing proportion of Christians tended to reject the very notion of prophecy and to contest the authenticity of the Gospel according to John (because of its mention of the Paraclete precisely) . The Christian public figures then turned away from the various apocalypses in circulation and therefore even from the Gospel of John (which was almost eliminated).

But Montanism has also influenced in two other ways the future official Christianity: by bequeathing to it many elements borrowed from the eastern mystery religions; especially the worship of Cybele (the meal of devogdonion commensality with the god-or-demons renamed Eucharist and others ...) . The Christians of Asia Minor, under the direction of Montan, will also be the first ones to collect tithes regularly, to systematize the offerings, and to pay the clergymen. Revolutionary organizational ideas which will be at the basis of the organization of all other later Christendom.

Montanism was not a new form of Christianity or a new heresy, in spite of the separation it entailed. Montanism was in reality a first reaction to the Gnosticism, even moderate (monarchian dualism) of Marcionism. Montanism indeed accepted the principle of a certain continuity with the Jewish Bible and the main themes of its eschatology; but by calling for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit for a New Prophecy, it also liberated Christianity from its Jewish attachments (without, however, completely breaking with it, what is the even characteristic of the Christianity of today).

Montanus maintained only that God had not wished to manifest in one go the aims of his Divine Providence for the human race, and dispensed to it only by degrees, with a kind of saving, the truths or precepts being to raise it. Same principle have we said that the Islamic theology of the abrogating or abrogated verses (.al-nassikh wa-l-mansukh).

God gave laws to the Hebrews, whom he invited to submission by the authority of punishments or the attraction of rewards. He sent prophets who enhanced the intelligence of their people. After the prophets came the much more complete revelation of Jesus Christ. But the Jesus of the Gospels also told his disciples that he reserved for other times the important truths, which they were not yet able to

assimilate. From where did this second revelation come under these conditions? From the Paraclete that Jesus had promised to send before ascending to heaven.

The basic idea of Montanism was that if the Apostles had benefited from the Holy Spirit, Montanus himself had benefited from this particular form of the Holy Spirit called "Paraclete" (unlike the Christians of today the Montanists then distinguished indeed the Holy Spirit of the Paraclete); that this Paraclete had revealed to Montanus more truths than Christ had preached during his living on Earth. Not only more truths, but truths more important and of a higher order.

The Holy Spirit had inspired the apostles, the Paraclete inspired Montanus. Exactly as it now inspires the Church and the Popes. Exactly like today's official Christianity.

There is very little information about the very person of Montanus and this information is very vague. It is generally accepted that Montanus was born in Ardabau, a village of Phrygia or Mysia, in 156 according to Epiphanius, fifteen years later in 172 according to Eusebius. He was a pagan converted to Christianity. He was undoubtedly a priest of Cybele (Didymus, De Trinitate III, 41). The thing is contested but as the cult of Cybele was dominant in Phrygia, it is likely that Montanus was attached to it. As it is almost impossible to divest oneself entirely from the religion in which one was born, especially when you have practiced priesthood in it; Montanus kept the impressions produced in him, as in most pagans, by the action he had seen developed by the Mother of the gods over the minds of the human beings in ecstasy, especially his belief in the perpetual revelations of the deity in oracles. This conjecture seems to be confirmed by the qualifiers *abscissus* and *semivir* (eunuch), that St. Jerome (Ep. ad Marcellam) applies to Montanus, which remind of the mutilations that the *galli* the priests of the Mother of the Gods inflicted themselves in their orgiastic ecstasies; but also by the ecstasies and co-operation of the women whom Montanus borrowed from this worship, to make them one of the keys of his religious system.

This will also be important for the very celebration of the Last Supper. The Last Supper will be understood less and less as a *agape* feast or a fraternal meal gathering the whole community and more and more as a kind of new sacrifice.

After his conversion to Christianity, he became a priest, perhaps even a bishop. Interpreting the texts of Saint John (Gospel, Revelation) Montanus declared that the Paraclete was him.

According to his opponents of the future Catholicism, he was only a possessed man taken by false ecstasies who "began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning." Of course!

Montanus indeed began his public life in a small village called Pepuza, where he began to prophesy under the effect of the Johannine Paraclete (or of the Holy Spirit?) of which he called himself the musical instrument (touched by the divine pick). See herein above quotation No. 5.

Such statements were made even more impressive by the scenery in which they were spoken.

According to Epiphanius, ceremonies took place frequently in the churches of Pepuza, with seven virgins, carrying white torches (some candles ??) entering and leaving to deliver oracles to the congregation. He notices that this triggered a contagious enthusiasm inciting tears or repentance.

Montanus succeeded in gathering a considerable number of faithful by going from town to town and spreading his prophecies to those who were willing to hear him. A little like Peregrinus, he gathered even around him a certain number of disciples. He was soon joined by two young women, Prisca (or Priscilla) and Maximilla, who abandoned their husbands to follow him and to prophesy in turn because they were clairvoyant.

And if Montanus was well the initiator of the movement and his organizer, it was Prisca and Maximilla indeed who were the theological pillars of it through their inspiration. This trio was the driving force of the movement, but other prophets and prophetesses of lesser reputation surrounded them.

Despite the sensation it created in his early days and the polemics it generated, the movement has long remained in the shadow of official Christianity, willing only to be its charismatic or Pentecostal tendency.

Originally, it was only a boost of religious enthusiasm within Eastern Christianity. Montanus wants only to regroup the Christians, to isolate them from the world in order to prepare better the return of Christ; but in view of the reaction of future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists, the Montanists will soon be forced to establish themselves as an autonomous Church. Among their opponents the conflict will focus on the establishment of a patriarchal hierarchy with a single leader, while Montanism was egalitarian and anti-hierarchical. There was no clergy in Montanism, only elders teaching catechism to the younger generation.

Montanus indeed taught that anyone could prophesy (like him), for Christ had promised to send spiritual support (the paraclete) to all his followers. He therefore taught consequently that all the faithful were equal.

The main see was located at Pepuza (west of Turkey between Izmir and Ankara), which was probably the place where Montanus had spoken publicly for the first time, a place where, according to Prisca, the new Jerusalem had to come down from heaven.

Montanus Prisca and Maximilla traveled in Asia Minor, spreading their message quickly and successfully. They had missionaries in the whole area and even beyond, since traces are attested in all the empire including in Lyons. The inscriptions bear witness to the fact that many towns then passed almost entirely to Montanism.

This popular Christianity violently attacked the (Roman) State by wishing only its disappearance under the blows of the barbarians. Refusal to bear arms in order to defend the country and so on ... see the statements of the priest of Marseilles called Salvian two centuries later even if he was not a Montanist. This movement also denounced with the same verbal violence the corruption that prevailed in the Church of that time. It is therefore evident that this popular and egalitarian aspect of Montanism could not but displease Christians who sought to become respected public figures.

As we have had already the opportunity to see it, Montanus had associated with his work two women who seem to have been very gifted for ecstasies and presumably also for suggestiveness: Prisca or Priscilla and Maximilla. They had great success; people came from afar to hear their prophecies.

The future Orthodox or Reformist Catholics proposed therefore to exorcise Prisca and Maximilla. This request was rejected as insulting to the Holy Spirit, who had chosen them as spokespersons.

The Montanists protested and endeavored at least to win over the favor of the distant Christians in the West.

Here is found the first sure trace of Christianity in Western Europe. In 177 the Montanists solicited the intervention and mediation of the Christians of Lyons.

The virulence of their social or political criticism will lead indeed to the first great anti-Christian persecutions ordered by the Roman emperors. Many Montanists, simple slaves or masters denounced.... by their own slaves, will end up being stoned or massacred by crowds that the very serious political situation of the time frightened, especially in towns where pogroms were frequent. Examples in Lyons in 177, Saint Pothinus and a woman named Blandina, with her fifteen-year-old son (called Ponticus). Blandina encouraged him to die rather than to swear loyalty to the emperor, and will thus contribute, by the horrible sacrifice of his child, like Abraham once, to feed the simplistic images of the perfect little Christian (rewriting of History). For comparison see what the famous Berber queen Dihya nicknamed kahina, made to preserve her children.

The conflict became soon so open that the other bishops of Asia Minor, more or less Judeo-Christians, condemned this Montanism become almost official. They organized a synod (the first mentioned in history), and they excommunicated the principal adherents of the movement probably after the affair at Lyons in 177, for it had also caused a sensation in this province. The Montanists remained officially excommunicated during their entire lives, although on essential points they were in communion of

faith with the future Orthodox or Reformist Catholic Church. Even if they were not criticized for their doctrinal mistake, the importance they attached to the prophecy inspired by the Paraclete or the Holy Spirit annoyed the future official Christians in the East, who persisted in their judgment and tried to justify it in many writings. They were even accused of sacrificing children and of sharing their flesh in their mysteries.

The Montanists, however, endeavored to win the favor of the Christians in the West. What produced for us the first date which can be accurately placed in the history of Christianity in Western Europe. In 177 indeed the Montanists asked for the mediation of the Christians of Lyons. Eusebius tells us that they sent then to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, a letter pleading reconciliation.

The evidence that the early Christians of Lyons were largely Montanists is...

1) That the Christians of that city had at the time accepted, in the person of St. Irenaeus, who went to Rome for that purpose, to plead the cause of the Montanists before the Pope Eleutherus. In his book *Adversus Praxeam*, Tertullian speaks of a Roman pope, who, unlike his predecessors, inclined to make peace with the Phrygians and the Asian congregations, and to recognize the new Montanist prophecy; but was persuaded by the calumnies of the Monarchian Praxeas to change his mind and condemn Montanism.

2) That it is evident that some Christians in Lyons such as Pothinus originated in Asia Minor, the rest being perhaps of Celtic origin.

3) That at least one of these Christians in Lyons, named Alcibiades, had a typically Montanist behavior and that his name (or that of a homonym?) is associated with that of Montanus two lines later in the famous letter of the martyrs of Lyons that Eusebius of Caesarea quotes in his church history. Irenaeus is ordinarily credited with the writing of the letter. However, this attribution is unlikely. Undoubtedly, Irenaeus was a priest at Lyons in those days. But during the persecution he was absent, sent in a mission to Rome in order to argue the case of the Montanists. The narrative is surely the work of an eyewitness. Moreover, in this naive narrative, we can't recognize the turn of mind, nor the erudite manner, nor especially the style, much more learned, of Irenaeus. The document remains therefore anonymous.

Below is the text in question of Eusebius of Caesarea.

DOCUMENT.

CHURCH HISTORY BOOK V.

CHAPTER 1.

[THE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR RELIGION UNDER VERUS AND THE NATURE OF THEIR CONFLICTS]

The Rhone passes through both of them, flowing in a broad stream through the entire region. The most celebrated churches in that country sent an account of the witnesses to the churches in Asia and Phrygia, relating in the following manner what was done among them. I will give their own words.

"The servants of Christ residing at Vienne and Lyons, in Gaul, to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, who hold the same faith and hope of redemption, peace and grace and glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Then, having related some other matters, they begin their account in this manner:

Then, being taken to the forum by the chiliarch and the authorities of the city, they were examined in the presence of the whole multitude, and having confessed, they were imprisoned until the arrival of the governor..... Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, and a man filled with love for God and his neighbor..... was filled with indignation, and asked to be permitted to testify on behalf of his brethren, that there is among us nothing ungodly or impious. But those about the judgment seat cried out against him, for he was a man of distinction; and the governor refused to grant his just request, and merely asked if he also were a Christian. And he, confessing this with a loud voice, was himself taken into the order of the witnesses, being called the Paraclete of the Christians, but having the Paraclete in himself.... Then the others were divided, and the proto-witnesses were manifestly ready, and finished their confession with all eagerness. But some appeared unprepared and untrained, weak as yet, and unable to endure so great a conflict. About ten of these proved abortions, causing us great grief and sorrow beyond measure, and impairing the zeal of the others who had not yet been seized, but who, though suffering all kinds of affliction, continued constantly with the witnesses and did not forsake them.....

These, being ensnared by Satan, and fearing for themselves the tortures which they beheld the saints endure, and being also urged on by the soldiers, accused us falsely of Thyestean banquets and Oedipodean intercourse, and of deeds which are not only unlawful for us to speak of or to think, but which we cannot believe were ever done by men..... the wrath of the populace, and governor, and soldiers was aroused exceedingly against Sanctus, the deacon from Vienne, and Maturus, a late convert, yet a noble combatant, and against Attalus, a native of Pergamos where he had always been a pillar and foundation, and Blandina.... The blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the bishopric of Lyons, was dragged to the judgment seat. He was more than ninety years of age, and very infirm, scarcely indeed able to breathe because of physical weakness but he was strengthened by spiritual zeal through his earnest desire for martyrdom. Though his body was worn out by old age and disease, his life was preserved that Christ might triumph in it.... the first went out rejoicing, glory and grace being blended in their faces, so that even their bonds seemed like beautiful ornaments, as those of a bride adorned with variegated golden fringes; and they were perfumed with the sweet savor of Christ, so that some supposed they had been anointed with earthly ointment. But the others were downcast and humble and dejected and filled with every kind of disgrace, and they were reproached by the heathen as ignoble and weak, bearing the accusation of murderers, and having lost the one honorable and glorious and life-giving Name. The rest, beholding this, were strengthened, and when apprehended, they confessed without hesitation, paying no attention to the persuasion of the devil.....

After all these, on the last day of the contests, Blandina was again brought in, with Ponticus, a boy about fifteen years old. They had been brought every day to witness the sufferings of the others, and had been pressed to swear by the idols. But because they remained steadfast and despised them, the multitude became furious, so that they had no compassion for the youth of the boy nor respect for the sex of the woman. Therefore they exposed them to all the terrible sufferings and took them through the entire round of torture, repeatedly urging them to swear but being unable to effect this; for Ponticus,

encouraged by his sister (??) so that even the heathen could see that she was confirming and strengthening him, having nobly endured every torture, gave up the ghost. But the blessed Blandina, last of all, having, as a noble mother, encouraged her children and sent them before her victorious to the King, endured herself all their conflicts and hastened after them, glad and rejoicing in her departure as if called to a marriage supper, rather than cast to wild beasts. . . . The heathens themselves confessed that never among them had a woman endured so many and such terrible tortures.

Counter-lay No. 13.

Again, as in the case of the alleged persecutions of Nero and Trajan, it is important to leave no doubt in the minds of our faithful readers given the importance of the subject in the Hollywood (martyr virgins) or national (Martyrs of Lyons) imagination in the West. At this point in our brief expound about Montanism, we will allow ourselves therefore to re-situate this founding event in the historical context.

THE PERSECUTION OF MARCUS-AURELIUS: 161.

Personal psychology.

Marcus Aurelius cannot bear the fanaticism of Christians and their fetishism for Christ and his cross. He considers that Christianity uses passions to establish morality unrelated to Nature, and without reflection (ethics of conviction and not of responsibility).

The persecution will take place in Smyrna (Polycarp?) in Rome (Justin) in Vienne and in Lyons (various martyrs); it does not appear that it extended to the other parts of the empire. It will be therefore a persecution of principle but limited in space.

In fact, what the Catholic or Reformist historians criticized most of Marcus Aurelius was the execution in Rome of the Christian philosopher Justin in 166 and the execution of the "Martyrs of Lyons" in 177. This is not here the place to go into details, it would take too much time and place.

Let us note, however, that the famous Justin was the author, in his apology of a dialogue with Tryphon, of the first formulation of the substitution theology (Christians have now become the true Israel) and of the first formulation outside the Gospel of the anti-Semitic accusation of being a deicidal people.

CXXXIII

For verily your hand is high to commit evil, because ye slew the Christ, and do not repent of it; but so far from that, ye hate and murder us who have believed through Him in the God and Father of all, as often as ye can; and ye curse Him without ceasing, as well as those who side with Him; while all of us pray for you, and for all men, as our Christ and Lord taught us to do, when He enjoined us to pray even for our enemies, and to love them that hate us, and to bless them that curse us.

For more details, see BERNARD Lazare's excellent book (one of the most documented) on ancient antisemitism.

Justin had also published numerous lampoons against the Gnostic heretics whom he accused of the most abominable crimes. Incest, cannibalism, bloody liturgies, anything went on.

As for Crescens, we only know about him what his opponents have said about him. Tatian that he was homosexual.

Eusebius of Caesarea that he is the great responsible for Justin's death.

ACTS OF JUSTIN'S MARTYRDOM.

The Prefect Rusticus:

If you do not obey, you will be tortured without mercy.

Justin : That is our desire, to be tortured for Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and so to be saved, for that will give us salvation and firm confidence at the more terrible universal tribunal of Our Lord and Savior.

Comment: the Muslim taqiya is still more appropriate!

To come more precisely to the case of the martyrs in Lyons, here is what we can say.

What is certain indeed, as might be expected, it is that many of these early Christians, if not all, were of Montanist leanings.

Very severe and at the limit of the hunger strike seems to have been for example the fasting of the Montanist martyr Alcibiades, in the prisons of Lyons (Eusebius, H. E. 5, 3, 2). It is true that he seemed to place some hubris in it, in any case it is of what his co-religionists accused him.

Let us now briefly remind of the facts: in 177, when the Empire was threatened by a new Germanic invasion, many Christians in the city of Lyons were denounced, arrested, judged and executed in the amphitheater. The main victims are Bishop Pothinus and Blandina, a slave.

These Christian martyrs of Lyons were almost all from Asia Minor, and all were probably more or less Montanists we have said so they were fanatic Christians.

Context.

At the moment when the barbarians were at the gates of the country, their defeatism was not to be well perceived either by the rest of the population of Lyons or by the Roman authorities "ready to go into battle." The Roman authorities could then reproach the Montanist Christian propagandists for their asocial behavior, their intolerance towards other religions, their refusal of military service. In a state always threatened and always standing at the ready, this could be considered a crime of high treason.

Circumstances.

Lastly, many Christians in Lyons were apparently denounced by their slaves who accused them of the worst vile acts (incest, cannibalism, ritual crimes, in short all that the Christians themselves ascribed to pagans or even to the other Christian sects they charged with heresy ...).

However, even if this tall story is true, and this is very little likely, then the Christians of Lyons were not prosecuted and condemned because of their religious convictions but for common law crimes. The charges had nothing to do with religion in this case!

The case of the Scillitan martyrs seems nevertheless different it is true.

ACTS OF THE SCILLITAN MARTYRS

On the 17th of July, 180*, at Carthage, in the court of the proconsul of Africa Saturninus, twelve Montanists, seven men and five women, who had just been arrested in the little town of Scillium, were brought to justice.

When Praesens, for the second time, and Claudianus were the consuls, on the seventeenth day of July *, at Carthage, there were set in the judgment-hall Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda and Vestia.

-Saturninus the proconsul said: you can win the indulgence of our lord the Emperor if you return to a sound mind.

-Speratus said: We have never done ill, we have not lent ourselves to wrong, we have never spoken ill, but when ill-treated we have given thanks; because we pay heed to our emperor.

- Saturninus the proconsul said: We too are religious, and our religion is simple, and we swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor, and pray for his welfare, as you also ought to do.

-Speratus said: If thou wilt peaceably lend me your ears, I can tell you the mystery of simplicity.

-Saturninus said: I will not lend mine ears to you when you begin to speak evil things of our sacred rites; but rather swear thou by the genius of our lord the Emperor.

-Speratus said: The empire of this world I know not; but rather I serve that God, whom no man hath seen, nor with these eyes can see. I have committed no theft; but if I have bought anything, I pay the tax; because I know my Lord, the King of kings and Emperor of all nations.

-Saturninus the proconsul said to the rest: Cease to be of this persuasion.

-Speratus said: It is an ill persuasion to do murder, to speak false witness.

-Saturninus the proconsul said: Be not partakers of this folly.
 -Cittinus said: We have none other to fear, save only our Lord God, who is in heaven.
 -Donata said: Honor to Caesar as Caesar: but fear to God.
 -Vestia said: I am a Christian.
 -Secunda said: What I am, that I wish to be.
 -Saturninus the proconsul said to Speratus: Dost thou persist in being a Christian?
 -Speratus said: I am a Christian. And with him they all agreed.
 -Saturninus the proconsul said: Will you have a space to consider?
 -Speratus said: In a matter so straightforward there is no considering.
 -Saturninus the proconsul said: What are the things in your chest?
 -Speratus said: Books and epistles of Paul, a just man.
 -Saturninus the proconsul said: Have a delay of thirty days and bethink yourselves.
 -Speratus said a second time: I am a Christian. And with him they all agreed.
 -Saturninus the proconsul read out the decree from the tablet: Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda and the rest having confessed that they live according to the Christian right, since after opportunity offered them of returning to the custom of the Romans they have obstinately persisted, it is determined that they be put to the sword.
 -Speratus said: We give thanks to God.
 -Nartzalus said: To-day we are martyrs in heaven; thanks be to God.
 -Saturninus the proconsul ordered it to be declared by the herald: Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januaria, Generosa, Vestia, Donata and Secunda, I have ordered to be executed.
 -They all said: Thanks be to God.
 And so they all together were beheaded for Christ's name.

* Editor's note. The date indicated for the execution of these Montanist fanatics corresponds to the reign of Commodus. Now this emperor does not have the reputation of having been a great persecutor of Christians. ... Do not forget, however, they are not here below the official records or the original, but it is a text handed over by Christian copyist monks, therefore assuredly arranged and rewritten. The whole question is to what extent? The original was certainly in Latin. From this document, which was often reworked in subsequent centuries, we have five Latin reviews and a translation into Greek language. In the series of Latin recensions, we can see the text deteriorate and be interpolated more and more.

Return to the year 77 AD in Lyons.

CHURCH HISTORY BOOK V

CHAPTER 3.

THE VISION WHICH APPEARED IN A DREAM TO THE WITNESS ATTALUS.

The same letter of the above-mentioned witnesses contains another account worthy of remembrance. No one will object to our bringing it to the knowledge of our readers. It runs as follows: For a certain Alcibiades, who was one of them, led a very austere life, partaking of nothing whatever but bread and water. When he endeavored to continue this same sort of life in prison, it was revealed to Attalus after his first conflict in the amphitheater that Alcibiades was not doing well in refusing the creatures of God and placing a stumbling block before others. And Alcibiades obeyed, and partook of all things without restraint, giving thanks to God. For they were not deprived of the grace of God, but the Holy Ghost was their counselor. Let this suffice for these matters.

The followers of Montanus, Alcibiades and Theodotus in Phrygia were now first giving wide circulation to their assumption in regard to prophecy—for the many other miracles that, through the gift of God, were still worked in the different churches caused their prophesying to be readily credited by many—and as dissension arose concerning them, the brethren set forth their own prudent and most orthodox judgment in the matter, and published also several epistles from the witnesses that had been put to

death among them. These they sent, while they were still in prison, to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, and also to Eleutherus, who was then bishop of Rome, negotiating for the peace of the churches....

CHAPTER 4.

[IRENÆUS COMMENDED BY THE WITNESSES IN A LETTER].

The same witnesses also recommended Irenæus, who was already at that time a presbyter of the parish of Lyons, to the above-mentioned bishop of Rome, saying many favorable things in regard to him, as the following extract shows:

We pray, father Eleutherus, that you may rejoice in God in all things and always. We have requested our brother and comrade Irenæus to carry this letter to you, and we ask you to hold him in esteem, as zealous for the covenant of Christ. For if we thought that office could confer righteousness upon any one, we should commend him among the first as a presbyter of the church, which is his position.

Why should we transcribe the catalogue of the witnesses given in the letter already mentioned, of whom some were beheaded, others cast to the wild beasts, and others fell asleep in prison, or give the number of confessors still surviving at that time?

For whoever desires can readily find the full account by consulting the letter itself, which, as I have said, is recorded in our Collection of Martyrdoms.

COUNTER-LAY No. 14.

Eusebius of Caesarea wrote his Church History between 300 and 324. He quotes, partially, this letter of Christ's servants residing at Vienne and Lyons, to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, and gives the names of 9 of the martyrs of Lyons in 177: Pothinus, Attalus, Alexander, Sanctus, Maturus, Blandina, Biblis, Alcibiades and Ponticus; Vettius Epagathus who defends them in the court has the title of martyr in the sense of confessor of the faith but is not one of those who were concerned by the first police roundup. He is also perhaps a Montanist, for the paraclete seems to have inspired him.

The letter gives various indications on the principal martyrs, on the circumstances of the arrests and interrogations, on the prison regime, on the tortures which led to the death of the victimsSaint Pothinus, bishop of Lyons at the time of the persecution, was then more than ninety years old.

Among the other martyrs, probably numbering forty-eight according to the Hieronymian Martyrology, there are several groups. First, Greeks from Asia Minor: Attalus of Pergamum and the doctor Alexander, to whom must be added the famous Alcibiades, an ascetic.

Then some Celts: Vettius Epagathus, perhaps a Montanist lawyer, with the double name half Roman, half Celtic; Maturus, a neophyte; Sanctus, known as the "deacon of Vienne" no doubt the chief of the Christendom in this neighboring town, but arrested at Lyons.

A young slave of uncertain nationality, a fifteen-year-old boy, Ponticus.

Finally, two women: Blandina the mother (or big sister?) of Ponticus and Biblis, who then retracted.

Of the other martyrs, we know the names only by the martyrologists, who do not always agree with each other.

Eusebius makes it clear that the martyrs of Lyons without being totally Montanist (at least, according to Eusebius) were not totally radically hostile either. "The followers of Montanus, Alcibiades and Theodotus in Phrygia were now first giving wide circulation to their assumption in regard to prophecy [...] as dissension arose concerning them, the brethren set forth their own prudent and most orthodox judgment in the matter, and also published several epistles from the witnesses that had been put to death among them. These they sent, while they were still in prison, to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, and also to Eleutherus, who was then the bishop of Rome, negotiating for the peace of the churches.....

Between Asia Minor and the Western congregations of that time, there existed indeed very close relations. The principal object of the letters in question was to inform the Christians of Asia Minor, and especially Phrygia, of the violent popular reactions raised at Lyons by their refusal to defend the

Empire against the barbarians. But, according to Eusebius a kind of declaration had been added to these letters, about what the congregations of the region thought of the Montanist new prophecy. And Irenaeus, who was to carry these letters to Rome, had been appointed to beg the Roman pope, Eleutherius (174-189), to continue to admit fraternally the Asian congregations. Eusebius, as he is accustomed to, does not quote this statement, but everything seems to indicate that it was rather favorable to the Montanists.

Tertullian (*Adversus Praxeam*) informs us indeed that a bishop of Rome, whose name he does not mention (Eleutherius, Victor, Zephyrinus?), inclined towards Montanism, but that he was diverted from it by Praxeas. What is more precise is the categorical reprobation which took place in the Church of Rome during the pontificate of Zephyrinus (199-217), following a controversy between Caius, a priest of this church, and the Montanist Proclus. The break therefore could no longer be avoided.

The baptism given by them was consequently declared null, and the New Prophecy or Montanism from then formed a distinct Christianity, having its seat at Pepuza. It kept the basic Christian ministry, and placed above it patriarchs and associates, perhaps successors of Montanus and of his prophetesses. But this process of separation did not take place everywhere with the same rapidity hence the case of the martyrdoms of Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity in Carthage a few years later, claimed by both the Montanists and the Catholics as we will see it .

THE DOCTRINE.

The best way to understand the problems aroused by the evolution of Christianity in a pagan milieu is to take the fidelity to Jewish scriptures as a point of reference.

Very quickly there were three tendencies in the Christian world.

The first tendency, the historical wing in a way, stick to the Old Testament. These are Judeo-Christians in the strictest sense of the term (those opposed to Paul).

The second tendency: frees itself more and more from the Old Testament (Paul at the beginning, then Marcion for example, even the Gnostics).

The third will be a tendency to compromise. Break with the Old Testament, but not complete. Code name: the great Church. The future Reformed Orthodox Catholics.

Around 140, at the time when Marcion published the letters of St. Paul, Christianity of Hellenic tendency definitely rejected Hebrew Christianity.

The reaction against Marcion will nevertheless continue its antijudaism.

-It will keep the Jews away, but on account of deicide this time.

- And deprive them of the monopoly of their sacred texts (that they will be accused of not having understood). Islam will do the same by accusing the Jews (and Christians) of having distorted the original divine message.

The growth of Christianity will be effected henceforth by the new current which has become dominant in the Christianity of the period, not the future Catholics Orthodoxes or Reformists but the Montanism.

Tertullian has endeavored to show that dissociating the creating and justiciar God of Moses from the Savior and merciful God of the Gospel leads to a bitheism incompatible with monotheism. But this did not succeed in sapping Marcion's rationalist logic, which could only understand this opposition through the existence of two different gods, the Jew and the Christian.

Tertullian will also endeavor to show that Christ is present in the Jewish Bible (the Old Testament). But the Carthaginian will use for this a typological, allegorical and figurative exegesis that Marcion, who takes the texts literally, considers dishonest and which, for us also, borders on the absurd.

One example, the famous text of Isaiah 7:14: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son...."

Marcion points out that the Hebrew text speaks of a young woman and does not specify that she is a virgin.

Moreover, Tertullian artificially amalgamates this so-called prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus with Isaiah 8: 4. "The wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria." According to Tertullian, the offering of the Wise men from the East. And the king of Assyria would figure Herod to whom the Wise men were opposed (Against Marcion, book III: 13-14). Such exegetical acrobatics, of which Tertullian has not the monopoly, cannot convince. Hence this polemic with Marcion which is an exchange of speeches falling on deaf ears.

Will we do better? For the problem remains a burning topicality. When you read in the Exodus: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" (Exodus 32:27), you cannot help wondering whether this God of Israel is the same as that of the Gospels?

As the doctrine of the Montanists is usually expounded only by their adversaries, it is useful in order to appreciate its degree of distance or not from the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists to refer to the summary that Tertullian made of it:

"The rule of faith, indeed, is altogether one, alone immoveable and irreformable; the rule, to wit, of believing in one only God omnipotent, the Creator of the universe, and His Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised again the third day from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right (hand) of the Father, destined to come to judge quick and dead through the resurrection of the flesh as well (as of the spirit). This law of faith being constant, the other succeeding points of discipline and conversation admit the "novelty" of correction; the grace of God, to wit, operating and advancing even to the end. For what kind of (supposition) is it that, while the devil is always operating and adding daily to the ingenuities of iniquity, the work of God should either have ceased, or else have desisted from advancing? whereas the reason why the Lord sent the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) was that, since human mediocrity was unable to take in all things at once, discipline should, little by little, be directed, and ordained, and carried on to perfection, by that Vicar of the Lord,

the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) [...] What, then, is the Paraclete's administrative office but this: the direction of discipline, the revelation of the Scriptures, the reformation of the intellect, the advancement towards the "better things?"

First of all, let us remark that, despite all that has been said on this subject, and especially by his opponents, Marcion is not Gnostic. At most, can we detect some Gnostic influences in his work. Marcion is not Gnostic because

- He interprets the Jewish Bible literally and that is why he finds no interest in it.
- He is not very wordy about the pleroma or celestial world of the eons, unlike true Gnostics.
- For him it is faith, pistis, which saves, and not Gnosis.

-And this salvation is open to all, not to only an elite predestined for this.

Nevertheless, Marcion is unquestionably Docetist in the sense that if he recognizes that Jesus had a body, it was only apparent.

The triumph of Marcionism thus aroused two types of reaction. The Gnostic schools further developed their theories about the world of the eons to such an extent that we can speak of an ultra-Gnosticism which split into two different schools, the Eastern school and the Western or Italian school.

Their main point of divergence concerned the nature of the body of Christ...

The Gnostics distinguished three types in nature, depending on the degree of matter involved.

The hylic or material nature.

The psychic or animal nature.

The pneumatic or spiritual nature.

In the oriental school (Theodotus, Mark) Jesus was only endowed with a body of pneumatic or spiritual nature (Docetism).

In the western school (Ptolemy Heracleon) Jesus was endowed with a psychic or animal body ?????.

Heracleon will be the author of a commentary on the Gospel of St. John, which will draw the attention of Origen since in his own commentary on the 4th Gospel (that of John) an enormous work (32 volumes) undertaken at the request of an ex-adept of Gnosticism named Ambrose, Origen will analyze 50 extracts from the commentary by Heracleon (these fragments of the text of Heracleon are available online) .

The extraordinary development of the Church of Marcion and of the Gospel of Tatian, will provoke a double reaction.

The first type of anti-Marcionite reaction will come, of course, from the Greco-Roman Christians, who will propose a theology based on overcoming the various primitive Gnostic currents as well as the original Judeo-Christianity of the Nazoreans in Jerusalem.

Gnosticism will thus launch itself into speculations of extreme complexity. It is from this ultra-Gnosticism that the first theological notion proper to Christianity, the Trinity, was born. It was first explicitly expressed by Theodotus, a disciple of Valentinus, in the form of the Trinity of the world, the Greek logos and the spirit, at the end of the second century, which saw coming rescue it the decisive reinforcement of the most diverse pagan symbols, especially those of Druidism in the West.

The second series of reactions will be that of Christians, of course, also anti-Jews, but nevertheless wishing not to completely deny their sacred books, like Peregrinus and Montanus.

Remove the Old Testament and a certain idea of religion disappears! If the Old Testament is removed, the apparition of Jesus somewhere in Palestine X years ago becomes incomprehensible, and his message also (Good news, the messiah has arrived!) There are, however, in the Old Testament many texts that can seduce certain minds sensitive to this fashion and legitimizing particularly the ability for some people to predict or prophesy.

These Christians like Montanus therefore will not follow Marcion in this way and will prefer, not without problems besides (this will create a permanent ambiguity) to keep the reference to the Old Testament. Yes, many passages of the Jewish Bible are irrelevant, or repugnant when taken literally. No, we must not give up all meditation on them, they are instructive if we do not take them literally, but allegorically, symbolically or metaphorically. They were inspired by God.

This Judeo-Christian reaction even went so far as to modify the original texts of the Gospels in order to systematically counterbalance Marcion, and to insert into them numerous details destined to well

make the heavenly Christ a human being who had really existed. Our modern four gospels have therefore the strange peculiarity of having been , at first, quickly removed from the Jewish world, and then of having been brought back in it "by force" in a second time. In short, they were initially unJudaized by the Hellenistic current (Paul, the Gnostics) and then Judaized again by the anti-Marcionite and anti-Gnostic Judao-Christians (the future Catholics or Orthodox , Etc.)

As we have had the opportunity to see it, Montanism had spread with a surprising rapidity, and their activism, of the kind Taliban or Parabolanus, even provided us with the first reliable trace of Christianity in Western Europe. In 177 indeed the Montanists solicited the mediation of the Christians of Lyons persecuted "for their faith" and Pope Eleutherius (174-189) was shouted out by the future martyrs of Lyons (Pothinus, Blandina) who called for reconciliation in the Church (Eusebius). In vain finally.

Condemned in Rome and in its native land, the Montanism found nevertheless a new home among the Christians in North Africa and especially in its then most prominent representative, Tertullian, thanks to which it reached its height.

This almost Father of the Church indeed mentions two other illustrious martyrs of the Montanism like Felicity and Perpetua in 202 in Carthage. Two women who had visions and dreams sent by the Paraclete, also claimed by the Catholic Church, proof whether it was necessary that the separation between the two currents was not yet consummated in the Carthage of that time .

TERTULLIAN.

Father of the Church born between 150 and 160 in Carthage (Tunisia) died in 220. Also in Carthage.

Tertullian was born at Carthage about the year 150, according to the most probable conjectures; because we know nothing positive about this. He was the son of a centurion, who served in the militia of the proconsul "in Africa." It is believed that his family was patrician. His own declarations testify that he was born a pagan.

Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage, completed the conversion of Tertullian, about the year 185. The following year Tertullian married to a Christian. Saint Jerome affirms that he was a priest. Tertullian was therefore married when he was elevated to the priesthood. There were then no rules, as it is known, which prevented the conferring of orders on men previously committed in the estate of matrimony.

St. Jerome says that the jealousy and the imprudent words of the Roman clergy prompted Tertullian to convert to Montanism.

Tertullian's works are generally divided into two categories: those which were written before his adherence to Montanism, about the year 200, those which were written afterwards.

For Tertullian, in any case, around 203, Catholics or Orthodox are no longer only psychic, or animal men, rude in their feelings, incapable of rising to supernatural things, and bending under the burden of things Earth.

From 207, this Taliban or Parabolanus of Christianity displayed extreme rigor in condemning remarriage, extolling fasting and abstinence, inviting girls to wear the veil and maintaining that Christians must accept the persecution without fleeing it.

The Treatise of Penance already inclined to a great rigor towards those who had failed in persecutions (lapsi, apostates). Become a Montanist Tertullian will assert that this fault is unforgivable.

The Treatise on Patience same thing. He approves of the escape before persecutions (there were not only martyrs in Christianity like Alcibiades or Perpetua in Christianity, there were also bishops who prefer first to exile themselves as Cyprian in 257 and Dionysius of Alexandria in the year 250, or who abjured like Eudaemon in Antioch in 250). On the other hand, become a Montanist, Tertullian condemned such an attitude.

The Treatise on Baptism was intended to refute the theories of a woman member of the Cainite Gnostic movement, named Quintilla, who had wrecked the necessity of baptism in many minds of the time.

Editor's note. Originally, baptism was only a symbol or a ritual, but in no way had real power. The first change of the role of this symbolic custom was the doing of priests members, like Tertullian, of Montanist communities, in view of the violent reactions aroused by their fanaticism. They made baptism a sacrament equal to the martyrdom which, according to Tertullian, is the baptism of sacrificial and saving blood.

But no one knows precisely to what period of his life, before or after his conversion to Montanism, to attribute the Epistle to the martyrs who confessed their belief to the end, the Scorpiace, directed against the Gnostics, Valentinians, and Cainites; the book against the games; the two books on women's clothing. The treatise on idolatry, and finally the treatises against Marcion, Valentinus, Praxeas, or Apelles, came only afterwards.

The first manifesto of the new period of his life (202-224) is undoubtedly the work entitled "On Monogamy," the object of which is to condemn the second marriages; and where he first examines the question of whether the Paraclete taught something new and differing from the original tradition in this regard.

Some reproached the Montanists for having too hard fasts and austerities, they practiced on the authority of the Paraclete, by making these regulations an indispensable law. Tertullian wrote his book on fasting, to defend them.

The book on modesty followed closely. It is directed against the bishops who admitted adulterers, apostates and fornicators to reconciliation when they had fulfilled their penance.

After responding to Hermogenes' assumptions about the eternity of matter (refusing to attribute the origin of the evil to the Creating God, Hermogenes saw no other solution to this difficulty than the traditional dualism of Genesis: God created the world from a pre-existing matter, the *tohu-wa-bohu*, whose presence is the real cause of the evil), he attacked the Valentinians.

The book on the soul dates from the beginning of his passage to Montanism. He evokes the Paraclete and the variety of his gifts. This treatise was certainly written before that which he composed on the carnal body of Jesus Christ, and that which he consecrated to the resurrection of the flesh, which is as the consequence of the first. In both, he refutes Marcion and some others, who did not support these dogmas, because of being members of the Gnostic tendency of Christianity.

Tertullian displayed against Marcion all the power of his argument, all the authority of his science. He made three attempts to attack him. His first writing was only a hurriedly composed work; he replaced him by a second, to whom he gave more scope. This second treatise did not satisfy him yet, so he was obliged to review it.

The book on the military garland, that which deals with the problem of escape in the event of persecution, and finally that in which he proves that virgins must be veiled, seem to belong to the last days of his Montanist period.

Main ideas of Tertullian (the same as that of Montanus of course).

For Tertullian, the essence of the Church was the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete), and in no case the episcopate, of which he rejected even the right to keep the keys of the Other World.

The Holy Spirit or Paraclete was given to the apostles; but he has not entirely formed or taught the Church by their ministry; he has kept to himself fundamental truths. The manifestation of these truths will take place by Montanus or the Paraclete, the last Messiah who will complete the revelation.

The second marriages are adultery.

There are unforgivable sins: the apostasy of those who failed in persecutions, adultery, fornication.

Fleeing the persecution is a crime. Keeping one's belief through flight is worse than giving up on it in tortures. The souls of the good persons and that of the evil ones persons are kept in the lower places of the earth, waiting there for the day of the last judgment, except those of the martyrs, who go straightly to Heaven.

The baptism administered by the heretics is not valid.

God was not always Father, because he could not have been so before the Son had been, and so there was a time when the Son was not.

The mother of Jesus ceased to be a virgin postpartum .

Jesus Christ will reign on earth with his saints in a new Jerusalem for a thousand years before the day of the Last Judgment.

The angels may have had relations with men, covered with a true flesh, although this flesh was not the result of a human birth. [Editor's note. They have even made children to the daughters of men, according to the Old Testament. Genesis 6].

Tertullian therefore adopted all the opinions of Montanism, and even developed them. The imminent return of Christ and the millenarianism are indeed the fundamental ideas of his theology. The living gift of prophecy, according to the divine plan of salvation, is the only means of passing from the present time to the coming millenary reign of God; and to prepare for its coming, the Church must advocate a morality detaching its members from the material side of life. Science and art, secular education, and all that adorns or embellishes life, must be avoided, because they are infected by paganism. The crowning of a human life is martyrdom. Fasting must be multiplied or even made more severe.

Marriage should not be encouraged and the second marriage condemned. In the case of mortal sin, the Church must exclude the one who committed it, for the sanctity of the Church is simply the sanctity of its members. In view of these principles, Tertullian could only enter into conflict with the Christianity in search of respectability.

LETTER TO THE PROCONSUL SCAPULA.

"We are not in any great perturbation or alarm about the persecutions we suffer from the ignorance of men; for we have attached ourselves to this sect, fully accepting the terms of its covenant, so that, as men whose very lives are not their own, we engage in these conflicts, our desire being to obtain God's promised rewards, and our dread lest the woes with which He threatens an unchristian life should overtake us. Hence we do not shrink from the grapple with your utmost rage, coming even forth of our own accord to the contest; and condemnation gives us more pleasure than acquittal..... But how

many rulers, men more resolute and crueller than you are, have contrived to get quit of such causes altogether—as Cincius Severus, who himself suggested the remedy at Thysdris, pointing out how the Christians should answer that they might secure an acquittal; as Vespronius Candidus, who dismissed from his bar a Christian, on the ground that to satisfy his fellow citizens would break the peace of the community; as Asper, who, in the case of a man who gave up his faith under slight infliction of the torture, did not compel the offering of sacrifices, having owned before, among the advocates and assessors of court, that he was annoyed at having had to meddle with such a case. Prudens, too, at once dismissed a Christian who was brought before him, perceiving from the indictment that it was a case of vexatious accusation; tearing the document in pieces, he refused so much as to hear him without the presence of his accuser, as not being consistent with the imperial commands.....

But the greater our conflicts, the greater our rewards. Your cruelty is our glory. Only see you to it that in having such things as these to endure, we do not feel constrained to rush forth to the combat, if only to prove that we have no dread of them, but on the contrary, even invite their infliction. When Arrius Antoninus was driving things hard in Asia, the whole Christians of the province, in one united band, presented themselves before his judgment seat; on which, ordering a few to be led forth to execution, he said to the rest, O miserable men, if you wish to die, you have precipices or halters. If we should take it into our heads to do the same thing here, what will you make of so many thousands, of such a multitude of men and women, persons of every sex and every age and every rank, when they present themselves before you? How many fires, how many swords will be required? “

According to Joseph Wheless, as we have seen, Tertullian renounced Christianity at the end of his life in view of the title of his last work (*De Pallio*- On the mantle). He would have adopted this costume to distinguish himself from the good Christian society of Carthage.

Those who followed Tertullian closely agree to say that he finished his career in an advanced age, about the year 245, out of all Christianity. It is therefore necessary to bring to this period the treatise on the mantle (*De Pallio*), a very obscure work, in which he answers, with his usual irony, to the detractors who reproached him with having given up the toga for this garment; that the philosophers then wore, and whoever professed severity in his manners.

Tertullian having returned to philosophical and rational paganism after having nearly become a Father of the Church, Montan's work was continued by a Roman named Proclus, and by a man named Eschinus.

Eschinus did not admit the idea of Trinity or of One God, in three persons, for to him Jesus was at once the Son and the Father.

But the severe repression of Montanism (see Alcibiades at Lyons and Perpetua in Carthage), the dangerous example of a bishop taking the floor in the name of Christ speaking directly through his mouth, and especially an ascetic rigorism of the most repulsive; induced a certain number of Christians to detach themselves from it, while pretending to approve of it. The Montanist fanaticism was not well in harmony with the political aims of the bishops, who aspired in their majority, not to martyrdom, but to a kind of convention with the Roman state.

From this Montanism came the Christianity that we know today, even if the latter will deny it about 250 because of its excesses of asceticism, martyrdom, and pentecostalism.

The bishops recovered these Christians after having rejected their idea of Christianity which had the triple disadvantage for them:

- a) To be based on extreme asceticism.
- b) To seek martyrdom.
- c) To recognize the possibility that anyone may call himself the reincarnation of Christ or the voice of the Holy Spirit (Paraclete).

Nevertheless, they kept for their mass the mythical materials derived from the worship of Attis or Cybele thus Christianized, which had nothing to do with the synagogue worship. As the Christianity of Montanus had taken root in a country where the worship of Cybele had spread, he had so well resumed various elements of her myth (symbol of wheat put into the earth to be reborn, Attis was born on December 25th, from the Virgin Nana who conceived him by eating an almond. Killed and buried, he was brought to life after three days and becomes the Father *); that Tertullian confessed that some people mixed up the two worships.

* At least according to Dorothy Milne Murdock known as Acharya S. (1960-2015) Professor Emeritus at the University of Nottingham although born American.

As for her thesis on historical non-existence of Jesus , we have already explained it.

There really was a man named Jesus who was born somewhere in Palestine during the reign of Herod the First. But in this field we do not even go as far as Renan's book on the subject and what we think certain are only a few lines. For the rest we agree with the observation that there are many, but then really many non-historical elements that have come together.

This historian of religions being very controversial in her appreciation of Tertullian let us recall that many less polemical authors have underlined the probable influence of the cult of Cybele on the nascent Christianity, the last one being Philippe Borgeaud, because from the mother of the gods to the mother of God there is only one step, a mark of the plural.

His investigation led him from the high plateaus of Phrygia where, at the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century before our era, the first iconographic and epigraphic testimonies relating to the cult of the Mother - known as Matar or Matar kubileia - to Constantinople where, according to Zosimus, Constantine had a temple of Rhea, Mother of the gods, built next to Hagia Sophia. The statue of her cult, brought from Cyzicus on the Propontis will be changed: the lions that flanked it will be removed and the hands placed in the position of a woman who is praying. The author concludes: "the Mother of the gods (Mèter théôn) has thus lost her old attributes. She borrows at the same time, and without forgetting her origins, the loving and protective attitude of the Mother of God (Méter Theou), her close neighbor".

On the other hand, we do not share his opinion on the "Gallic" origin of the priests of Cybele, even if there were for a long time Celtic-speaking Galatians in this part of the world and there were high priests in Pessinus speaking this language since one of them had a brother called Aiorix (History of the Westerner Celts by Felix Robiou 1866 Paris).

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MONTANISM.

N.B. We do not say that Montanism was a feminist movement before the word is invented, we only note that women played a great part in it, up to and including in martyrdom.

If we want to understand the birth of the movement, we must begin by remembering the important role of prophetism during the first century. But the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists showed the largest reluctance facing these extraordinary charisma. The Didache (end of the first century) even warned the faithful against the false prophets, and in the second century the space of freedom of the spirit was gradually limited to the gifts of healing, science or language. They will be simply "admitted" and "honored."

The hierarchical and "ordered" regime which established itself from Ignatius of Antioch could not allow these charismatic functions, especially those of prophecy, to subsist. The prophets will therefore disappear. Their duties, which consisted particularly in reading and commenting on the reading, will pass into the hands of the elders or of the bishop. This will be the time of the "sacerdotalization" of worship. The origin and model of the ministry of presbyters is sought in the past, and is believed to be found in the high priests of the Old Testament.

The gradual sacerdotalization of the first Christians, who were all more or less misogynists, consequently gradually relegated women to the second rank. For sacerdotalization means masculinization.

Among the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists, men will have therefore alone the power to decide. The women stripped since the beginning of the only function that could remain accessible to them, the prophecy, will not be able to catch up this missed departure. In the hierarchical curriculum of the future Catholics Orthodox or Reformists, no woman.

The women prophets will therefore disappear except in certain communities that will be considered as sects.

Case of the Montanists precisely. In their Church women prophesy in a state of ecstasy and could practice the functions of teaching or liturgy (baptism, Eucharist).

Prophets and prophetesses were therefore the true leaders of this Church.

The apocrypha of the second century. Indicate the important activity of women in certain churches of the time. It is unfortunate that they were quickly forgotten or suppressed, largely because they emanated from communities that practiced equality between men and women, but also because some of these communities were regarded as heretical movements.

N.B. Between the 2nd and 5th century texts indicate occasionally women who celebrate the Eucharist also in the sect of the Collyridians, which had women presbyters and even bishops. In Southern Italy priestly ordination was also conferred on women under Gelasius I (492-496).

But it will be especially in the two movements of young Christianity, the new prophecy (Montanism) and the gnosis, that the role of women will be important: they are prophetesses and teachers. The two terms are hardly distinguished, because in both cases the woman speaks publicly, without respecting the "Pauline" injunction that requires her to remain silent. In Montanism indeed we can see women practicing prophecy after its disappearance in the future "Great" Church of Rome.

The Montanist ceremonies included indeed meetings of prophecy and could be presided over by men as well as by women. Two of her best disciples, who in their turn became prophets, were women, Priscilla and Maximilla, as we have already said.

DOCUMENT : ACTS OF THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT PHILEAS (EGYPT).

"The governor professed a great regard for his quality and merit, and said: "If you were in misery, or necessity, you should be despatched without more ado; but as you have estates sufficient not only for yourself and family, but for the maintenance almost of a whole province, I pity you, and will do all in my power to save you." The counselors and lawyers, desirous also of saving him, said: "He had already sacrificed in the monastery (phrontisterium)

His wife, children, brother, and other relations, persons of distinction, and pagans, were present at the trial. The governor hoping to overcome him by tenderness for them, said:—"See how sorrowful your wife stands with her eyes fixed upon you." Phileas replied: "Jesus Christ, the Savior of souls, calls me to his glory: and he can, if he pleases, also call my wife." The counselors, out of compassion, said to the judge: "Phileas begs a delay." Culcian said to him: "I grant it you most willingly...." Then all the counselors, the emperor's lieutenant, who was the first magistrate of the city, all the other officers of justice, and his relations, fell down together at his feet, embracing his knees, and conjuring him to have compassion on his disconsolate family, and not to abandon his children to their tender years whilst his presence was necessary for them. But he, like a rock unshaken by the impetuous waves that dash against it, stood unmoved. Raising his heart to God, protested aloud that he owned no other kindred but the apostles and martyrs. Philoromus a noble Christian was present: he was a tribune or colonel, and

Admiring the prudence and inflexible courage of Phileas, and moved with indignation against his adversaries, he cried out to them: "Why strive you to overcome this brave man, and to make him, by an impious compliance with men, renounce God? Do not you see that, contemplating the glory of heaven, he makes no account of earthly things?" This speech drew upon him the indignation of the whole assembly....

The brother of Phileas, who was a judge, said to the governor: "Phileas desires his pardon." Culcian therefore called him back, and asked him if it were true. He answered: "No: God forbid. Do not listen to this unhappy man. Far from desiring the reversion of my sentence, I think myself on the contrary much obliged to the emperors, to you, and to your court, for by your means I become co-heir with Christ, and shall enter this very day into the possession of his kingdom."

THE MARTYRDOM OF SS. PERPETUA AND FELICITY.

Fact check.

Carthage, March 7, 203.

Felicity is the servant of Perpetua...

The family of Perpetua is a member of the municipal aristocracy.

The father is hostile to the new religion.

The mother and one of Perpetua's brothers seem rather sympathizers.

Another of his brothers is a catechumen.

Another died unbaptized.

Perpetua herself is a convert to Christianity.

She is a 22-year-old bride who has just had a child.

She was arrested, perhaps following a denunciation.

As soon as he is informed of her arrest, her father rushes to beg her to renounce this madness.

The account of martyrdom is known to us in a Greek text and a Latin text. A long controversy developed to know which of these two texts was the original one.

The Passion presents itself as the work of an anonymous writer - formerly often equated to Tertullian, a hypothesis much less retained today - framing pages written by Perpetua and Saturus during their captivity before execution.

The story of Perpetua's passion in any case had a rapid circulation since it is it is quoted by Tertullian who assuredly was a Montanist.

Tertullian or the anonymous writer left therefore a general introduction, the narrative of the games ceremony which is concluded with the death of the martyrs and a peroration.

The pages written by Perpetua and Saturus are essentially devoted to the visions they had during their captivity. These visions are dreams inspired by the deity according to the common idea in antiquity that dreams made the gods able to communicate with men. The accounts of Perpetua and Saturus are considered as original accounts, what makes the historical value of this passion. The story of Perpetua is indeed one of the few texts left to us by a woman during the Roman Empire. Perpetua appears with a very rigorous faith that resembles Montanism.

What is certain in any case is that the author of the preface was a Montanist.

How can we not draw this conclusion when we read sentences such as these.....

PREFACE. If ancient illustrations of faith which both testify to God's grace and tend to man's edification are collected in writing, so that by the perusal of them, as if by the reproduction of the facts, as well God may be honored, as man may be strengthened; why should not new instances be also collected, that shall be equally suitable for both purposes — if only on the ground that these modern examples will one day become ancient and available for posterity, although in their present time they are esteemed of less authority, by reason of the presumed veneration for antiquity?

But let men look to it, if they judge the power of the Holy Spirit to be one, according to the times and seasons; since some things of later date must be esteemed of more account as being nearer to the very last times, in accordance with the exuberance of grace manifested to the final periods determined for the world. For "in the last days, said the Lord, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and their sons and their daughters shall prophesy. And upon my servants and my handmaidens will I pour out of my spirit; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

And thus we — who both acknowledge and reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions as equally promised to us, and consider the other powers of the Holy Spirit as an agency of the Church for which also He was sent, administering all gifts in all, even as the Lord distributed to everyone

This is precisely the language spoken by the Montanists, and if it is possible to find an orthodox sense in it, we cannot disregard the intention revealed by these words when we have regard to the particular circumstances which caused them. No Catholic would have spoken thus, in a moment when it was precisely question to fight the new prophecies defended by Montanus and his disciples. It seems therefore difficult to misunderstand the Montanist flavor diffused in the preface of the Acts of Saint Perpetua.

Then certainly it does not prove that Perpetua herself was a Montanist but it proves that her Acts are so ...

Montanism was an exaggeration, it was to perish. But, like all exaggerations, it left deep traces. The Christian novel was partly his work. His two great enthusiasms, chastity and martyrdom, remained the

two fundamental elements of Christian literature. It was Montanism which invented this strange association of ideas, created the virgin martyr, and, introducing feminine charm into the darkest accounts of torture, launched this strange literature, of which, from the fourth century, the Christian imagination was never detached. The Montanist Acts of St. Perpetua and the martyrs in Africa (Carthage), full of faith in charisma, full of extreme rigor and burning ardor, pervaded with a strong flavor of captive love, mingling the finest images of a learned aesthetic with the most fanatical dreams, opened the series of these works of austere delight. Perpetua sees only martyrs in heaven. The search for martyrdom becomes a fever that it was impossible to control.

THE REIGN OF PHILIP THE ARAB 244-249.

Philip the Arab (Marcus Julius Philippus). 244 - 249. Philip would be born in Shahba, which later became Philippopolis, near Bosra (or Bostra), a town located 90 kilometers south-east of Damascus. He was the son of a sheikh of these vassal tribes of the Roman Empire. Some people report that he might have practiced, in his youth, the trade of a brigand. But in fact it is more probable that he led, at the head of the men of his tribe, profitable expeditions into the territory of other Arab tribes, vassals of the Persian Empire.

When Severus Alexander recruited squadrons of light cavalry to fight with maximum efficiency against the Germans, Philip and his men enlisted with joy in the Roman legions. It is true that the Emperor Alexander, also born in Syria, was almost a fellow country man.

The intelligent Philip got promoted very quickly. During the bloody accession to the throne of Maximinus Thrax, he perhaps took part in the revolt of the Syrian troops, who remained faithful to Severus Alexander, while taking great care not to be too involved to risk his life and position in the army, but enough to prove to the successor of Maximinus that he had followed the latter only by dragging his feet!

Thanks to this political clairvoyance, when Gordian III went to the war against the Persians, Philip the Arab occupied the second rank in the Roman military hierarchy, just behind Timesitheus, Prefect of the Praetorian Guard and Emperor's father-in-law.

The king of Persia had just broken the truce which, since Severus Alexander, had bound him to Rome. His cavalry had even crushed the legions at the battle of Rhesaina. The routed Romans gave up Mesopotamia and Armenia. Syria itself was threatened on every side and beyond this province, Egypt, the true bread basket of Rome.

Timesitheus restores the situation, repulsed the enemy, and chases it as far as right to the middle of Mesopotamia. The ambitious Philip the Arab, whom the rumor accused of having poisoned Timesitheus, from now on, had free rein to accede to the imperial throne. Only the Emperor Gordian III still hindered him.

The circumstances of the death of Gordian III remain vague. Let us say that two versions confront each other: the "Latin tradition" that condemns Philipp the Arab, and the "Greek tradition" which exonerates him.

According to the first, therefore, the Latin historians, the deceitful Philip, who was appointed prefect of the Praetorian guard replacing Timesitheus, would have initially simulated by continuing to apply the strategy of his predecessor: the Roman legions, still victorious, advanced ever more deeply into Persian territory, into Mesopotamia, driving before them the army of King Shapur.

But while the legions moved away from their bases, Philip sapped the morale of the troops by disorganizing the supply of the army, and then, when the soldiers were starved, started a virulent campaign of denigration against Gordian. Propagandists in his pay went through the camp, opposing the inexperience and incompetence of the young prince systematically to the qualities of military man, allegedly exceptional, of the prefect of the Praetorian Guard, Philip.

This plan succeeded admirably: the legitimate emperor soon perceived that no one in the camp obeyed him. He tried desperately to get along with his Praetorian Prefect, offering him to share power. But Philip was inflexible. One day he ordered his guards to execute Gordian. This was done.

But the Greek-speaking historians, as well as the Persian inscriptions to the glory of the King of Kings Shapur, do not say the same thing at all. According to them, Gordian III died as a result of a wound (broken leg) received during a battle fought near Ctesiphon (south Irak), the capital of the Persian age-old enemy. Philip the Arab would be in no way responsible for the death of the last of the Gordians; he would have done nothing but to seize a throne left vacant.

Today, it is this last version that receives the assent of most historians. They consider that the Latin authors intentionally painted a bleak picture of the memory of Philip the Arab because "exotic"

emperor, he was the guilty party according to all indications to take the role of a scapegoat for all the misfortunes that struck the Roman Empire at that moment.

Of course ... But on the other hand, we could just as well doubt the objectivity of the Greek historians (some Christian Byzantines), who were well advised to do exonerating this Philip whom they believed - probably rightly - a co-religionist. As for the king of the Persians, was it not more glorious for him to claim that he had after a hard fight overwhelmed a Roman emperor in a pitched battle rather than to admit that he owed his safety to the intrigues of a disloyal general?

Whatever it be, guilty or not of the death of his predecessor, in March 244, Philip the Arab, the son of an obscure Bedouin of the Syrian deserts, girded his head with the crown of the Caesars.

What the whole army did not know was that this crafty man, who had not hesitated to resort to murder in order to reach his ends, was also a Christian, and even a good Christian.

The reign of Philip the Arab, which lasted five years, is one of the least known of Roman History.

We know that he hastened to conclude a humiliating treaty with the king of the Persians Sapor I. The Romans, though victorious, committed to pay the king of kings a yearly tribute, while the latter, on his part, agreed to cease provisionally his incursions into the eastern provinces of the empire.

The festivities of the millennium of Rome nevertheless resonated like the swansong of Philip the Arab. Troubles broke out ...

With great difficulty, one of the most eminent senators, a former Illyrian general named Decius, succeeded in calming the imperial fears. As Decius had been right, the Emperor Philip thought that this good counselor would be well suited to again bring to heel the boisterous Danubian legions.

Fatal mistake ! On his arrival the ancient partisans of Pacatianus, still discontented, crowned Decius, and, notwithstanding his strongest protestations, clothed him with the imperial purple. Willingly or unwillingly, the senator was therefore obliged to put himself at the head of the mutineers and to march on Italy in order to dethrone Philip.

The decisive battle took place near Verona. The Emperor Philip the Arab was killed, while his son was massacred at Rome by the praetorians (249). The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine considers the son of Philip the Arab as a martyr, died during the "persecution" of Decius ...

THE REALITY OF ANTICHRISTIAN PERSECUTIONS

Persecutions that have not been similar but have varied greatly in intensity and duration according to the place or more exactly according to the zeal of the local authorities (the governors). Paul Allard, in his work titled « Persecutions and modern critique» mentions the figure of 11 million. Let us not hesitate to be completely revisionist in this field.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THEOLOGY: THE ALLIANCE WITH THE GODS.

The Romans also made a kind of covenant with the gods, called in Latin Pax Deorum, at the time of the foundation of the city by Romulus.

The power of the gods is always a cause for concern, and it is therefore better to live in harmony with them.

Among the Celts we find nevertheless to begin traces of a real war having taken place between men (some Fir Bolg Gauls in this case) and the gods (the Tuatha De Danann) for the possession of the land (at the beginning of the historical times or more exactly at the threshold of History)...

In Rome religion will be rather viewed as "diplomacy."

Since the gods are supposed to help or favor Rome. This is at least the point of view of the believing Roman (atheists are rare at the time).

And this agreement between the new city thus founded and the gods Rome will carefully keep it in force including by integrating the gods of other cities or peoples in case of conquests. There is even a military ritual, the evocatio, by which the Romans commit to build a temple in honor of the god of the opposing party if he joins them. And when they feel that it was the case, they keep their promise.

Known examples of evocatio..:

The evocatio of the Juno from Veies practiced during the war against Veies in 396 before our era. The goddess is evoked by Camillus and installed in Rome on the Aventine.

The evocatio of the Carthaginian goddess Tanit. During the Third Punic War in 146 before our era Scipio Aemilianus promises Tanit a temple and a cult in his city so that she leaves Carthage before the final assault. This promise was also kept since Tanit was worshipped in Rome under the name of Juno Caelestis (the goddess is represented veiled, with a crescent on her forehead, or stars, or a crown of towers; sometimes she is mounted on a lioness, or on a chariot harnessed by lions)...

The pax deorum is seen by the Romans as a contract between two parties: man and gods. As long as the gods are favorable to Rome, they help the Romans. Therefore, any adverse event suffered by Rome, whether a natural disaster or a defeat, is interpreted as the logical consequence of an offense to the gods, which must therefore be repaired. We find here the same way of reasoning as the faithful of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

From the Roman point of view Christianity even more than Judaism (which had agreed to make sacrifices in honor of Caesar and Augustus as long as it was outside the temple and which was therefore a religio licita in Rome) Christianity thus threatens the fragile balance that the Romans have painfully established with their gods.

PENAL LAW.

The word persecution in Latin initially simply designates a lawsuit. It was the Christian authors who gave it, as well as to the term "persecutor," a deprecatory meaning.

These persecutions, in their diversity, will play a fundamental role in the development of Christianity and of its doctrine (see the case of the Montanist Christians of Lyons and Carthage). Christian propaganda (and thus the vast majority of our sources), which developed along with the cult of martyrs, has represented these persecutions as a "policy of religious, coherent and systematic intolerance."

In fact, during the first and second centuries, Christianity was persecuted sporadically and not systematically in time and space by the Roman state. Despite their traditional denomination ("persecutions of Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus"), after Nero, the Roman emperors were not the initiators of the condemnations and repression during the first two centuries, and the religious motives of the persecution are often found in the background and are somewhat imprecise.

It is true that until 311 Christians were threatened with repression, as a result of the common law first, then of special edicts. But when the history of these three centuries is reviewed year by year, there are only rare and short periods of real and somewhat general persecution. In ordinary times, that is,

almost always, Christians could lead their lives and labors, mingled with the other subjects of the empire, and enjoying, like them, the protection which the laws ensured to all.

"Your cities, your forts, towns, assemblies, and your very camps, wards, companies, palace, senate, forum, all swarm with Christians wrote Tertullian (Apology XXXVII, your temples indeed we leave to yourselves".

When the persecution raged, the Acts of the martyrs showed them receiving in their prison visits, subsidies and exhortations of deacons, even the deputations of foreign churches, without the prevention of magistrates and jailers. After the execution, their corpses or ashes were generally left to the faithful, who eventually made them the objects of special worship.

It is possible, without venturing in the slightest paradox, to affirm that the repressive measures taken by the pagan empire against the Christians appear to be rather badly organized or rather debonair, when compared with the persecutions which were inflicted later on heretics by Church including America (Salem 1692). According to the procedure instituted by Trajan, magistrates were forbidden to seek Christians. When these were accused, informers should be required to make a written denunciation. If this denunciation was found to be false, the informer was punished with the penalties which, would have been pronounced by because of his denunciation, if he had been right. But this justification, when it was not confirmed by the confession of the accused, required special evidence. Since ancient religions were national and political institutions, their worship was less a question of individual than of citizens. The women, the children, the old men could be away from it without being noticed. The family father himself could accomplish most of the rites and sacrifices on the domestic altar. He was free to be away from the temple and to desert the service of the gods for many years without appearing guilty and without losing any of his rights. Besides, the accusations, even categorical, were ordinarily kept only with regard to bishops and heads of churches.

In the Christian system, heresy, or only indulgence towards it, is an enormous crime, a crime of lese divine majesty, to the repression of which all the faithful have the duty of contributing. This duty is often sanctioned by laws punishing the silence with penalties sometimes equal to those of heresy, or stimulating denunciation by the promise of large rewards. Moreover, the search and denunciation of heresy are imposed as a special office to multitudes of agents, priests and monks (Inquisition). The smallest village is subject to the authority and vigilance of a priest (parish priest). And this surveillance includes all the acts and all the moments of the life of his flock. Not only birth, marriage, sickness and death, confession and communion at least yearly, lead them or put them necessarily at the feet of this priest; but the celebration of the feasts also. When the Church makes a heresy suit, all negligence or absence is a denunciation. Even if the heretic wishes to disguise his rebellion by attending during the day the ceremonies of the dominant worship in order to practice at night only the worship he prefers (the case of Spanish maranos for example) , this concealment is not a pledge of safety for him; for the Church possesses almost infallible means of discovering it. The confessional brings to the Church an inquisition a hundred times more clear-sighted than all the informers in the pagan Rome. The priest, whenever he wishes, may draw from the mouth of the child or of the servant the denunciation of the father or of the master. Then, overlooking and summing up all this, the Holy Office of the Inquisition, a permanent and formidable organ of persecution, whose proceedings runs secretly on anonymous denunciations, sentences the accused without confronting him with the witnesses and tortures him to extract confessions. In short, from the execution of Priscillian (385) to that of the witches in Salem (1692), Thomas Aikenhead (1697), the pastor Rochette (1762) of the knight De La Barre (1766), a long funereal series of tortures, wars, massacres and extermination, due to the religion of love, ah the joy of the religion of love for ever.

Christian historians count ten general persecutions suffered by the Christian religion in the Roman Empire before its legalization. This number ten has become, in a way, a number as symbolic as that of the 6 million victims of the holocaust (whose different estimates vary actually between 5, 1 million - Raul Hiberger- and 5.95 million-Jacob Lechinsky) ; but it is very seriously contested by history, which takes into account only facts, authentic documents and likelihood. Indeed, it seems very difficult to admit that a general persecution could have been directed against a religion when it had yet only rare and obscure adherents scattered in some towns. There were to be, at first; only local, accidental, facts ,produced by particular causes falling within common law.

Paganism by definition (and contrary to monolatry) admitted the existence of different gods and therefore worships; the only thing that was expected or even demanded from any citizen was loyalty, at least some a piece of evidence of loyalty, to his country. And in the Rome of that time there was no through a renunciation to his personal religion; but through a symbolic gesture to do from time to time, in honor of the gods of the Empire or of the very person of the Emperor. Everyone could then return home to practice the worship of his choosing.

THE FIRST OF THE TRUE OFFICIAL AND UNIVERSAL PERSECUTIONS (performed throughout the empire) THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS IN 250.

PRELIMINARY BOXED TEXT.

For the recorded let us remind of the fact that the first anti-Christian persecutions were of Jewish origin and took place in +30 + 40, that is to say, from the death of the high Nazarene rabbi, and that the Roman authorities did not always take the initiative for these arrests in the period which followed, but sometimes acted on a complaint duly lodged in court or on anonymous denunciation.

+31 + 36. The future Saint Paul actively participated in the persecutions ordered by the Sanhedrin.

+ 32 +37. Arrest of St. Stephen. Cause: blasphemy. Court: the Sanhedrin. Place of execution: Jerusalem. Means of execution: stoning. Accomplice: the future Saint Paul.

Same period. The Sanhedrin entrusts the future St. Paul with a letter asking the Jewish authorities in Damascus to arrest the Christians in the city.

+ 155. Disturbance of the peace in the city of Smyrna resulting in the death at the stake of Saint Polycarp.

If we believe our only testimony on the subject (a letter from the church of Smyrna to that of Philomelion), the Roman proconsul of the province, no doubt indifferent to all these stories between Jews (he does not believe in the devil and neither do we), tries above all to restore calm to his jurisdiction.

The proconsul "persuade the people." Polycarp: " To you I have thought it right to offer an account; but as for these I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me."

Persecutions of Decius now.

As we have had the opportunity to see it, the previous period comes under the legal regime instituted by Trajan's rescript in 112. This regime allowed both tolerance and repression. The repression remained local, depending solely on the magistrates. These ordinarily took action only under the pressure of the people, who was the true promoter of the persecution and provoked it by its complaints, sometimes even by its revolts. All this resulted, however, only in short bouts of rigor or violence, which only reached a number of martyrs much less than it is generally imagined, because they were mainly directed against the bishops and the heads of churches. In the long intervals between these fits of violence, the Christians, though always threatened were not really bashed about; they were in security, if not safe.

At least this is what Origen could write about 248, the date of the writing of his book against Celsus (III, 8).

"But with regard to the Christians, because they were taught not to avenge themselves upon their enemies (and have thus observed laws of a mild and philanthropic character); and because they would not, although able, have made war even if they had received authority to do so—they have obtained this reward from God, that he has always warred in their behalf, and on certain occasions has restrained those who rose up against them and desired to destroy them. For in order to remind others that by seeing a few engaged in a struggle for their religion, they might also be better fitted to despise death, some, on special occasions, and these individuals who can be easily numbered, have endured death for the sake of Christianity—God not permitting the whole nation to be exterminated, but desiring that it should continue, and that the whole world should be filled with this salutary and religious doctrine. And again, on the other hand, that those who were of weaker minds might recover their courage and rise superior to the thought of death, God interposed His providence on behalf of believers, dispersing by an act of His will alone all the conspiracies formed against them; so that neither kings, nor rulers, nor the populace, might be able to rage against them beyond a certain point." Their churches developed their hierarchy, celebrated their worship, founded cemeteries, built buildings and even acquired properties. Their writers, Quadratus, Justin, Miltiades, Athenagoras, Apollinaris, Melito, Tertullian, Origen, published Apologies and Exhortations to martyrs, of which one page would have condemned to fire books and authors, if they had been written by heretics, at the time when the Catholic Church was all-powerful in Europe.

During the reign of Philip the Arab (244-248), the Church could even enjoy a complete peace. The benevolence of this emperor towards the Christians was so great that Eusebius claims that he had converted to Christianity.

Everything changed when Decius defeated Philip the Arab in 248. Decius had indeed some good reasons to distrust the Christians, those co-religionists of Philip the Arab, his assassinated predecessor.

At the end of the Persian campaign in 244, and when, in view of the military situation, we were moving towards a status quo ante, Philip had signed with Shapur, the Persian King of Kings a peace treaty humiliating for Rome. Decius had very good reason to suspect Christians of being at the origin of this "precarious" peace.

It must be said that Shapur, in order to break the exorbitant power of the Zoroastrian magi, as well as to rally the dissidents of Rome at the moment when he was about to conquer the eastern provinces of the Empire, had authorized Mani, a Babylonian adept of a Christian sect, to preach his doctrine in his states.

Now, for the King of kings Shapur, for the Roman Emperor Decius, and even for the Christian doctrines of that time, Mani's doctrine was only a Christian heresy among others. And since this "Manichaeism" was on the way to becoming the official religion in the Persian Empire, it was not surprising that the Emperor Decius blamed the Christians for the disastrous treaty of 244. For it was clear that a shameful peace had been purchased by a treaty of friendship between Philip, a crypto-Christian emperor, and Shapur, a crypto Manichean, and therefore also a crypto-Christian king of kings.

Moreover, if in the East the collusion of the Christians with the Persian age-old enemy was probable, in the West their betrayal was certain. On the death of Philip the Arab, his brother Priscus, Christian as well as the whole family of the assassinated emperor, had revolted and made an alliance with the terrible Goths. Supported by his dangerous allies, Priscus had put on the imperial purple and threatened to march on Rome.

If the Roman Empire wanted to survive, it was imperative to counteract the Christian threat. But how? Philip, the Arab had placed all his Christian friends at the command posts.

A radical purge was urgently needed. This was called "the persecution of Decius."

At first Decius ordered the execution of the most prominent figures of the former regime. Most, of course, were Christians.

After having suppressed the instigators of the policy of Philip the Arab, Decius then ordered that the chief dignitaries were questioned about their relations with the enemies of the state, with Priscus, or with the Persian enemy.

And there he did not confine himself, like Trajan, to allow the execution of those who were accused and convicted of being Christians. Considering their religion as a danger for the empire, Decius ordered all his subjects to offer a solemn sacrifice to the gods of Rome. The novelty of this edict lies in its binding and universal character. Commissions are responsible for controlling the execution of the sacrifices by the inhabitants and for distributing certificates to the sacrificers, the famous libelli.

The operation is brief but very violent. A large number of Christians obeyed and sacrificed by making the gesture demanded from them. Others refuse.

In Smyrna the martyr of Pionius and the abjuration of the Bishop Eudaemon are known to us by particularly reliable acts. The pope Fabian (236-250) is killed, Origen is arrested and tortured. Guilty of high treason or not, Origen, who in his youth had, for the greater glory of God, endured the pain of a voluntary castration, resisted all ill-treatment. In the absence of confessions and of evidences, he was released.

But if Origen had remained silent under torture, others spoke (cf. the case of the bishop of Smyrna Eudaemon) and like always in this case many names were given.

However, this persecution does not seem to have made as many victims as Christian propaganda suggests it. Moreover, the application of the edict seems unequal in the provinces: severe in Africa, the persecution is much lesser in Gaul.

The real scope of the edict of Decius arouses therefore several problems for the historian as we shall see. And first of all, was it truly a question of really compelling all the inhabitants of the Empire, without exception, to sacrifice to the gods of Rome in order to show their loyalty to the empire?

It would be too tedious to expound here all the inconsistencies that arise if we accept the (official) version of an edict of universal persecution that Decius would have promulgated in order to eradicate a religion on the sole ground that this doctrine would have threatened the cohesion of his Empire. Although the text of the persecutory edict did not reach us and the pagan chroniclers do not speak of persecution against Christians, the majority of modern historians think that the emperor Decius, wishing to re-establish the ideological unity of the Empire, obliged well all the Roman citizens to express their patriotism. All, under penalty of death, would have been obliged to offer a sacrifice to the guardian gods of the State.

The extent and care taken in the research depended, of course, on the zeal of the local magistrates and on their loyalty towards the Emperor Decius, whose power had hardly time to establish itself firmly throughout the Empire.

The edict of persecution itself is lost, we have said, but many certificates of sacrifice (libelli) have been preserved both in the West (Proconsular Africa, Rome, Gaul, Spain) and the East (Egypt) testifying to the application of that edict.

Cyprian of Carthage, warned of the danger of an imminent police raid by a remained anonymous informer survived the first persecution by retiring to his country house. Therefore this has probably been applied with more or less zeal depending on the region.

Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria withdrew to his estates, remains silent, and escaped this persecution. Some Christians are sentenced to prison, whereas the edict lost and mentioned by later Christian writings was supposed to provide only one punishment: death.

And finally, we have already said it, but as this case is undoubtedly exemplary, let us remind of the fact that Origen was arrested, subjected to the question (tortured), but finally released. What happened then?

This absence of the text of the edict obliges us to use the sources with care. Thus it is much more probable that the edict of Decius was intended not to detect the enemies of the ancient cults in order to eliminate them but rather to recover them and assimilate them into a common Roman culture.

THE LAPSI CRISIS (250 to 350).

The result was not what Decius had expected, for the rallying were obviously only a facade and from the end of 250 the Christians who had failed would ask en masse for their reinstatement.

Small semantic details to begin (Latin Church Glossary).

The diversity of reactions and circumstances had given rise to different types of situation.

Lapsi (singular lapsus) is the name given to believers who have failed in one way or another during persecutions.

There are 5 categories of lapsi.

-Libellatici. Have agreed to have their name entered in the registers of the taking oath of allegiance to the emperor with incense burned in his honor, and have had a receipt for that, but have not personally participated in the ceremony. It may therefore also be a bogus certificate.

-The thurificati. Have accepted to burn a few grains of incense in front of statues of the gods or in honor of the emperor.

-The sacrificati. Have actually and personally participated or attended a sacrifice ceremony in honor of the gods of Rome.

-The acta facientes. Have accepted to do the little move they were asked to do BUT AFTER HAVING DENIED BEING CHRISTIAN.

-The traditores or traitors. Have given up to the police the Holy Scriptures, objects of worship and even names (of other Christians) when it was in their power.

One distinguishes in the other camp...

-The confessors of the faith. Have been imprisoned, have refused every compromise, but have been released for various reasons.

-The martyrs of Type 1. Refused to give up the Scriptures to the police force come to arrest them, and therefore a fortiori suffered the death penalty provided for that purpose.

-The martyrs of type 2. Have refused to make the small move they were asked to make (usually burning a few grains of incense in honor of the Emperor) and therefore preferred to be executed in the fashion of the time and place.

-The martyrs of type 3. As soon as they heard the news, they surrendered themselves to the authorities by declaring that they were Christians and by.....putting here everything you can imagine as deliberately provocative words.

NB. One can assume from certain writings such as those of Tertullian (Treatise on Flight in Persecution) that there must have been such cases. The future Catholics Orthodoxes or Reformed blamed Montanists very much for their suicidal attitude at the time.

Again see Tertullian; letter to Scapula. " Of a truth, we Christians do not mightily fear or dread aught which we undergo from those who know us not; forasmuch as when we became of this sect, we thereby |2 bound ourselves to let out our very lives in the warfare belonging to it. We look not only for the reward which God proffers, but we also fear his threatenings against those who live after another way. Furthermore, we strive against your utmost cruelty, crowding uncalled before you, and happier on being found guilty than when we are dismissed.....

.....But the greater our conflicts, the greater our rewards. Your cruelty is our glory. Only see you to it, that in having such things as these to endure, we do not feel ourselves constrained to rush forth to the combat, if only to prove that we have no dread of them, but on the contrary, even invite their infliction. When Arrius Antoninus was driving things hard in Asia, the whole Christians of the province, in one united band, presented themselves before his judgment seat; on which, ordering a few to be led forth to execution, he said to the rest, "O miserable men, if you wish to die, you have precipices or halters."

It is also important here before to tackle Islam's challenge to well distinguish the witness or martyr (of the faith) from the simple confessor (of the faith still).

In order to be regarded as martyrs or witnesses of the faith, it was necessary, when summoned to court, to go there as in the theater, to insult the emperor, the magistrates and executioners, to suffer tortures by praising God, and if the judge proved inflexible, what was far from always being the case, to accepting death in atrocious sufferings as a supreme reward. What, we see it , and sorry for French

journalists or intellectuals in general, has nothing to do with the notion of shahid in lands of Islam (Dar al Islam).

The calling "confessor" was, on the other hand, awarded at the time to Christians who suffered in persecutions other than by shedding their blood and by ending executed. It is true that this notion was initially badly distinguished from that of a martyr. The martyr was a witness, he had by his attitude testified to his belief before the judges. In the same way, a confessor (Latin confessor) too affirmed (or more exactly professed) his membership in the Church.

Saint Cyprian will therefore specify the meaning of the two words: A witness or martyr in Greek is the one who was executed for his belief or died in prison, and in the same way the one who was tortured when he survives. Is confessor the Christian who voluntarily exiled himself, who was incarcerated and suffered other prejudices, especially material losses, but who was neither executed nor truly tortured, in short who did not shed his blood.

N.B. St. Cyprian visibly thought of his personal case by working out such a definition.

Many, imitating Cyprian of Carthage and Dionysius of Alexandria, preferred therefore to enter a half underground movement. They were called "Confessors" (of the Faith). But for others, those who were later called "Martyrs or Witnesses" (of the Faith), attempting to evade these measures was already an indefensible sin, and on the contrary they took advantage of the opportunity to turn the courts into platforms. See, for example, what Tertullian wrote about this in the letter he wrote to the magistrate named Scapula. (above)

To guarantee the Pax Deorum and secure Roman unity around the official state religion, Decius ordered therefore in 250 that all citizens sacrifice to the Roman god-or-demons by making offerings of wine and eating meat of animals offered in sacrifice; in the presence of commissioners appointed in each locality to vouch for it. The acceptor receives a libellum (a certificate) signed by these representatives of the power and shielding him from any subsequent prosecution. Such certificates were found in Oxyrhynchus, a city in Egypt on the western bank of the Nile:
"To the superintendents of offerings and sacrifices at the city from Aurelius ... It has ever been my custom to make sacrifices and libations to the god-or-demons, and now also I have in your presence in accordance with the command poured libations and sacrificed and tasted the offerings together with my son Aurelius Dioscorus and my daughter Aurelia Lais. I therefore request you to certify my statement. (P. Oxy 4.658.) Death sentences punished crimes of high treason or common law offenses, not religious motives, and they were perhaps rare. And naturally, the biggest metropolises or regions where the extremist Christian Taliban (Parabolani) were the most numerous (Africa, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria) were more severely hit. The extent and care taken in the research also depended on the zeal of the local magistrates and on their loyalty to the Emperor Decius, whose power had hardly time to establish itself firmly throughout the Empire. In addition, anti-Christian pogroms could still occur. While some Christians succeeded in avoiding persecution without too many problems, others, linked to the most radical movements of Christianity (the Montanists), had no chance of escaping: their reputation as extremists was known urbi et orbi. These Christians will very rarely slip through the net. Specialists distinguish the "sacrificati," those who had participated in a true sacrifice and the "thurificati," those who had only burned two or three grains of incense before any divine representation. Others bought the certificate (libellum) attesting that they had sacrificed (libellatici). Others, however, simply let their names appear in the official records of those who had obeyed the imperial edict (acta facientes *). At Oxyrhynchus, the Christians brought before the magistrate of the city, and summoned to sacrifice, too, to the god-or-demons; had the possibility of authorizing a third party, often a still pagan relative, to perform the ritual for them, thus avoiding "defiling themselves." The Roman judges demanded, as we have seen, from the Christian, not that he really denied his religion, but that he sacrificed himself to the imperial cult in order to prove his loyalty to the Emperor. Those who submit and sacrifice to the god-or-demons of Roman polytheism are not disturbed. They are numerous and arouse the opposition or the contempt of the fanatic Christian Taliban (Parabolani) supporting martyrdom like the Montanists, or the future Donatists in Africa, who call them "lapsi" (meaning "those who fell").

The immediate effect of these measures was to excite in those who were determined to persevere an elation aspiring to martyrdom, but to provoke many "apostasies" from those who were called lapsi.

As we shall see it, however, these measures could not reach their goal, for the rallying were only superficial but they had an unexpected effect which was almost worse for the incipient Christianity. Not everyone had the faith of Montanist Christians like Perpetua .

Many of the basic Christians (the converted soldiers, for example) knew they had nothing to fear because no one could ever doubt their loyalty to the Empire. But for many others, having their consciousness less clear or simply a more fearful nature, the re-enactment and the hardening of the ancient regulations of Trajan was a real tragedy. Some, even without being subjected to any pressure, rushed into the temples and hastened to sacrifice to the gods. Others (the libellatici) bribed one or another official in order to get bogus certificates attesting that they had burned some grains of incense in front of the statue of the emperor or of the gods of Rome.

Did the Christians who refused to perform this citizen gesture be numerous ?? It is unlikely. But if these Christians dodged thus the persecution without too many problems, others, linked to the most radical movements of Christianity such as Montanism, had no chance to escape prosecution: their reputation as extremists was known *urbi et orbi* .

Many of these visionaries, imitating Cyprian of Carthage and Dionysius of Alexandria previously warned of the danger, then went underground. Being well understood that it was not a question then "to take the maquis" passively! This French expression must be taken in the sense it had at the time of the Second World War. It is only thus, by entering the "militant Church," that the highly respected title of "Witness to the Faith," of "Confessor" could be conquered.

But if you wished to deserve the glorious title of "confessor of the faith" without entering this Resistance, you had to act like the most revered personages, for it was a sin only to try to escape persecution. When summoned to court, you must go to it in order to speak in it most intransigent remarks, and if the judge was inflexible, accept the glorious death of the martyrs as a supreme reward (Tertullian).

It is impossible to estimate the number of victims of this repression. Everything suggests that it was limited: as soon as 251, just a few months after the end of this persecution, we find the Christian communities of Rome and Carthage more flourishing than ever, peopled and active, organizing meetings and supporting financially its members in difficulty!

The Christians who had sacrificed to the gods of the Empire (*lapsi*) quickly asked to be reintegrated into their community.

The debate that followed in Christendom on the problem of the reintegration of the *lapsi*, that is, those who had agreed to sacrifice to the gods of Rome, testifies to the reality of a major crisis not only within the empire, but also within the Christian communities.

The problem of the *lapsi* will start the Novatian crisis after the bishop of Rome Cornelius (251-253) decided to reintegrate the *lapsi* into the Church, in accordance with the moderate position of many Church leaders such as Denys of Alexandria or Cyprian of Carthage.

Contemporary Christian writers, of course, speak only of martyrs and *lapsi*, those weak who deny their faith. That is normal. The martyrs were the glory of the Church and the reintegration of the *lapsi* raised a painful penitential problem. But it would be a mistake to reduce the Christian community of the time to these two groups of believers, with a so violently contrasted attitude. The Church was not made up only of heroes or cowards. And since we know from Saint Cyprian that even at the height of the "persecution," "Confessors" intervened so that certain *lapsi* were reinstated in the "communion of the Church," it was because this Church was not reduced to these two categories of faithful ... and that all the "Confessors of the Faith" did not perish under the claws of lions or under the ax of the executioner! More than any other indication, it is the diversity of behavior of the Christians during the "persecution" which shows that the presumed edict of Decius could not be what the majority of Christian historians say.

If this law only stipulated that all the citizens of the Empire should sacrifice to the gods under death penalty, the room for maneuver and assessment of the magistrates responsible for applying it would have been almost non-existent. And as, generally, the imperial edicts left little room for interpretation, the tribunals would soon have been changed into mass graves. And since no historical source describes such hecatombs ...

But, for a proved (or so-called) martyr, as for example the pope Fabian executed in Rome in the beginning of the year 250, how many Christians, even among the most prominent ones, escape all pursuit with an amazing facility! The great Saint Cyprian of Carthage simply withdrew to his country house and his counterpart in Alexandria, roughly speaking, has the same fate.

As for the great theologian Origen, his case is even stranger. He is arrested, horribly tortured ... and then he is released, as nothing has happened! Other Christians are sentenced to penal colony ...

Others are released after having "confessed their faith," before the Roman judge!

And all this although the lost edict of Decius ordered only a punishment - death - for all those who refused to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire ??

* Acta faclentes: those who obeyed the law.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF TREBONIANUS GALLUS, VALERIAN, AND GALLIENUS.

-Trebonius Gallus (251-253) continued the persecution initiated by Decius. Thus, in the course of the year 252 or in the beginning of 253, the Pope Cornelius would have been exiled to Centocelle (Centumcellae) near Civitavecchia. But if the real power really wanted to "persecute" the Christian religion, it would not have been enough to exile Pope Cornelius a few kilometers from Rome. It is as if, after having painfully defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, the English had exiled him70 kilometers away Paris!

-Valerian (253-260), at first indulgent towards the Christians, ended by decreeing against them measures more precise than those of his predecessors. They target essentially the upper strata and the clergy and by no means the simple faithful.

A first edict dated 257 forbids for the first time the worship and the meetings of the Christians and orders the clergymen to sacrifice to the pagan gods and the emperor under penalty of exile or hard labor.

A second edict dated 258, more severe, provided for slavery or hard labor for the members of the emperor's family concerned, for confiscation of property for the public figures, for death penalty in case of refusal to sacrifice.

The Christian hierarchy is shaken, the faithful deprived of their elites and the tax authorities largely beneficiary. The victims are more numerous than during the persecution of Decius, especially in Egypt, Carthage (death of Cyprian of Carthage this time) and Spain (death of the Bishop of Tarragona). In Rome, the eminent Christian figures executed are Pope Sixtus II, with seven deacons, including St. Lawrence, who was burned to death as a martyr.

-Gallienus put an end to the persecution as soon as he has alone the power: he published soon as 260 a first edict of toleration inaugurating a period of tranquility of forty years, the little peace of the Church, by making lawful the Christian worship and by giving back the properties confiscated from churches, including cemeteries.

This rescript, the text of which has been preserved, corresponds to a request of the bishops of Egypt. Christian communities are thus integrated or reintegrated into the common law of associations, through the recognition of certain collective freedoms: freedom of speech, assembly and association, property rights.

This situation will end only with the persecution of Diocletian, Emperor Aurelian having carried out nothing in this field.

THE PERSECUTION OF AURELIAN.

There may have been confusion with Marcus Aurelius.

Of course Aurelian was a fervent worshiper of the Sun - some even claim that his mother was a priestess of this deity. He promoted therefore the cult of the "Sol Invictus" throughout the Empire and especially in Rome, where he built a magnificent temple in his honor.

But this emperor had nothing against the Christians.

In the years 272-273, the Church even begged him to arbitrate the "case Paul of Samosata" which had for many years divided the Christian community in Antioch since he had become the bishop of it (in 260). Paul of Samosata was a defender of Mesopotamian Christianity, and he violently opposed the philosophical innovations of the Greek Church in Alexandria, which was very much in fashion since the learned theologian Origen had allegorically interpreted many passages of the Old Testament and of the Gospels. The huge gap was therefore dug between the Hellenistic Christians, who, according to the theological innovations of Origen and his disciples, regarded Christ as an emanation of the divine word as a god son of God, and these old Aramean believers faithful to the original message of Christianity, and who saw in Jesus only a man ... an illustrious man and endowed with supernatural powers, of course, but only a man!

Paul of Samosata therefore incurred the more and more virulent disapproval of all these intellectual priests. The latter denounced their bishop to the other Christian churches in the East as well as to the bishop of Rome and even decided to resort to the judgment of the Emperor Aurelian.

These disputes for dogmatic subtleties inaccessible to sound reason surpassed perhaps at the highest point this realistic and punctilious soldier. As for him, he certainly had no doubt as to the purely human nature of this Christ crucified during the reign of his predecessor Tiberius! The emperor Aurelian having thought a lot about his case, ordered wisely that, as a last resort, the bishopric of Antioch should be given "to those to whom the bishops of Italy and of the city of Rome should adjudge it" (Eusebius of Caesarea, Hist. Eccles. VII, 30). There is no trace of anti-Christian persecution in all that.

THE SECOND AND LAST TRUE OFFICIAL AND UNIVERSAL PERSECUTION (practiced throughout the Empire) THE DIOCLETIAN'S PERSECUTION FROM 303 TO 313.

A few words, first of all, about the administrative situation of the Roman Empire at the time: the tetrarchy: in other words two monarchs, each with a deputy. What is a little bit complicated to trace the history of the anti-Christian persecutions.

Diocletian, having come to power by being designated new Augustus by his troops on November 20, 284, and then by eliminating his rivals Numerianus and Carinus soon realized that it was now impossible for one man to rule the gigantic Roman empire. In 285 he had therefore taken as his assistant, as co-emperor, Maximian, one of his most faithful companions in arms, in charge of defending the western part of the empire (it was a matter of fighting against the Bagaudae) himself keeping the eastern part, the richest one.

The empire, however, was not divided, and there was not yet a Roman Empire of the West or a Roman Empire of the East, and Diocletian kept all authority over his Caesar, as well as over the whole of the empire, and of the legions. Maximian benefited only from a delegation of power. He was nevertheless soon raised to the rank of Augustus, equaling thus Diocletian in title.

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT MAURICE AND THE THEBAN LEGION.

Martyrdom mentioned by two sources, an anonymous passion and a passion of Eucherius of Lyons. The historicity of this episode is controversial because of several historical improbabilities of the texts, for example the non-existence of this legion in the list of the Roman legions of the time. It is also impossible to know precisely the number of soldiers who made up this legion. At the time of the Roman republic, legions had 6,600 soldiers, but in the late period the number per legion was smaller.

Let us briefly remind of the facts. Around 285-286, in a small village of the Alps (near Agaune, in the Swiss Valais), a number of soldiers of a legion raised in Egypt, together with their chief, a man named Mauritius; would have been executed on the orders of the deputy Emperor Maximian Hercules, because, Christians, they would have refused to sacrifice to the guardian deities of the Empire.

Saint Maurice, first version (That of Eucherius of Lyons).

In the last years of the third century, during the reign of the co-Emperor Maximian, an entire Roman legion (about six thousand men), the "Theban legion" would have converted to Christianity. Stationed in Egypt, it was ordered to march westward, without first knowing why. It is only through the passes of the Valais that it learns it: it must take part in a suppression of Christians. Under the impulse of its chief, Maurice, it stopped, as one man, in a place now called Saint-Maurice in Switzerland, and refused to continue. The deputy Emperor, facing this unprecedented rebellion, takes personally the things in hand. He caused the mutineers to be surrounded by secure troops, and repeats his orders. New refusal. Maximian threatens to have them decimated (in the first sense of the term: one man in ten, drawn by lot, is scourged and then beheaded). It's no use. They proceed to a first decimation, then to a second one. Finally, the entire Theban legion is exterminated. This version, told more than a century after the alleged facts, is generally considered unlikely. The next one is more plausible.

Saint Maurice, anonymous version.

Same time, same place, same context, the Roman army. But Maurice is no more than a decurion, i.e., a non-commissioned officer. He is put to death with a handful of soldiers for refusing obstinately to participate in a pagan sacrifice. If the second version seems more likely, it is not only because it is more "modest." It also matches the most common case. The person is martyred not because he is a Christian, but because he refused to sacrifice to the (pagan) gods.

This version of the history of Mauritius nevertheless poses a problem. For at that time, since an edict of Gallienus(260) respected by his successors (all pagans nevertheless) and for a few more years, Christianity was accepted, and its followers very officially dispensed from sacrificing to the pagan gods. But it is true that armies are not always respectful of the rights and freedoms of their soldiers. Moreover, what did these Coptic Egyptian soldiers so far from their native Nile? According to the legend, this "Theban legion" of Maurice would have been raised to fight against the Bagaudae. It is therefore important in this respect to put an end to an umpteenth "Christian" legend, an umpteenth lie, the links that can exist between Bagaudae and Christianity.

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Volume I. Part 1. Chapter XIII. Edward Gibbon himself does not believe in it, who summarizes thus the events.

"The first exploit of Maximian (in 287), though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who, under the appellation of Bagaudæ, had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those which in the fourteenth century successively afflicted both...The greatest part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labor on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of fetters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul, from the reign of Gallienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these servile peasants was peculiarly miserable; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, of the barbarians, of the soldiers, and of the officers of the revenue.

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury. The plowman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equaled those of the fiercest barbarians. They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without control; and two of their most daring leaders had the folly and rashness to assume the Imperial ornaments...we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders, Ælianus and Amandus, were Christians, or to insinuate, that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity, which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind. The fact rests indeed on a very slight authority, a life of St Babolinus, which is probably of the seventh century".....

It was in 284 (or sooner according to the authors) that appeared the first bagauda. Aelianus is the most famous leader of it. He will deal a while on an equal footing with Probus. Contained for some time by Aurelian and Probus, these Resistant again revolted during the reign of Diocletian, with at their head a named Amandus, an officer of the Roman army, having joined their cause.

For a soldier like Maximian, to massacre these disorganized bands of tramps was not an insurmountable task. Yet it was far from being so simple! Horrible reprisals, innumerable massacres, and sanguinary battles, proved necessary to overcome these poor desperate guys. After a final carnage at the confluence of the Marne and of the Seine rivers, where the last bands were massacred, the question was settled but it is perhaps the fate of this Amandus that inspired the formation of the legend of Saint Maurice. It is nevertheless possible, as Maurice Bouvier (a French historian of the family of Jacqueline Kennedy ???) notes it, that this Amandus was later Christianized and is at the origin of the name of Saint Amand. Our author mentions also the cases of Saint Ceneri and Saint Leonard (of the forest), but with much less probability (he makes them some almost druids).

It was not uncommon for the Roman legionaries to be sent to fight very far from their original country ; but generally they were men of the Northern Empire (Bretons, Germans, Illyrians) who, in addition to defending their own borders, were mobilized to use their pilum by defending the Southern provinces; rarely the reverse! Apart from the Arab cavalry and archery, the "Westerners," especially the Egyptians, were not considered to be excellent soldiers. Moreover, at that time, Upper Egypt, from which the recruits of this "Theban legion" were supposed to come, was gravely threatened by the invasions of Blemmyes, some Nubian (Sudanese) peoples as dangerous to Rome (and its Egyptian grain supply) than the Bagaudae. Maurice and his comrades, therefore, had no reason to emigrate: it was not the enemies to fight who were missing at home. On the other hand, in the years 260-300, Christians were not persecuted. It was only in 303 that Diocletian, the hierarchical superior of Maximian, passed against them a certain number of edicts. At the time when the "Theban legion" was massacred, Christians had lived for thirty-five years or more, in peace (a period known as "the little peace of the Church"). Since Gallienus had put an end to the persecution of his father Valerian, their worship was tolerated. Even better, the wife of the Emperor Diocletian did not hide his Christian

sympathies, and St. Caius, the "bishop" of Rome, would even have been a member of the imperial family!

In March 293, satisfied with the functioning of this duumvirate, Diocletian developed it. Each Augustus chose a new Caesar to assist him in his empire, and destined to succeed the Augustus whom he assisted in a first time. Severe rules were set for the choice as for the experience and the qualification of the chosen person, including the prohibition of choosing a son as Caesar.

The two generals chosen were Galerius by Diocletian, and Constantius Chlorus by Maximian.

THE CAUSES OF THIS TRUE PERSECUTION.

In the end of the year 302, the deputy of Diocletian, Caesar Galerius comes back victorious from the war against the Persians.

After two extremely hard campaigns, he had led the Roman Empire to the height of its territorial growth. However, in spite of these successes, one thing had marked Galerius: he had been able to measure very precisely the political danger formed by the massive presence of Christians. Did not the defeat and the humiliation of the all-powerful Persian King of Kings find indeed its first cause in the revolt against him of the Armenian king Tiridates, baptized since 288?

And if the Christians of the Roman Empire imitated the Armenians and revolted against Rome? Given their flagrant lack of patriotism, evidenced by decades of lack of civic spirit and some consequential betrayals, given their constant refusal to take an oath to the state, given their growing influence and their presence at all levels of the power, result of forty years of toleration, the worst could be feared if nobody put a halt to their ambitions.

Galerius asked Diocletian to carry out an inquiry about the wrongdoing and plans of Christians.

Already in 296, when Rome was entering a war against Persia, didn't have the emperor published an edict proscribing Manichaeism, precisely because this doctrine, strongly influenced by Iranian and Christian elements, appeared to him as a danger to the moral unity of the Empire?

A meeting of the enlarged Council of the Empire was then held at Nicomedia (now Izmit, Turkey) in order to decide the fate of the Christians. The only reading of the last book of the New Testament (Apocalypse) would have been enough to frighten any Roman leader: these fanatics dreamed only of the ruin of Rome, which they did not hesitate to affix with names as "Seven Headed Beast" or "Great Prostitute." The invective of the Jesus of Revelation (chap. 17 et seq.) is as terrible as compromising. Let us quote, among other courtesies: "Render to her [Rome] just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her" (Revelation 18: 6-8).

Nevertheless Diocletian was reluctant to shed blood: his wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria had sympathies for the sect. On the other hand, Christians, already numerous, rich, powerful and fanatic, risked, if provoked, to foment bloody riots, even secession. The Emperor therefore opted for a gentle method, aimed above all at avoiding the propagation of subversive ideas by Christian leaders.

At the end of 302 - beginning of 303, another persecution broke out against the Christians. In fact, the only (historically proven) measure of general repression taken by the Romans against the advocates of this new belief.

Historians are lost in conjectures as to the motives of this persecution, so much the real motivations of the emperor and of his entourage remain vague. Although, for political reasons, Diocletian loudly claimed his divine direct line of descent, this prosaic emperor was very far away from any "pagan" fanaticism. Besides, his wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria were perhaps also Christian.... Until Pope St. Caius (283 - 296), who was probably a member of the imperial family.

According to the commonly accepted explanation, Diocletian would have decided to crack down on Christians firstly for the sake of ideological unification ("one empire, one religion"); secondly, because

in his eyes the presence of Christians in the Administration and especially in the Army formed a danger to the State.

The tetrarchical period, therefore, made succeed every few years measures of exclusions of the Christians from the imperial army (see the famous episode of the Theban "legion" in Switzerland) and the great persecution of 303. The first event can be dated 298 according to Eusebius and Lactantius. From this period dates the Edict against the Manicheans, which expresses the concern for moral cohesion around traditional Roman values.

The imperial will to exclude Christianity from the army could have gone in the same direction. This purge was interpreted as the first step in a general plan of outlawing Christians, or it was assumed that the problems encountered in the army had led to widespread persecution. Another factor is to be taken into account. From the earliest years of Diocletian, there had been a growing number of cases of conscientious objection from recruits, a consequence perhaps of the draft system which had just been put in place. This refusal to serve could place Christianity in a position of moral and physical refuge for the refractory and, inside the churches, amplify the echo of the doctrinal positions affirming the incompatibility of the armed service with the Christian belief.

But if insubordination and conscientious objection are undoubtedly at the origin of the purge of the army, and can explain - at least partially - the "military martyrs" like Saint Maurice and his comrades; what reasons to find for the persecution of priests, believers, and the confiscation of Holy Scriptures?

The first edict of February 24, 303, without threatening the physical integrity of the people, ordered the demolition of the churches and the destruction of the sacred books. Christians should also be deprived of any office, dignity or privilege.

For those who find this shocking, I remind you that in our time, *mutatis mutandis*, we do not act differently when we prohibit (or try to prohibit) extremist, fascist and racist parties from vomiting their nauseating ideas on the radio and on television or when we try to ban their meetings or demonstrations.

Diocletian ordered personally the demolition of the sumptuous church in Nicomedia, which stood opposite his palace, and made the Edict, signed with his own hand, to be displayed in the great square of the city. A fanatic Christian smashed to pieces and publicly and furiously trampled on this document, while others tried to set fire to the Imperial Palace. Twice in fifteen days suspicious fires broke out in the Emperor's dwelling, one of which was in Diocletian's room itself.

Two edicts thus aggravated the first: one promulgated in the spring of 303 ordered the imprisonment of the members of the clergy, the other enacted in the autumn of the same year provided for the execution of those who would refuse the sacrifice to gods. Finally, a third edict, published in 304 following the armed revolt of the bishops in Syria, ordered all the subjects of the Empire, on death penalty, to sacrifice to the gods of the State.

Pope Marcellinus abjures, sacrifices to the god-or-demons, and died in his bed, while hundreds (thousands ?) of his co-religionists, more courageous (or more fanatical); perish on the scaffold, thus winning, through the blood baptism, their crown of a martyr.

After taking these extreme measures, Diocletian renounced the imperial purple and abdicated. He left the system of the tetrarchy in place: two emperors (the "Augustus" Constantius Chlorus in the West and Galerius in the East) associated with two "Caesars" (Severus and Maximinus Daia) governed the Empire, applying with more or less rigor, and according to political necessity, the edicts of persecution. This persecution therefore slackened after the abdication of Diocletian, but the ordinances ordering it were not withdrawn.

In the eyes of the Christian hagiographers, Maximian is considered a horrible persecutor. Yet, as brutal and violent as he was, the chief collaborator of Diocletian does not seem to have displayed much zeal in executing the orders of his superior.

In Italy there were also a few dead, although it seems that the Christian authors wallowed in attributing to Maximian and the persecuting edicts of Diocletian hypothetical martyrs whose precise date they did not know. For example, that of St. Lucia in Syracuse, whose miraculous veil stopped the lava of Mount

Etna, or that of St. Agnes, exhibited naked in a brothel, but whose modesty was, as in the case of Lady Godiva, another avatar of Epona, miraculously preserved thanks to her hair.

In Italy and Rome the persecution was of short length. As long as the peninsula was ruled by Maximian, the Christians were disturbed. Their situation became milder when Maxentius, son of Maximian, seized power. Nevertheless, after the death of the very controversial Pope Marcellinus, who perhaps gave the Holy Scriptures up, the throne of Saint Peter will remain vacant for three and a half years.

Nevertheless, as early as 308, even though the Christians in the East continued to be persecuted by Maximinus Daia, those of Rome had resumed their disputes.

The renegades (the lapsi), those Christians who had obeyed the imperial edicts by sacrificing to gods, were very numerous, and they ardently wished to return unconditionally to the communion of the faithful. Pope Marcellus, who had just been elected instead of the traitor Marcellinus, opposed it: according to him, a penance was necessary. The nature of this sanction is unknown, but it was perhaps to be financial: the churches had been destroyed and had to be rebuilt. In addition, it was necessary to reconstitute the stock of sacred books, and the transcription of the manuscripts was very expensive.

Correction or fine, whatever! The repentant lapsi did not agree and protested violently. Bloody riots ravaged Rome, the Christians tore each other to pieces while the priests urged either side, according to their respective preferences, either to chastise the traitors or to eliminate those who refused to forgive.

Christian sources also mention some martyrs in Spain. Let us quote especially the virgin Eulalia, who was executed in Merida. It was in his honor that, very long after his martyrdom, about the 10th century, the poem called "Canticle of St. Eulalia" was composed: "Buona pulcella fui Eulalia, bel avret corps, bellezour anima ..."

On the other hand, in (North) Africa, this other territory controlled by Maximian, the repression of Christianity seems to have been really and severely practiced. It seems well that the imperial authorities were mainly concerned with the confiscation of the Holy Books. But we see, for example, Mensurius, the bishop of Carthage, to give heretical works up, instead of the usual works in order to foil this measure of confiscation.

That being said, the number of African victims of the persecution of Maximian was relatively high ... Without, however, reaching the records held by the eastern provinces of the Empire!

In the East, Christians were more numerous than in the West, and the persecution in it, of course, was more severe. Generally, persecuting edicts were applied more rigorously, although there was a legitimate doubt as to their strict application in certain regions where Christians were already almost the majority; the official in charge of the execution of the imperial orders would have been thrown into pieces before opening his mouth!

The severity of the measures taken varied significantly according to the physical presence of the power or its absence. Clearly, the magistrates, for fear of reprisals, sentenced the Christians when the emperor or senior officials were present. On the other hand, they dragged their feet as soon as the leaders had their backs turned.

These magistrates were, moreover, often from the same social milieu as the local public figures of the clergy, concerned, as it is evident from the acts of the martyrdom of Saint Phileas in Egypt.

"The governor professed a great regard for his quality and merit, and said: "If you were in misery, or necessity, you should be despatched without more ado; but as you have estates sufficient not only for yourself and family, but for the maintenance almost of a whole province, I pity you, and will do all in my power to save you." The counselors and lawyers, desirous also of saving him, said: "He had already sacrificed in the monastery (phrontisterium)

His wife, children, brother, and other relations, persons of distinction, and pagans, were present at the trial. The governor hoping to overcome him by tenderness for them, said:—"See how sorrowful your wife stands with her eyes fixed upon you." Phileas replied: "Jesus Christ, the Savior of souls, calls me to his glory: and he can, if he pleases, also call my wife." The counselors, out of compassion, said to the judge: "Phileas begs a delay." Culcian said to him: "I grant it you most willingly...."

Then all the counselors, the emperor's lieutenant, who was the first magistrate of the city, all the other officers of justice, and his relations, fell down together at his feet, embracing his knees, and conjuring him to have compassion on his disconsolate family, and not to abandon his children to their tender years whilst his presence was necessary for them. But he, like a rock unshaken by the impetuous waves that dash against it, stood unmoved. Raising his heart to God, protested aloud that he owned no other kindred but the apostles and martyrs. Philoromus a noble Christian was present: he was a tribune or colonel, and

Admiring the prudence and inflexible courage of Phileas, and moved with indignation against his adversaries, he cried out to them: "Why strive you to overcome this brave man, and to make him, by an impious compliance with men, renounce God? Do not you see that, contemplating the glory of heaven, he makes no account of earthly things?" This speech drew upon him the indignation of the whole assembly....

The brother of Phileas, who was a judge, said to the governor: "Phileas desires his pardon." Culcian therefore called him back, and asked him if it were true. He answered: "No: God forbid. Do not listen to this unhappy man. Far from desiring the reversion of my sentence, I think myself on the contrary much obliged to the emperors, to you, and to your court, for by your means I become co-heir with Christ, and shall enter this very day into the possession of his kingdom."

It is to be admitted that the number of victims was probably quite high ... But let us not talk about hundreds of thousands of dead. It was not Auschwitz, far from that! The historian of the Church Eusebius of Caesarea says that throughout the Empire nine bishops only died. On the other hand, as he speaks of a total of 72 victims for the Palestine, a projection (calculation of Gibbon, History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire) on the basis of this last figure makes it possible to estimate up to two thousand, at most, the total number of fanatics who preferred death to a small symbolic gesture in honor of the Emperor (from 303 to 313).

In the western part of the empire, Constantius Chlorus (who died in 306) applied the edicts with extreme softness, destroying a church here and there, but protecting the Christians from popular fury. As for Constantine, the son of Constantius Chlorus and of the Christian Helene, he would disobey the Imperial injunctions squarely, on the contrary, favoring the Christians (for purely political reasons besides, these were his allies in his struggle against the other Caesars ").

DOCUMENTS.

MINUTES OF THE PERQUISITION MADE IN THE CHURCH OF CONSTANTINE
(CIRTA) MAY 19th 303.

A copy of the report of Munatius Felix, perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said in the colony of Cirta. This account of the searches carried out by Munatius Felix appears in the Gesta apud Zenophilum consularem (appendix of the edition of St. Optatus of Milevis in Numidia) . Documents added during a trial before the consular judge so named (Zenophilus). Saint Optat being a Catholic fiercely hostile to the Donatists, he did not fail to emphasize their contradictions and to indirectly accuse their predecessors of having betrayed by giving the holy scriptures up, using the minutes of this trial for that

'When they came to the house in which the Christians were accustomed to assemble, Felix the flamen and guardian of the state said to Paul the Bishop: "Bring out the Scriptures of the Law, and anything else that you may have here, as has been commanded, that you may obey the order."

Paul the Bishop said: "The lectors have the Scriptures. But we surrender what we have here."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Paul the Bishop: "Show us the lectors or send to them."

Paul the Bishop said: "You all know them."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said: "We do not know them."

Paul the Bishop said: "The public officers know them, that is Edusius and Junius, the notaries."

'Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said: Let the matter of the lectors stand over. They will be pointed out by the public officers. Do you surrender what you have."

In the presence of Paul the Bishop (who remained seated), of Montanus and Victor of Deusatelium, and Memorius priests, Mars and Helius the deacons, Marcuclius, Catullinus, Silvanus and Carosus the subdeacons standing by with Januarius, Meraclus, Fructuosus, Migginis, Saturninus, Victor and the rest of the gravediggers, Victor son of Aufidus made this brief inventory against them.

Two golden chalices, also six silver chalices, six silver pots, a silver chafing vessel, seven silver lamps, two torches, seven short brass candlesticks with their lamps, also eleven brass candlesticks with their chains, eighty-two women's garments, thirty-eight veils, sixteen men's garments, thirteen pairs of men's shoes, forty-seven pairs of women's shoes, eighteen cloaks for the country.

After the cupboards in the bookcases had been found to be empty, Silvanus brought forth a silver casket and a silver candlestick, for he said that he had found them behind a jug.

Victor son of Aufidus said to Silvanus: Had you not found these things, you were a dead man."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Silvanus: "Search more carefully lest anything else should have been left behind."

Silvanus said: "Nothing has been left behind. This is all what we have thrown out."

And when the dining room was opened, there were found in it four casks and six jugs.

Felix the perpetual flamen and life guardian of the state said: "Bring forth whatever Scriptures you have, that we may obey the precepts and commands of the Emperors."

Catullinus brought forth one very large codex.

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Marcuclius and Silvanus: "Why have you given us only one codex? Bring forth the Scriptures which you have."

Catullinus and Marcuclius said: "We have no more, for we are subdeacons, but the lectors have the other books."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Marcuclius and Catullinus: "Show us the lectors."

Marcuclius and Catullinus said: "We do not know where they live."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Catullinus and Marcuclius: "If you do not know where they are living, tell us their names."

Catullinus and Marcuclius said: "We are not traitors, behold we are here. Order us to be killed."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said: "Let them be taken into custody." And when they came to the house of Eugenius, Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Eugenius: "Bring forth the Scriptures which you have that you may obey the decree." And he brought forth four codices.

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Silvanus and Carosus: "Show us the other lectors."

Silvanus and Carosus said: "The Bishop has already told you that the notaries Edusius and Junius know them all. Let them point out their houses to you."

Edusius and Junius said: "We will point them out to you, my lord."

And when they came to the house of Felix, the worker in marbles, he brought forth five codices. And when they came to the house of Victorinus, he brought forth eight codices. And when they came to the house of Projectus, he brought forth five large and two small codices. And when they came to the house of Victor the Grammarian, Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to him: "Bring forth whatever Scriptures you have that you may obey the decree."

Victor the Grammarian brought forth two codices, and four notebooks. Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Victor: "Bring forth the Scriptures. You have more."

Victor the Grammarian said: "If I had more, I would have given them."

And when they came to the house of Euticius of Caesarea, Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Euticius: "Bring forth the Scriptures which you have that you may obey the decree."

Euticius said: "I have none."

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Euticius: Your statement is set down in the Acts."

And when they came to the house of Coddeo, his wife brought forth six codices.

Felix the perpetual flamen and guardian of the state said to Victorinus, Silvanus and Carosus: "If anything has been kept back, the danger is yours."

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT GALLONIUS.

Another example of persecution under Diocletian, the acts of the martyrs of Thimida Regia 1) as well as of Utina in North Africa (late 302 early 303). Text found in 1997 in the library of the seminary of Gorizia in Friuli where it had probably been kept by mistake (confusion between Uthina/Oudhna in the south-east of Carthage and Utinum/Udine in Italy).

It does no harm just this one, we will begin with an analysis of the document before coming to the text itself, given the interest of its content: it is a first application on the ground of Diocletian's first edict concerning Christians. The first part of the text teaches us many things on the history of Roman criminal law. It clearly shows the respective roles of the municipal authority that proceeds with the indictment and conducts the trial, of the registry office that prepares and presents the case, of the council of jurists that assists the proconsul; it also shows the mixture of formalism and cruelty that characterized Roman criminal law and the fact that other Christians in the city are disassociating themselves from defendants who are foreigners.

On 31 May 303, the proconsul of Africa Anullinus judges (*sedente pro tribunali*) a group of Christians in Thimida Regia 1). The clerk (*officium commentariense*: the clerk's office) reads an indictment drawn up by the municipal authority, which at the time was certainly the *curator rei publicae*, accompanied by the magistrates (*cum magistratibus*), i.e., the *duumvirs*. They explain that they surprised in their *municipium* (the first attestation of this status for this city) a group of Christians in the act red-handed of a celebration of the *dominicum*, the Sunday service. Twenty-seven defendants are listed at the end of the text in the sentence, including six women. These Christians had come from elsewhere (*pervertisse*). They were the object of a denunciation (*testatio*) by the inhabitants of the city, who described them as magicians (*magi*), a very serious accusation which will not be upheld by the proconsul. It seems, therefore, that the authorities and the people of Thimida have shown a strong anti-Christian attitude, at least towards this group coming from outside. The accused are being brought in. The only ground for the accusation is their forbidden religious meeting, and the refusal of their leader, Gallonius, to give the Scriptures up. They are neither asked to abjure Christianity nor to perform a sacrifice: it is therefore the application of the first edict of persecution, promulgated by Diocletian at Nicomedia on February 24, 303, prohibiting worship and ordering the confiscation and destruction of the Christian sacred books. Gallonius is said to be neither a bishop, nor a priest, nor a deacon, which is noteworthy; on the other hand, it can be assumed that he was a reader, since he had

the Scriptures. Given his refusal to give the holy books up, he was tortured by iron nails (unguli). During the rest of the interrogation, Gallonius refuses to say his place of residence or his origo: he says he is from Nazareth, which is repeated by other Christians, "because every Christian is a Nazarene." Some end up acknowledging that they come from a place called Cellas Abaratias, a sounding African new toponym, which certainly designates a village. But others come "from various places, some from one place, others from elsewhere" (ex diversis locis, alii aliunde): obviously from the countryside. The initial refusal to designate their city of origin is a serious provocation: they deny their city, and consequently the Roman city. The intransigent Christians, in the line of Tertullian, liked to affirm this secession.

The obstinacy of Gallonius and of his companions irritates the proconsul who exclaims: *Tantum temporis consumptum*, "How much time has been lost!". In view of Gallonius's refusal to give the Scriptures up despite torture, and given the unanimous support of his companions, the proconsul pronounces the sentence. He does so in two stages. First, he deliberates with his consilium. Every Roman magistrate is assisted by a council, made up in particular of professional jurists. Following this deliberation, a *sententia* is drawn up on a tablet (*tabella*) and read out. The crime is described as: deliberate disobedience to the orders of the two Augusts (emperor and co-emperor), perseverance in this attitude; therefore a proven and reiterated crime. This first phase of the procedure is the *iuris dictio*, which defines the cause in law. The word *sententia* must be understood in its primary meaning of opinion founded in law. The second phase follows: the proconsul alone, without consulting the council, pronounces a *decretum*, drawn up on another *tabella*, setting out the convictions. The governor alone being invested by the imperial power of the *ius gladii*, his *adessores* had no need to intervene here. This mention of the two phases of the procedure can be found in the Acts of St. Cyprian. The twenty-six companions of Gallonius are sentenced to death by the sword, except for two who will be burned alive for having uttered *infaustae voces*, clamors of curses, against the emperors presumably, what is a crime of *lèse-majesté* (at the time of arrest by the municipal authorities).

The case of Gallonius is dissociated: he must appear again at a hearing held in the city of Uthina. The second part of the acts refers to this trial. Fourteen Christians, including three women, appear in addition to Gallonius. The account is very abrupt, without the institutional details found in the first part of the document. No distinction is made between the two phases of the sentencing procedure (the *sententia*, with the consultation of the council, and the *decretum*). Only mention is made of new tortures endured by Gallonius, whom the proconsul says he was previously dragged "through various cities" (*per diversas civitates traxi*), in order to make him confess where he had hidden the Scriptures if he had them before his eyes, that is to say, if he passed by the place where he had hidden them. He is sentenced to be burned alive, other Christians to be beheaded. The reprieve granted to Gallonius will therefore have been eleven days.

OF WHAT COMMUNITY THE CHRISTIANS IN QUESTION WERE MEMBERS...

A case comparable to that of Gallonius and his companions is known: in Abitina (Chouhoud el Bâtin, in the Mejerda Valley), a group of Christians gathered around the priest Saturninus violently opposed Bishop Fundanus who had given the Scriptures up to the authorities. Arrested and judged they clashed with the Bishop of Carthage Mensurius, and the Donatists later will claim the example of these confessors of the faith.

Returning to the twenty-seven Christians arrested in 303 at Thimida Regia with their leader Gallonius, it seems that they were in fact from elsewhere (*pervertisse*). Some of them lived in a village called Cellas Abaratias, others from different places, but they were certainly country people, and it is not clear that they came from the surroundings of Thimida. There has been an Episcopal church in this city since the time of St. Cyprian, but this "established" community does not seem to have been worried during the persecution (nor to have defended Gallonius and his followers). The arrested group professed an uncompromising Christianity, without concessions, as it is evident from the minutes of the interrogation. It was they, and not their fellow Christians, who had been fiercely pursued by the municipal authorities of Thimida; these authorities had undoubtedly encouraged the proconsul, given the seriousness of the accusation, to stop off and sit in their small town, which was obviously not a regular seat of circuit court (*conventus*). Who were these strangers to the city who had aroused such animosity?

During the persecution, the sometimes exalted behavior of these communities could draw the malevolent attention of the authorities (we have seen the magistrates of Thimida Regia describe Gallonius and his people as *magi*, i.e., sorcerers). Bishops such as Mensurius of Carthage observed a cautious wait-and-see attitude; they were anxious, while waiting for better days, to avoid any imprudence, any provocation, and thus to prevent confrontation with the authorities and bloodshed.

These bishops were therefore wary of these exalted and somewhat anarchic groups. This opposition was one of the causes of the Donatist schism. Subsequently, the extremist and violent wing of the Donatist party was formed by the circumcellions, who were initially groups of seasonal farm workers. The acts of the passion of Gallonius and his companions thus perhaps make us able us to witness the birth of the religious and social conflicts that would stir up Roman Africa in the fourth century.

THE TEXT.

"During the consulship of the Augusti Diocletian for the eighth time and Maximian for the seventh, at Timida Regia, in the presence of the proconsul Anullinus sitting in his court against the Christians, a platform having been arranged, it was said by the court clerk as much about the men as that of the women:

"Those of whom you have ordered the indictment, for the reason that they have been caught in the act of holding a meeting in this city, in violation of the imperial edict, are at your disposal, Lord. You also have at your disposal the minutes, which will be read if you agree. "

The proconsul Anullinus said, "Let them be read." And they were read.

In the same way, it was said by the court clerk: "I bring to your attention, on the testimony of the inhabitants of Thimida that come here Christian magi who hold meetings which disturb the peace. And as we were leading an investigation among them with the magistrates, by asking them, 'What are you doing here?' They answered that they were celebrating their Sunday assembly. And I heard them crying out, 'We are Christians and we are celebrating our Sunday meeting.' It is for this reason, Lord, that I made you a report form, and here they are at your disposal. "

Anullinus said: "Let them appear before me! And, as they made them enter the court, the proconsul asked to St. Gallonius: "Is it you, the instigator of this crime? "

Gallonius replied: "I am not the instigator of a crime, but a believer in Christ. "

The proconsul said, "You should have respected the sacred order. "

Gallonius replied: "I respect only the eternal precepts of Christ, our savior. "

The proconsul says all Christians: "As for you, have you been deceived by this man and have you, on his instigation, gathered to celebrate the Sunday meeting? "

They replied, "We have not been deceived, because we are Christians. "

The proconsul said to Gallonius: "So the divine 2) scriptures are also in your hands? "

Gallonius replied, "Yes. "

The proconsul said, "Give them up, that they can be burned in conformity with the sacred order."

Gallonius replied: "It is not permissible for me to deliver the sacred and divine texts. "

The proconsul said, "Let him be suspended on the rack."

And as he was suspended on the rack, the proconsul asked: "Where are the impious scriptures?"

Gallonius replied, "I have hidden them where no one knows, except myself. "

The proconsul said, "Torment him with the iron claws." And as he was tormented, he answered, "Christ, I thank You! "

The proconsul said: "You will die in tortures if you do not say where. "

Gallonius replied: "I suffer readily for my Lord Jesus Christ. For his bonds have freed the good thief. "

The proconsul said, "Let him tell the truth. "

And as he was again curried by the iron claws, he shouted out, "Thank God! "

The proconsul said, "Stop!"

And as he was spared, the proconsul asked: "Where do you come from? "

Gallonius: "From the city of Nazareth. "

The proconsul said, "Where is Nazareth? In what country? "

Gallonius replied, "In the East. "

The proconsul said to all the other Christians: "And you, where are you from? Where do you live? "

They replied, "In Nazareth. "

The proconsul said: "But you are Africans, how did you get to know Nazareth? "

They replied, "Every Christian is a Nazarene. "

The proconsul said, "Where were you born? "

They replied: " In Cellas Abaratias."

The proconsul said to Gallonius, "And the others, where are they from? "

Gallonius replied: "From various places, some from one place, others from another. "

The proconsul said, "Say where you keep your scriptures hidden. "

Gallonius replied: "I have hidden them where no one knows. "

The proconsul said, "Can you show them?" "

Gallonius replied: "I cannot. "

The proconsul "Say me where they are. "

Gallonius replied, "I shall die rather than I say it." "

The proconsul said: "More serious tortures await for you if you do not say it. "

Gallonius replied: "I keep them in a secret place, I entrusted them with heaven. "

The proconsul, "Can you go and bring them to us?" "

Gallonius, "I am going, but in order to remain there with my Lord! "

The proconsul , "Say us rather where they are, and I will save your body. "

Gallonius replied, "Save me actually " (????)

The proconsul said: "If you say me, I will spare you. "

Gallonius replied, "In heaven."

The proconsul said, "What a waste of time! You will die if you do not confess it. "

Gallonius replied, "May Christ's will be done! "

The proconsul said, "Who are the other instigators of the crime? "

Gallonius replied: "Those whom you see before you are all Christians. "

Then Anullinus, after having deliberated on that with his council, read the sentence written on the tablet, saying:

" Poor stubborn madmen, because of the mistake of a vain superstition, you have therefore gathered in this place – what is an offense in itself (Latin *complanatum et indisruptum*) according to the sacred and venerable decisions of the forever Augusti emperors Diocletian and Maximian - and because in a sacrilegious intention, with a criminal aim, you have persevered in disobedience, you will be punished by the appropriate punishment.

As for Gallonius, who is recognized as the manager and the instigator of this crime of having gathered you, let him meanwhile be postponed to later and after being separated from you let him be afflicted by the long-suffering of torture."

"As for Victorinus (and) Ianuarius, who had a meeting against the sacred law and uttered sacrilegious cries, I ordered them to be burned alive 3). As for Festus, Datianus, Ziddin, Vincentius, Quintianus, Apuleius, Felix, Quartosus, Constantius, Saturninus, Romanus, Successus, Nartzalus, Priuatianus, Victor, Ianuarius, Candidus and another Ianuarius, Maxima, Mustella, Romana, Urbana, Victoria and another Victoria who met in violation of the sacred orders, it was decided that they would be punished by the sword. "

All answered , "Thank God! "

The proconsul added: "Let Gallonius, who questioned on the scriptures did not want to confess, be meanwhile postponed and led to Uthina " (Modern Oudhna in Tunisia).

And as he reached Uthina and as the proconsul Anullinus was sitting on the market place , by making appear for various questioning and with a view to various punishments, along Gallonius, other Christians : Restitutus, Sa (I?) ??vius Fortunatus, Te (..) us Restitutus, Vincentius, Varieninus, Maiosus, Octavianus, Saturninus and Saturninus, Casta, Donata, and Pelagia, the court clerk asked: "Who does your excellency order to make come (for the question)?"

The proconsul answered: "Gallonius ."

And as he was brought in, the proconsul said to Gallonius, with an inquisitive tone, "If I have dragged you thus through various cities after having inflicted sorrows and wounds on you, it is, if you have them before your eyes, in order that you finally confess where you hid your scriptures. "

Gallonius replied: "You ask a man of flesh what is in heaven. "

The proconsul said: "You persevere in your ruse? "

Gallonius : "It is you who persevere in the wrong way.

The proconsul , "Now, if you want to spare your body, speak! "

Gallonius: "You have power over my flesh, but not over my soul".

The proconsul said: "Let him put again on the rack!"

And as he had been put there, the proconsul said: "Let him be curried with the iron claws!"

Gallonius replied: "I thank God. "

The proconsul , "Now, if you want to spare your body, therefore confess where the Scriptures have been hidden. "

Gallonius replied, "I will not say it." "

The proconsul said: "Let him be questioned more cruelly! "

And as they strove against him with more violence, he said: "The spirit feels nothing, the flesh suffers, but the soul is saved. "

The proconsul said, "Stop !"

And as they stopped torturing him, the proconsul added: "Let him be again on the ground!" "

After he had been released, the proconsul, accompanied by his council, read the sentence written on the tablet:

"Gallonius, after many and great tortures, and having been submitted to the question, didn't want to confess; but since he was recognized as the leader and instigator of everything and as the leader of this meeting and that he is convicted of having flouted the decisions of his lords the emperors, let he be burned alive. "

Gallonius replied: "Thanks God! "

As for all the others of the same confession, he commanded that they would be put to the sword. All said, "Thank God! "

1) In fact, the "established" (and provided with a bishop) Church in Thimida Regia seems to have been relatively spared by the magistrates' prosecution and may have voluntarily kept away from all this unrest, which is a prelude to the separations between different Christian sensitivities from which Donatism will emerge.

2) Latin Scripturae divinae. The word divinae in the mouth of the proconsul to designate the Scriptures is a first clue of Christian retouching (Anullinus will use later a more expected impious Scriptures).

3) These two Christians there were therefore sentenced to a more serious penalty than the others, perhaps they had been found guilty of lese-majesty.

THE BEGINNINGS OF DONATIST SCHISM.

A last edict of the Tetrarchy (Diocletian assisted by Maximian, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus) promulgated at the beginning of the year 304 prescribed a general sacrifice in the Empire, under penalty of death or sentence to forced labor in the mines. The persecution and its end then took a new turn. Let us recall that many clerics will then give in to the vexations and constraints of power. Some religious leaders even surrendered their co-religionists to the Romans and even went so far as to burn Holy Scriptures in public. Christians who made the small symbolic gesture they were asked to make (offering incense to the gods of the Empire or to the person of the emperor) are designated as lapsi (from lapsus: the one who has fallen) or traditores (from traditor: the one who hands over to the authorities... the sacred books).

We will mention here a last example because it will then open directly on the Donatist crisis...

The Facts.

In the year 304, in a small town called Abitene or Abitina, near Membressa (present-day town of Medjez el-Bab), 49 Christians were surprised on a Sunday celebrating the Eucharist. Arrested on 12 February, they were taken in chains to Carthage to be interrogated by proconsul Caius Annius Anullinus. After usual tortures, they were put to death. In the list of these martyrs appears the name of Saturninus priest.

Now Saturninus priest is the head of Abitina's confessors in the most important monument of Donatist martyrial literature: the Acts of St. Saturninus and companions. They were used by the Donatists at their meeting with the Catholics in Carthage in June 411 (570 bishops).*

And this seems well confirmed by a mosaic discovered in the basilica of Uppenna in Tunisia in 1904, the great mosaic of the martyrs. Did the sponsor of the mosaic want to affirm that the martyrs of Uppenna and Abitina had met in the dungeons of Carthage?

The Abitina-Uppenna relationship could, therefore, be seen in two different ways.

Either there was a meeting in the prisons of Carthage of the martyrs of Uppenna and Abitina on the occasion of the same persecution.

Or the Christians of Uppenna were martyred during the same persecution as those of Abitina but there was nevertheless no meeting between the two groups (since Uppenna is in Byzacene, and Abitina in Proconsular). On the other hand, the ideas expressed by the editor of the Acts of St. Saturninus and companions reflected those of the Christians of Uppenna who had lost thirteen of their fellow citizens during the same events.

At the very least, we can think that if the Donatists counted on the Abitina-Uppenna coming together, it is because it was not rejected a priori by all the faithful and that it even appear natural to them.

The other Christians were all released a few months later as throughout the Empire at the same date, but the Donatist schism that developed in North Africa in the fourth century was a direct consequence of this persecution or, more exactly, of the differences in the behavior of the Christian elites in the face of this persecution. Many clergymen then yielded to the vexations and constraints of power. Some religious leaders give their co-religionists up to the Romans and go so far as to burn sacred books publicly. These Christians are referred to as "lapsi" – from lapsus: the one who has fallen - or "traditores" – from tradire: to give (sacred books) up. Attitudes will be different: Felix, bishop of Thibiuca, refuses and is transferred then executed in Carthage. Paulus, bishop of Cirta (Constantine), obeys and gives everything up; the bishop of Carthage, Mensurius, uses a stratagem and gives only works that Christians consider heretical up to the police.

Of all this, as we have had the opportunity to say, history has retained traces, particularly a text of St. Optatus of Milevis and a writing of St. Augustine as part of his struggle against Donatism. These are the minutes of the meeting of the Bishops of Numidia, May 13, 307.

The question of the authenticity of this text nevertheless arises because the document was drafted fifteen years after the facts to be used in the lawsuit against Bishop Silvanus before the consular judge Zenophilus on the initiative of a subdeacon named Nundinarius.

Context of this astonishing document where we see Donatists and Catholics accusing each other of the worst crimes and betrayals. The subdeacon Silvanus was elected bishop of Cirta. But once Silvanus has been elected, he must be ordained. Hence this meeting. Now, during the persecutions of 303, the aforementioned Silvanus gave liturgical or holy books up to the authorities, thus becoming what is called a "traditor" (a traitor).

Secundus of Tigisi, as chairman of the synod, tries firstly to sort by excluding the bishops who were stained with the taint of having betrayed (having given the Holy Scriptures up to the police or burned incense grains in honor of the emperor).

Many, apparently, were indeed suspected of having done so. The first suspected bishop, Donatus of Mascula, denies having done anything wrong but will be dismissed by Secundus anyway.

The second bishop Marinus of Aquae Tibilitanae, admits having tricked by giving books of body medicine up instead of books concerning the care of souls. Secundus also dismissed him, however, because of his evident lack of faith in God or of courage.

The third bishop, Victor de Russicade, admits having burned the holy scriptures because he was forced to do so, and here his case is clearly that of the traitor or traditor.

But a bishop named Purpurius of Limata shouts at Secundus in turn, asking him, "What did you do when the Curator and City Council demanded the Scriptures from you? ... They did not release you for nothing anyway! "

Secundus' own nephew then intervenes to point out to his uncle that this unbridled search for traitors who have given the Scriptures up is likely to have the worst consequences for the unity of the Church and for himself: Do you understand what he is saying ? He is ready to secede and start a schism, and not only he, but all those you have accused. I know they will dismiss you, and anathematize you, and you will remain by yourself, a heretic.

Suddenly frightened by such a risk, Secundus turned to the bishops who had not yet been questioned and asked them for their opinion.

They answer that the bishops' cases should be left up to God. In a way an adaptation of the famous "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

Secundus decides to stop there and make everyone sit down.

The synod then will choose to consecrate Silvanus as the new bishop of Cirta in spite of his unworthiness.

Beginning of the Donatist crisis because many Christians of the place would have preferred the Bishop of Casae Nigrae (Black huts) in Numidia (today Negrine in Algeria), a certain Donatus.

* Council summoned by the Emperor Honorius and presided over by Marcellinus of Carthage, Secretary of State.

The Cartage Conference will be a kind of trial Christians versus Christians to be held in Carthage June 1 to 8.

Big names.

On the Catholic side Saint Augustine (who needs no introduction).

On the Donatist side Petilianus, bishop of Cirta/Constantine in 395. Author of 5 treatises against the Church of Rome. Will play a very important role at this conference due to his oratory skills.

As in any trial there was a production of testimonies, true, false, speeches, etc.

The Emperor Honorius having already decided in favor of the Catholic hierarchy, the confiscation of the Donatist churches was nevertheless confirmed.

EXTRACTS THEREFORE FROM THE FASCINATING MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF THE BISHOPS IN NUMIDIA, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN CIRTA (CONSTANTINE) ON 5 MARCH 305. Translation given without prejudice, St. Augustine is not always easy to understand (he caricatures the Donatists) and my 7 years of Latin are far away.

ST. AUGUSTINE. CONTRA CRESCOMIUM DONATISTAM. III, 27, 30.

De vestris autem maioribus exstat Secundi Tigisitani concilium, cum paucissimis quidem factum apud Cirtam post persecutionem codicum tradendorum, ut illic in locum defuncti ordinaretur episcopus.

Concerning your forefathers [the Donatists], there is extant a Council of Secundus of Tigisis, held with very few at Cirta, after the persecution, as to giving up the sacred volumes, that then a bishop should be appointed in the place of the departed.

Below is the date given by St. Augustine: it is up to the specialists to manage with that.

"Diocletiano octies, et Maximiano septies consulibus, quarto nonas martii, Cirtae, cum Secundus episcopus Tigisitanus primae cathedrae consedisset in domo Urbani Donati, idem dixit

"After the ninth consulate of Diocletian and the eighth of Maximian, the third of the nones of March, in Cirta, Secundus, bishop of Tigisis, primate, sitting in the house of Urbanus Donatus; opened the meeting by stating...

" We must first try ourselves before we can venture to ordain a bishop."

Secundus said to Donatus of Mascula: "You are said to have given [the Scriptures] up."

Donatus replied: "You know how Florus searched for me that I might offer incense, but God did not deliver me into his hands, brother. As God forgave me, do you reserve me to His judgment."

Secundus said, " What then shall we say of the martyrs? It is because they did not give up anything that they were crowned."

Donatus: "Send me to God, to Him will I give an account ."

Secundus: " Stand on one side."

Secundus then said to Marinus of Aquae Thibilitanae: "You are also said to have given the Holy Scriptures up."

Marinus replied: " I gave no important papers up to Pollux; my books are safe."

Secundus: "Go over to that side."

Secundus to Donatus of Calama: "You are said to have handed the holy books. up"

Donatus: "I gave books on medicine up."

Secundus: "Stand on one side ..."

Et alio loco: We can also read in another place, the following sentence:

Secundus to Victor of Russicade: "You are said to have the four Gospels up."

Victor: "It was the Curator Valentianus, who forced me to throw them into the fire. But they had been the subject of various interpolations. Forgive me this fault, God will also forgive it. "

Secundus: "Stand on one side."

Et alio loco:

"Secundus said to Purpurius of Limata ": You are said to have killed the two sons of your sister at Milevis."

Purpurius replied, "Do you think I am frightened by you as the others are? What did you do yourself when the curator and his officials tried to make you give the Scriptures up? How did you manage to get off scot-free, unless you gave them something, or ordered something to be given? They certainly did not let you go for nothing! Tu quid egisti, qui tentus es a Curatore et Ordine ut Scripturas dares? quomodo te liberasti ab ipsis, nisi quia dedisti aut iussisti dari quodcumque? As for me I have anathematized and I anathematize those who are against me; do not provoke me to say more. You know that I do not interfere where I have no business."

Secundus the younger then said to his uncle Secundus: " Audis quae dicat in te? Paratus est recedere et schisma facere, non tantum ipse, sed et omnes quos arguis : quos scio quia dimittere te habent, et dare in te sententiam, et remanebis solus haereticus. You hear what they say of you? He is ready to withdraw and make a schism; and the same is true of all those whom you accuse; and I know they are capable of turning you out and condemning you, and you alone will then be the heretic. What is it to you what they have done? Each must give his account to God."

Secundus, speaking to Felixand to Victor of Garbe, asked them: "What do you think of that?"

These answered: They have God to whom they must give an account."

Secundus added: "You know and God knows."

And all replied, thank God.”

Hos tu traditores, qui cum aliis apud Carthaginem in Caecilianum et socios eius dixerunt sententias, inter quos et Silvanus Cirtensis fuit, de cuius traditione gesta mox inseram, praeclara videli cet ratione defendes: hoc enim de his tam pluribus utique dicturus es, quod de uno Silvano tamquam magnum aliquid dictandum putasti, hinc te arbitratus manifeste falsum crimen quod ei traditionis obiicitur, demonstrare, quia interposuisti sententiam eius quam in concilio inter caeteros episcopos contra Caecilianum et alios communionis eius participes dixit; tamquam fieri non posset ut traditores traditor condemnaret.

These apostates and many others, as Silvanus of Cirta [Constantine] , of whom I will report further the betrayal, these are the very ones who, in Carthage, issued an excommunication against Caecilian and his supporters; and you justify them, as you will justify many other and particularly Silvanus, by claiming they cannot be apostates because they rightly accuse their adversaries of the crime of apostasy; without excepting Caecilian and his partisans, who were declared guilty unanimously by the council. Do you think impossible for an apostate to condemn other apostates?”

Optatus of Milevis, Against the Donatists. Appendix 2.

It is a fragment of the famous Donatist trial known as Purgatio Caeciliani

The only problem, and it is a big one, is that it has come down to us only in the writings of Saint Optatus of Milevis, and that its sole purpose is to show that there were traitors on the side of the future Donatists. Duly noted!

In order to make our readers able to appreciate this document at its true value we will summarize schematically the context: the controversy which opposed towards 370 the catholic bishop of Milevis Optatus, and the Donatist Primate of Carthage, Parmenianus.

Following the death of the bishop of Carthage Mensurius in 311 two episcopal lines shared the faith of the Christians in North Africa.

The C like Catholic, lineage, which went back to the bishop Cecilianus of Carthage via Genethlius, Restitutus and Gratus.

The D like Donatists lineage which went back via Parmenian and Donatus to the bishop Majorinus elected by ovation in the place of Caecilianus during the council of 312 given the doubts concerning one of the three bishops who consecrated him, Felix of Apthugni.

The Donatists reproached the Catholics for being the party of those who had failed or even betrayed during the persecutions, and the Catholics asserted the principle *ex opere operato*.

The *Gesta apud Zenophilum* is an investigation made in 320 by Zenophilus, consular of Numidia, about the Donatist bishop of Cirta, Sylvanus, sub-deacon during the persecution of 303, within the framework of the anti-Donatist suppression ordered by the emperor Constantine himself (a repression which he will renounce as early as 321, given the magnitude of the reactions caused by these Stalinist before the word is invented, trials).

Incipiunt gesta, ubi constat traditorem Silvanum, qui cum ceteris ordinavit Maiorinum, cui Donatus successit.

Constantino Maximo Augusto et Constantino iuniore nobilissimo caesare consulibus Idibus Decembribus Sexto Thamugadiensi, inducto et applicito Uictore grammatico, adsistente etiam Nundinario diacono Zenophilus uir clarissimus consularis dixit: quis uocaris? respondit: Uictor. Zenophilus uir clarissimus consularis dixit: cuius condicionis es? Uictor dixit: professor sum Romanarum litterarum, grammaticus latinus

These interrogations are followed by the reading of the minutes of the seizures in Cirta in 303 and by the indictment against Silvanus. Several letters are read at the audience.... which are very compromising for Silvanus and tend to prove that he had indeed given the authorities the holy writings. Then Zenophilus and Nundinarius make the grammarian Victor undergo a new interrogation, to make him admit that he recognizes the fault of Silvanus, which he will do under certain reserves (*tradidit, sed non me praesente*: he did betray but not in my presence).

After these documents had been read, Zenophilus added:
 From the Acts and letters which have been read aloud, it is clear that Silvanus is a Betrayer (traditor).
 And he said to Victor:
 -Frankly confess whether you know that he gave something up.
 Victor said:
 He did betray, but not in my presence.
 Zenophilus said:
 -What office did Silvanus hold at the time among the clergy?
 Victor answered:
 The persecution broke out when Paulus was Bishop; Silvanus was then a subdeacon.
 Nundinarius the deacon replied:
 When he came here, as he said to be made a Bishop, the people answered, "Let it be another, hear us, O God."
 Zenophilus said to Victor:
 -Did the people cry out, "Silvanus is a Betrayer (traditor)"?
 Victor said:
 -I myself fought against his being made a Bishop.
 Zenophilus said:
 -So you did know that he was a Betrayer! Confess to this.
 Victor answered:
 -He was a Betrayer.
 Nundinarius the deacon said:
 So you seniors cried out, "Hear us, O God! We want our fellow citizen. This man is a Betrayer."'
 Zenophilus said to Victor:
 So you cried out with the people that Silvanus was a Betrayer (traditor) and ought not to be made a Bishop?'
 Victor said:
 I did cry out, and so did the people. For we wanted our fellow citizen [Donatus] , a man of integrity.
 Zenophilus said:

-For what reason did you deem him unworthy of being a bishop?
 Victor said:
 We preferred one who was a man of integrity and our fellow citizen. For I knew that for this reason, we should have to go to the Emperor's Court 1) if the office were given to such as he.

1) What was actually done. The Emperor Constantine, who had just recovered Italy and Africa by his victory over Maxentius, had to interfere. Considering that it was a problem between Christians, Constantine asked the Bishop of Rome Miltiades to take care of it. A council was organized in 313 in the Lateran Palace. From this council dates the first condemnation of the Donatists, later called "schismatics."

IMPORTANCE OF THE DONATISM.

(The fundamental principle known in Latin language as "ex opere operato" 1) unknown among rabbis and imams but inherent to the very person of the Christian priest).

Donatism comes directly from the persecution of Christians in Roman Africa. From the years 295 - 299, these African provinces will indeed have a relatively high number of martyrs. The repression took a particularly hard form during the great persecution of Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century. In a first phase, in the proconsular Africa and in Numidia, the governors only carried out searches and confiscated the objects for the worship. The bishops are summoned by the authorities to hand over the Holy Scriptures.

As we have already had the opportunity to see, the attitudes of the main Christian leaders will be then varied and contrasted.

After this period of persecution, around the spring of 305, there was an era of tolerance. This is a de facto toleration, for the edicts have not been repealed and the return to peace will not be official until 307, date of Maxentius peace. But it was on this occasion that the first manifestations of what was to become a schism took place. The majority of the Church showed toleration towards those who had failed (lapsi) and reinstated the priests and bishops who embraced again Christianity.

Bishop Mensurius will be therefore reinstated as primate of Africa. After all, he had only burned worthless books, since they were not scared, but "heretic" books.

The meetings for the succession of Paulus in 307 nevertheless showed an opposition of the "pure Christians" to those whom they called traditores, which means "deliverers (of sacred objects)", in other words "traitors." These opponents were certainly influenced by the writings of their compatriots Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage, who refused to allow that Christians who were at fault and reinstated in the community may practice a priesthood. From their point of view, the sacraments and the spiritual authority of the lapsi and then reinstated priests were worthless.

They accused Pope Marcellinus (296-304) of sacrificing to the gods at the beginning of the persecution of Diocletian, and the pontificates of Marcellus (308-309) and Eusebius (310) were filled with painful struggles concerning penitential discipline, especially with regard to the lapsi. The conflict broke out in 312 at the time of the succession of the bishop of Carthage, Mensurius precisely. The nomination of Caecilian was disputed: since he had been ordained a priest by Mensurius, a bishop who was regarded as a traditor by some despite his former subterfuge (to give heretical books up instead of the true sacred books of the community). In the eyes of the diehard Christians, Caecilian's ordainment was therefore not valid, and consequently he could not be a bishop. Led by Donatus, bishop of Cellae Nigrae (Black-Huts = Negrine today), seventy other bishops of Numidia elected in his place a concurrent bishop, Majorinus. The movement quickly took on a large scale, with double appointments of bishops; and even second baptisms (the Donatists, logical with themselves, considered this sacrament to be invalid if the bishop who conferred it was one of those who failed in the persecutions), and acts of violence.

The conflict continues in the legal field and requires imperial arbitration. No more than Maxentius in his time, Constantine could tolerate that public order was disturbed in his empire for reasons that interested only a minority of his subjects, but left the immense majority of citizens completely indifferent. He wrote to the bishop of Rome Miltiades (himself a native of Africa, like most Donatists); to ask him, by virtue of the eminent position (that he recognized to him) in the Church (that he respected) to settle this internal problem, "of little importance" (he said).

This document is the first known letter of a Roman emperor to a pope.

Miltiades went beyond the wishes of Constantine; he assembled a council at the palace of the Lateran, which the Emperor's mother, the Empress Helena, had just given him. As might be expected, the Assembly of the Sages, composed of fifteen Italian bishops (appointed by the Pope) and of three appointed by Constantine, condemned Donatus' theses. Henceforth, everybody had to confess that Christ, the single author of the sacraments, was also the only actor and their only active principle. The meal of commensality with God or the Demiurge (Holy Communion), even if given by a priest totally unworthy of his function, remains perfectly valid, it is still bread and wine really changed into body and blood of Christ. The Lateran Council confirmed the validity of this ordainment by the following argument: if Christ is present in all the sacraments, a sacrament is effective, whatever the antecedents of the priest who administers it. So the ordainment of Caecilian by Mensurius was valid.

The Donatists, stubborn, made new appeals to Constantine, who had to become more seriously involved. Constantine, very uncomfortable in all these theological subtleties, imagined a way out: since

the Pope's decision had not been enough, he summoned another meeting of bishops, but in the city of Arles this time. Pope Sylvester did not attend this council. The reasons for this absence remain unknown.

In Arles, as it was to be expected, the present bishops condemned Donatism. The council ended on 1 August 314. While regretting the "absence" of the pope, the bishops informed Sylvester of the numerous disciplinary decisions they had taken and asked him to endorse them. As the bishops gathered in the city of Arles were ensured with the unconditional support of Constantine, the Pope ratified their decisions and Constantine ordered the dissolution of the Donatist communities, as well as the confiscation of their property.

The Donatists controlled many communities, so the application of this law was accompanied by multiple acts of violence in Carthage and in the African provinces. To re-establish calm, Constantine suspended the application of these repressive measures in 321. The Donatists kept their position, intensified by the violence they had just experienced. They alone were the pure ones, they were "sons of the martyrs" and without compromise, facing the "sons of the traditores or lapsi". Every sacrament coming from a priest unworthy of them was null, so they baptized again those who had received the sacrament outside their community.

Circa 340 bands of itinerant agricultural workers, the circumcellions, rose up against the landowners, forcing them by violence to cancel the debts and to free the slaves. These "maquis" of armed heretics recruited especially among the landless peasants, ruined by the excessive fiscal pressure of a Roman Empire on the brink of bankruptcy. Circumcellions were not strictly speaking an ethnic group, although their bands were predominantly composed of non-Romanized Moors of North Africa, or remained resistant to any Romanization.

The merging between the Donatists and the circumcellions soon took place. The emperor Constantine sent to Africa two commissioners charged with calming religious quarrels by distributing relief. Bishop Donatus, still in office, refused every subsidy, rejecting the interference of the power in his Church. The tour of the commissioners degenerated into armed clashes against the Donatists assisted by the circumcellions. The Donatist bishop Marculus perished during his imprisonment, falling from a rock. The Donatists proclaimed him a martyr, while later Augustine preferred to see in it as a suicide. After the Council of Nicaea, Christian orthodoxy started the struggle against all forms of deviation and heresy, while the policy of the emperors varied according to their religious sympathy. Donatist, although not yet accused of heresy, but only of schism, remained, even after the death of his inspirer Donatus, about 355, a center of regional opposition to orthodoxy, and experimented in turn toleration and repression .

In 362 Julian authorized all the tendencies of Christianity. He put an end to the exiles of Donatists and restored to them their places of worship. In 373, Valentinian I forbade the Donatists to practice the second baptism. In the years 372-375, the Donatists were mingled with the revolt of the Moorish leader Firmus. In 376, Gratian renews the prohibition of the Church and of the Donatist worship. From 385, the Count of Africa Gildo protected and encouraged Donatism, and even revolted against the imperial power in 397-398. Defeated, he left the Donatists at the top of their strength, but isolated. Divergences of opinion appeared in Donatism: about 370-380 Tychorius tempered their rigor by pointing out, in support of the gospel, that the Church is on Earth an institution that mixes the righteous and the sinners.

As Constantine resigned himself to a gentle settlement of the Donatist conflict, a precarious *modus vivendi* settled somehow between the two Christian churches in North Africa, the Orthodox and the heretic one. But in the beginning of the fifth century, the Donatist crisis, with as a corollary the socio-religious disorders caused by the circumcellions, was restarted by the intervention of St. Augustine; who entered into this most sensitive theological debate with the muted gentleness of a bull in a china shop and especially a lot of bad faith.

In 411 the celebrated bishop of Hippo assembled a council at Carthage, which again pointed out that the effectiveness of the sacraments did not depend on the priest, even if he was the worst thief criminal or pedophile: it was enough for him to use the name of the bishop in Rome. By this declaration the Carthaginian bishops implicitly admitted therefore a certain primacy of the bishop of Rome, who could only subscribe to it. The assembly of Carthage also noticed the failure of the "soft" methods to defeat heresy. And indeed it seems that at that time the Donatist Church, which called

itself the "Church of the Saints," had more faithful than the Orthodox Catholic one. With his customary hypocrisy, the great bishop of Hippo wrote to the secular arm that ...
Below are some excerpts from his letter number 185 addressed to Count Boniface ...

1. I must express my satisfaction, and congratulations, and admiration, my son Boniface, in that, amid all the cares of wars and arms, you are eagerly anxious to know concerning the things that are of God. From hence it is clear that in you it is actually a part of your military valor to serve in truth the faith which is in Christ. To place, therefore, briefly before your Grace the difference between the errors of the Arians and the Donatists,....

34. But if we were to consider the matter under discussion with yet greater care, I think that if there were a large number of persons in the house which was going to fall, and any single one of them could be saved, and when we endeavored to effect his rescue, the others were to kill themselves by jumping out of the windows, we should console ourselves in our grief for the loss of the rest by the thoughts of the safety of the one; and we should not allow all to perish without a single rescue, in the fear lest the remainder should destroy themselves. What then should we think of the work of mercy to which we ought to apply ourselves, in order that men may attain eternal life and escape eternal punishment, if true reason and benevolence compel us to give such aid to men, in order to secure for them a safety which is not only temporal, but very short—for the brief space of their life on earth?

36. Everything, therefore, that was held in the name of the churches of the party of Donatus, was ordered by the Christian emperors, in their pious laws, to pass to the Catholic Church, with the possession of the buildings themselves. Seeing, then, that there are with us poor members of those said churches who used to be maintained by these same paltry possessions, let them rather cease themselves to covet what belongs to others while they remain outside....etc.etc.etc.

The Roman imperial authorities struck therefore with rudeness: three hundred heretical bishops and thousands of priests of lower rank were stripped of their possessions and then exiled to the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. As for their followers, severe penalties were imposed to punish their possible obstinacy: the Donatist who attended his Mass was condemned to a heavy fine and was automatically deprived of Roman citizenship; at the fifth recidivism, it was the death on the stake!

These gentle laws had the effect that one might fear. The rebellious heretics formed themselves once again into armed bands which ravaged the country. Whole legions, which could have been more usefully used elsewhere, had once again to face these "circumcellions." It was an atrocious civil war, which ended only twenty years later, when the Vandals invaded Africa. In spite of their "savagery," these Barbarians were welcomed as liberators by the Donatists; and faced with this coalition, the determination of the Roman army, commanded by Count Boniface, proved vain. The province of Africa, one of the richest and most populous of the Empire, was now definitively lost for Rome.

In 533-535 the Byzantines partially conquered again the provinces of Africa, but the historian Procopius did not mention the Donatists in his "Vandal War against"; while a law of Justinian in 535 will still prohibit all worship to "Donatists, Jews, Pagans, Arian and other heretics." Did this enumeration represent a real presence or a simple oratory effect of accumulation? The laborious Muslim defensive war in North Africa, from the raid on Sbeitla in 647 to the fall of Carthage in 698, and that of Ceuta in 709; made definitively pass the Donatism into oblivion, the newcomers making no distinction between Christians.

The Donatists were not just an opposition movement; they also had religious practices different, emphasizing the Holy Spirit. The Anabaptists and other Churches of the Radical Reformation saw in them some predecessors, because of their opposition to the union of the Church and of the State. What remains of this bloody episode is that the Church had to clarify that the sacraments given by a priest were valid "ex opere operato," that is to say, whatever the dignity or the unworthiness of the religion minister in question. Also that St. Augustine had to define the notion of the Church in relation to its communion with the bishops and especially that of Rome.

Finally, it is the Church itself that has carried out the legal repression in this case, what, alas, will provide a precedent for the development of the Inquisition later.

1) Ex opere operato means in Latin language "from the work having been worked". The sacraments administered by a regularly ordained priest himself are working regardless of his personal unworthiness. As in the case of the most cursed of sorcerers therefore, then it is enough that the used technique is the right one or that the magic formulas recited are the ones that are necessary.

2) The Muslim empire of the time of the Umayyads was the only empire in the world resulting only from defensive wars.

THE EDICT OF SERDICA KNOWN ALSO AS EDICT OF GALERIUS.

After the abdication of Diocletian Galerius became the principal of the four ruling tetrarchs of the empire. In 308, at the imperial conference of Carnuntum, he raised Licinius to the title of Augustus in replacement of Severus and officially recognized Constantine as Caesar. As they protest against the promotion of Licinius to the title of Augustus, the two Caesars, Constantine and Maximinus Daia, in turn will be appointed Augustus in 310.

End of the tetrarchy!

The persecution decided by Diocletian will be then and more than ever applied very unequally. Constantius Chlorus in the West contented himself with destroying some monuments, while Maximian, who had at first fully applied the orders of Diocletian, grew tired of this persecution. Finally, Maxentius and Constantine are both very reticent about the opportuneness of such a policy that, so to speak, they do not apply. There will be thus a great difference between the East, where Galerius and Maximinus Daia are very zealous in the application of the imperial edicts, and the West, where the persecutions are of lesser extent, which is perhaps explained by the proportion of Christians much more important in the East than in the West,

On April 30, 311, Galerius, just before his death, convinced that his cancer was a vengeance of the god of the Christians, published an edict of toleration admitting the existence of the Christian religion. This edict, called the edict of Serdica, put an end to all the anti-Christian measures still in force in the territory of the Empire.

" Among other arrangements which we are always accustomed to make for the prosperity and welfare of the republic, we had desired formerly to bring all things into harmony with the ancient laws and public order of the Romans, and to provide that even the Christians who had left the religion of their fathers should come back to reason; since, indeed, the Christians themselves, for some reason, had followed such a caprice and had fallen into such a folly that they would not obey the institutes of antiquity, which perchance their own ancestors had first established; but at their own will and pleasure, they would thus make laws unto themselves which they should observe and would collect various peoples in diverse places....Finally, when our law had been promulgated to the effect that they should conform to the institutes of antiquity, many were subdued by the fear of danger, many even suffered death. And yet since most of them persevered in their determination..... we thought that we ought to grant our most prompt indulgence also to these, so that they may again be Christians and may hold their conventicles, provided they do nothing contrary to good order....Wherefore, for this our indulgence, they ought to pray to their god for our safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, that the republic may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes" (Lactantius, On the Deaths of the Persecutors I, 34).

Urged by his end, Galerius, accustomed to the overthrow, published and promulgated this edict without consulting his peers of the tetrarchy, not only in his own name but also in that of his three Tetrarch colleagues - namely Constantine, Licinius and Maximinus Daia.

N.B. The edict of Milan of June 313 will formalize the approval given by the Tetrarchs Licinius and Constantine - who had not been consulted in 311 - to the Edict of Galerius, and will add an essential provision: the citizens of the Empire are now exempt from the veneration as a god of the Roman emperor.

CONSTANTINE'S DOUBLE PERSONALITY.

The origin of the Constantinian chiasm is rather obscure. The legendary account of the miraculous conversion of Constantine and of his army to Christianity before the battle of the bridge of Milvius against Maxentius is reported to us by three different authors. The professor of Bordeaux called Nazarius (nine years after the fact), as well as the Christian authors Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea (ten years after the events for Lactantius, twenty years later for Eusebius). These three different versions are difficult to reconcile.

The first account looks still very pagan. It sounds like a druid supporting Rome, like the famous Diviciacus mentioned by Caesar.

Nazarius. Panegyric of Constantine. 14 (nine years after the events therefore).

"It is the talk of all the Gauls that armies were seen which let it be known that they had been divinely sent [in order to support Constantine's offensive]. And although heavenly things are not in the habit of coming before men's eye, because the unmixed and incorporeal substance of their subtle nature eludes our dull and darkened vision, yet at that time your (divine) helpers submitted to being seen and heard, and escaped contamination by mortal sight after they had attested your worth. But what is their appearance said to have been, the vigor of their bodies, the size of their limbs, the eagerness of their wills? Their flashing shields were aflame with something dreadful; their celestial weaponry was ablaze with a terrible glow; for they had come in such a form that they were believed to be yours. This was their discourse, this was the speech they composed in the midst of their hearers: "We seek Constantine, we go to help Constantine." Surely even divine things admit conceit and ambition touches heavenly things as well: those armies come down from heaven, those armies divinely sent bragged because they were fighting for you. Your father Constantius, I believe, was their leader, who had yielded earthly triumphs to you, greater than he, and who, now deified, was enjoying divine expeditions..."

Lactantius. On the Death of the Persecutors. 44 (ten years after the facts). " And now a civil war broke out between Constantine and Maxentius. Although Maxentius kept himself within Rome, because the soothsayers had foretold that if he went out of it he should perish, yet he conducted the military operations by able generals. In forces he exceeded his adversary; for he had not only his father's army, which deserted from Severus, but also his own, which he had lately drawn together out of Mauritania and Italy. They fought, and the troops of Maxentius prevailed.

At length Constantine, with steady courage and a mind prepared for every event, led his whole forces to the neighborhood of Rome, and encamped them opposite to the Milvian Bridge. The anniversary of the reign of Maxentius approached, that is, the sixth of the calends of November, and the fifth year of his reign was drawing to an end. Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round thus at the top, being the cipher of Christ. Having this sign, his troops stood to arms.

The enemies advanced, but without their emperor, and they crossed the bridge. The armies met, and fought with the utmost exertions of valor, and firmly maintained their ground. In the meantime, a sedition arose at Rome, and Maxentius was reviled as one who had abandoned all concern for the safety of the commonweal; and suddenly, while he exhibited the Circensian games on the anniversary of his reign, the people cried with one voice, "Constantine cannot be overcome!" Dismayed at this, Maxentius burst from the assembly, and having called some senators together, ordered the Sibylline books to be searched. In them it was found that "On the same day the enemy of the Romans should perish." Led by this response to the hopes of victory, he went to the field. The bridge in his rear was broken down. At sight of that the battle grew hotter. The hand of the Lord prevailed, and the forces of Maxentius were routed. He fled towards the broken bridge; but the multitude pressing on him, he was driven headlong into the Tiber.

Eusebius of Caesarea. Life of Constantine. 1, 27-31 (twenty years after the facts).

"Reviewing, I say, all these considerations [Editor's note. For polytheism or for monotheism], he judged it to be folly indeed to join in the idol worship of those who were no god-or-demons, and, after such convincing evidence, to err from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honor his father's God alone.

[Editor's note. Affirmation of Eusebius contradicted by, among other things, the numerous ornaments of the buildings in Rome after the capture of the capital by Constantine]. Accordingly he called on him with earnest prayer and supplications that he would reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvelous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth?

He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline [Editor's note. In the account of Lactantius, the vision took place at night during the sleep of Constantine], he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this (Greek *Toutoi nika*) . At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle.

He said, moreover, that he doubted within himself what the import of this apparition could be. And while he continued to ponder and reason on its meaning, night suddenly came on; then in his sleep the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. At dawn of day he arose, and communicated the marvel to his friends: and then, calling together the workers in gold and precious stones, he sat in the midst of them, and described to them the figure of the sign he had seen, bidding them represent it in gold and precious stones. And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing.

Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this, the symbol of the Savior's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its center: and these letters the emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period [Editor's note. From 315]. From the crossbar of the spear was suspended a cloth, a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of great length, bore a golden half-length portrait of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner. The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies."

Comments. The three accounts are very different. We know indeed that the military insignia were very varied in the Roman Empire. The spear or stick was always topped by an idol, a symbolic animal, or some other sculptured figure; below was the narrow flag of embroidered, gilded, purple; lastly, below, were fixed the medallions of the emperors.

But for the remainder, who to believe?

Nazarius was a professor of rhetoric. His speech was delivered in 321, in Rome, to celebrate the fifteenth year of the reign of Constantine. It was, therefore, an inevitable opportunity for the speaker to remind of that battle which had enabled the Emperor to defeat Maxentius and enter Rome as a new sovereign.

According to the speaker's account, it was the pagan god-or-demons who, through their active participation, enabled this decisive victory. And he is probably representative of the ideology still dominant at that time.

We will not offend pious Muslims, or at least we hope it, by pointing out that this type of narrative reminds us much of the intervention of the thousands of angels (3000 or 5000) who helped Muhammad at the Battle of Badr in 624. It is enough to put the word "angel" in place of the word "(divine) helpers." See our essay on, or more exactly, against, Islam. The mythical story of this battle is indeed evoked clearly in the Quran.

Sura 3 verses 124-125. "God has already made you victorious at Badr.....when you said to the believers, is it not enough for you that your Lord should help you with three thousand angels; sent

down? Yes, if you hold on to patience and piety, and the enemy comes rushing at you; your Lord will help you with five thousand angels .”

But let us return to the account of Lactantius. The purpose of Lactantius was clear. It is even written on it, as an advertisement proclaimed it in the past! Lactantius tries to show that all those who have persecuted the Christians have experienced a terrible or miserable death, or both at the same time. Example Galerius, who is described by Lactantius, with morbid joy (but without excessive Christian charity nonetheless) literally gnawed alive by worms, the whole in mustiness indescribable - except for Lactantius - and other nauseous effusion of this kind ...

To the antipodes of these anti-heroes, whom God particularly punishes, Constantine, the good emperor, is rewarded by a mystical experience, by a divine vision; which, o miracle, opens him both the gates of the earthly Rome and those of the heavenly Rome. In hoc signo ("in this sign"), Constantine defeated Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge, and opened his heart to the true belief.

In his narrative, Lactantius writes that the abbreviation (in Greek language) of the name of Christ is an X (representing the Latin CH) and a perpendicular line drawn through it having the shape of a circumflex. But this last letter, thus described, does not appear in the Greek wording of the word "Christ." Lactantius therefore did not dare to affirm categorically that it was the letter P (which was later to form, with the X, the true and official Christic monogram), because many people who witnessed this event were then still alive. Moreover, Constantine had only a limited knowledge of Greek, and even less of its possible abbreviations. In any case, in their huge majority, and especially in the West, the soldiers were ignorant of Greek and spoke mainly Latin or even Celtic: the Greek X intertwined with a Greek P would not have made much sense for them.

It may therefore be supposed that the letter in question was by no means turning round, and was quite straight, as the "i" are accustomed to be in our latitudes. What made the whole therefore a traditional six-spoke sun wheel).

The account of Eusebius.

A few years after Lactantius, Eusebius of Caesarea, in turn, gives an account of the miraculous conversion to Christianity of Constantine, of which he declares with prudence and with pride that it was told to him directly by the Emperor himself. This new account testifies to a media rise in power, radically changing, in the form, the story of Lactantius, and enriching it considerably. The perpendicular line turning round has become squarely a "P." The change, ideologically, compared with the first version, is of such importance that Eusebius of Caesarea takes care to present this new narrative with very precautionary introductory remarks.

But, in any event, and notwithstanding the development of the legend as for the birth of the Christic symbols; This new account offers a description of the emblems, which corresponds to the allegorical reality as it was subtly and gradually put in place by Constantine and his successors; to integrate the signs of Christianity in the traditional symbolism of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, we can note that, in his undertaking to unify the various religions of his empire, Constantine began by stating very clearly that the god or Demiurge of the Christians appeared to him as a manifestation of the Sun God-or-demon Sol, whom his father, Constantius Chlorus, honored.

There has been much discussion, not on the undeniable existence of the labarum, but on the details brought by Eusebius in his "Life of Constantine"; Which is the latest of his works, and where flattery, rhetoric, and, in a word, inaccuracy, take part largely. Many believe that the labarum (at least the one which Eusebius saw) was made only many years after the capture of Rome. It is indeed unlikely that on the eve of such a decisive battle, soldiers had time to make such a work of art.

As these three narratives differ, it can be deduced that Constantine deliberately played upon a certain ambiguity, in order to allow the Christians to give a Christic interpretation to a sign and a symbol, which in all likelihood were originally pagan. For this eventual sign or symbol was destined, at the beginning, let us not forget it, to galvanize a pagan army, of which the vast majority, in any case, would have been unable of deciphering Greek letters and confidential Christian symbols. Besides, it may be remarked that no trace of this capital sign, which would have appeared to Constantine and his army to offer them victory; appears in the numerous arrangements and decorations which the emperor had built in Rome after the aforementioned victory.

This standard was by no means a miraculous creation ex nihilo: the novelty may have consisted only in the addition of two intertwined letters, which for Christians were the *chrism*; but which, for the pagans, probably represented a sun symbol.

Some authors even maintain that this *labarum* was designed long before the entry into Italy, while Constantine was on the Rhine and organized his campaign from afar. This is there that the first vision at the origin of this symbol would have taken place.

The *chrism* is believed to have been "discovered" by Constantine on the occasion of the battle of the Milvian Bridge, but in reality it was in 309 that Constantine, on his way to the Germanic front, decided on the choice of this emblem. Following a dream that occurred during his visit to Grand (the most beautiful shrine in the world according to some people). *Labarum* is a Latinized form of the Celtic neuter *labaron*. It was in fact the emblem of the great Celtic god- or-demon worshipped there (the *Taranis* wheel. Christian Recovery: the cross of St. Patrick or St. Andrew in Scotland). The most famous "tarbess" took place therefore in 309 at Grand in the Vosges and it was not to a future Irish king that it was applied himself, but to a future emperor.

"Fortune 1) herself so ordered this matter that the happy outcome of your affairs prompted you to convey to the immortal gods what you had vowed at the very spot where you had turned aside towards [the village of Grand, French department of the Vosges] the most beautiful temple in the whole world 2) , or rather, to the deity made manifest, as you saw. For you saw, I believe, O Constantine, your Apollo, accompanied by the goddess Victory, offering you laurel wreaths, each one of which carries a portent of thirty years. For this is the number of human ages which are owed to you without fail-beyond the old age of a Nestor. And now why do I say "I believe"? You saw, and recognized yourself in the likeness of him to whom the divine songs of the poets 3) had prophesied that rule over the whole world was due. And this I think has now happened, since you are, Augustus Emperor, like he, youthful, joyful, a bringer of health and very handsome). (Panegyric VII of Constantine, year 310, by Eumenius.)

It is this insignia (a simple X surrounded by a crown of leaves) that led the armies supporting him to victory (Maxentius was beaten and Constantine was able to capture Rome). Rudolf Egger has demonstrated the Celtic origin of this symbol whose source is to be found in the X sign symbolizing the fulgurant and dominating power of *Taranis*. This Celtic pagan symbol was adopted by Constantine as a result of his vision in the Great Shrine and not at the Battle of Milvius. The primitive standard consisting of a simple X surrounded by a laurel wreath appears besides on some sarcophagi. It was it which led the Gallic armies to the victory over Maxentius. The banner taken by Constantine from the temple in Grand to be used as his personal flag was the pennon of the god-or-demon venerated there. Editor's note. The high-knowers of the druidiaction (*druidecht*) of this city of subterranean miraculous and oracular waters (or their successors in this place) devoted themselves to the healing of diseases of the soul / mind (e.g., Caligula) or of psychosomatic diseases after analysis of patients' dreams. This last point of view also is a must for those who admit only the narrative of Lactantius. If it is complicated to make a standard, it is almost just as much to engrave or even to paint *chrism* on all the shields of an army!

Neither one nor the other is done on a battle morning! If the soldiers who crossed the Milvian Bridge and entered Rome on October 29, 312, had this cross marked on their arms, if the *labarum* were among their standards; that is that vexillum and shields had already been ornamented with them before they had passed the Alps.

At the time of his aising or vision in the temple of Apollo-Grannus, which had taken place a few months earlier (precisely at Grand, in the Vosges), had not Constantine declared that the god-or-demon had predicted to him thirty years of glory? It may be supposed therefore that it was this omen, printed visually, that Constantine proposed to his troops, to assure them of the support of the god-or-demons, the certainty of their victory, and the prosperity which would ensue.

Lactantius would then have then changed this pagan sign into a Christian monogram for the needs of Christian propaganda, and Constantine would have endorsed and adopted this symbolic change in order to strengthen the adherence of Christians to his reign.

Let us try to review: the original *labarum*, manufactured according to the Emperor's instructions, is described by Eusebius of Caesarea as consisting of a long spear, forming with a crossbar the design of a cross. At the top of the whole was fixed a crown, with in its center the symbol of the name of the savior. The banner, fixed on the transverse bar, was square and of purple color, richly embroidered with gold and precious stones, offering to the eyes a spectacle of ineffable beauty. It bore the Greek inscription "EN TOUTOI NIKA," which the Emperor had previously seen in a dream. Fifty soldiers of the Imperial Guard, having distinguished themselves by their piety and courage, were in charge of the

protection of the new standard. Therefore, according to Eusebius, regarding the original labarum, the monogram was not on the standard itself, but on the standard-bearing spear, and it was the version inscribed in a circle. Several copies of the Labarum were then produced so that each legion could have one of them. The coins of the time that have come down to us bear witness to the existence of several variants, and it is undoubtedly to one of these variants that Eliphaz Levi 5) refers. In view of the confusion of the historical narratives, we can reasonably think that the chrismon has originally a solar origin, and results from a certain Pagan-Christian syncretism.

The crown of some monograms sometimes consisted of a triple rope coil, meaning the following doctrine: "The three worlds are wound in one another, to make one, each end of the rope vanishes in eternity"; or more simply: the Trinity. This, difficult to design and very paradoxical, idea, differs from the doctrine of determinism: everything is not necessarily "written in advance," but, on the other hand, the temporal distinctions must be considered as eminently relative; because at the higher level, past, present, and future, are mixed up, since in the end All is One.

- 1) Fate or Tokade, the great god-or-demon of the druids.
- 2) Grand.
- 3) Some bards or their heirs of the time.
- 4) Portrait of Grannus? In any case it is necessary to exclude the possibility that it was the Celtic-druid god-or-demon Suqellus. The striker god-or-demon always represented as a man of mature age, bearded, holding in a hand a mallet that evokes the world of the dead, and on the other a vase (olla) symbol of fertility. He often wore a costume decorated with astral symbols (some kinds of crosses of St. Andrew or St. Patrick) and was accompanied by a dog.
- 5) The Frenchman Eliphaz Levi writes in his Dogma of High Magic that the incommunicable axiom of the Great Work is contained in this Christ's monogram. But let us return to more serious things.

THE EDICT OF MILAN (313).

The edict of Milan, or the edict of Constantine, promulgated by the emperors Constantine I and Licinius in April, 313, is often presented as an edict of toleration, through which each one may worship in his own way the deity of his choosing; granting freedom of worship to all religions and allowing Christians not to have to venerate the emperor as a god.

But what is commonly called the edict of Milan is in fact a circular letter attributed to Constantine, published by Licinius in Nicomedia, in the form of a rescript of June 13, 313 (mandatum or decree affecting the application intended to the high officials in the provinces); of which Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea have preserved to us the text (with some differences between them), posted throughout the Roman Empire and corresponding only to an application decree of the Edict of Serdica by Galerius in 311.

Licinius, who already controlled the Balkans, dreamed of conquering the East ruled by Maximinus Daia who had long pursued the policy of repression against Christians, very numerous in the eastern part of the Empire.

Constantine and Licinius, by allying themselves, had interest in rallying these activists behind their cause. In February-March, Constantine and Licinius therefore met in Milan in order to coordinate their action against Maximinus Daia; in this context they also agree to clarify, by letters addressed to their respective officials, the toleration edict of Galerius in 311, by increasing it.

But, as our Belgian friend Lucian J. Helde points it out, no "edict" was signed in Milan in 313. It was only a declaration of principles made by two pagan rulers (Constantine was not yet Baptized or converted), a weapon of propaganda, intended to get intelligence in enemy territory. We must not, therefore, consider this "Edict of Milan" as the evidence of Constantine's conversion, or as the expression of the "Triumph of the Cross."

Therefore here below is the text of the circular published by Licinius on June 15th 313 in Nicomedia and addressed to the governor.

" When we, Constantine and Licinius, emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us that, among those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that that God, who is seated in heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to everyone under our government. And therefore we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the supreme Divinity, to whose worship we freely devote ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe His favor and beneficence to us.

And accordingly we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted, freely and absolutely, to remain in it, and not to be disturbed in any ways, or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your charge, that you might understand that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional; and perceive at the same time that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others, as well as to the Christians.

Moreover, with respect to the Christians, we formerly gave certain orders concerning the places appropriated for their religious assemblies; but now we will that all persons who have purchased such places, either from our exchequer or from any one else, do restore them to the Christians, without money demanded or price claimed, and that this be performed peremptorily and unambiguously; and we will also, that they who have obtained any right to such places by form of gift do forthwith restore them to the Christians: reserving always to such persons, who have either purchased for a price, or gratuitously acquired them, to make an application to the judge of the district, if they look on themselves as entitled to any equivalent from our beneficence. All those places are, by your intervention, to be immediately restored to the Christians. And because it appears that, besides the places appropriated to religious worship, the Christians did possess other places, which belonged not

to individuals, but to their society in general, that is, to their churches, we comprehend all such within the regulation aforesaid, and we will that you cause them all to be restored to the society or churches, and that without hesitation or controversy: Provided always, that the persons making restitution without a price paid shall be at liberty to seek indemnification from our bounty.

In furthering all which things for the behoof of the Christians, you are to use your utmost diligence, to the end that our orders be speedily obeyed, and our gracious purpose in securing the public tranquility promoted. So shall that divine favor which, in affairs of the mightiest importance, we have already experienced, continue to give success to us, and in our successes make the commonweal happy. And that the tenor of this our gracious ordinance may be made known unto all, we will that you cause it by your authority to be published everywhere" (Lactantius. On the Deaths of the Persecutors 48).

N.B. This decision of principle intended to weaken Maximinus Daia was communicated to all the governors of the provinces being part of the respective territories of Constantine and Licinius. The tactics soon bore fruit.

As early as April 313, Licinius crushed Maximinus Daia's forces in the East, then massacred him and all his family.

After his victory nevertheless, Licinius in the East hardly kept the promises made to the Christians while Constantine, himself, in the West, continued to support them.....

Still in the context of our correction about the anti-Christian persecution we now turn to the case of the aspirant Emperor Maxentius at the same time. Short flash back to start.

Although he was not much concerned with the theological disputes of the Christians, the usurper Maxentius, who ruled Rome at that time, was not in the mood to tolerate such disorders. He was at war with his colleagues-rivals Severus, then Galerius, and insisted that order reigns in the territories under his control. He therefore took the only measure necessary to restore calm in Rome: he seized Pope Marcellus and sentenced him to clean the imperial stables Then Maxentius banished the bishop away from Rome. Marcellus died in exile shortly after (on January 5, 309, it is said). A victim of the persecution?

Emperor Maxentius had not yet finished with the fanaticism of his Christians. Really, the "persecutions" had taught them nothing! Yet, more from fear of reprisals than to please him, the Christian faithful and the clergy of Rome had elected a certain Eusebius as bishop. This Greek, more moderate towards the "lapsi" than the ruthless Pope Marcellus, thought that "these unfortunates had at least the right to weep their crimes."

But the party of the Taliban or Parabolani of Christianity had not disarmed. As soon as Eusebius was elected, they opposed him with an antipope, a priest named Heraclius, who contested to those who had fallen (lapsi) the right to repent. And at once, to the big exasperation of Maxentius, new riots between hard and soft Christians bloodied the city.

The latter did not hesitate: Eusebius and Heraclius were sent back-to-back. The two bishops, the pope and the antipope, the moderate and the intransigent, were banished to Sicily.

Eusebius died in exile after a short time. History ignores the fate of the inflexible Heraclius.

Two more victims for the "persecution of Diocletian?"

Maxentius had understood! For more than two years, he did not allow the election of a bishop in Rome. But in 312 he had to change course: Constantine, who ruled Gaul and (Great) Britain and favored the Christians, was about to attack him. If he wished to resist effectively the offensive of this rival, Maxentius had to rally imperatively behind his cause his turbulent Christian subjects, particularly numerous in his territories in Italy and Africa. He therefore authorized the designation as a pope of a named Miltiades (or Melchiades), an African, and restored to the Church the property of which it had been despoiled during the persecution.

However, Maxentius' pro-Christian measures were not enough. The armies of Constantine fell upon Rome, crushed those of his competitor, first at Turin, then at the Milvian Bridge, in the suburbs of Rome. It was there that Maxentius found death, drowned in the Tiber, through which he tried to escape with his disbanded troops.

N.B. Licinius was in turn so weakened by this internal opposition in the East (Christians were numerous in this part of the Empire, let us remind of it) that he was afterwards defeated and killed by his ally Constantine.

THE LAST TOLERATION PERIOD OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

(70 years later the new Edict of Milan, signed in 391 by Emperor Theodosius, will ban paganism).

In 314 Constantine, who was a (pagan) high priest through his function as pontifex maximus or supreme pontiff, will also begin to interfere more deeply in the affairs of the Christian religion, although not baptized. He gathered for example some bishops in Arles to try to solve the problem raised by the fanaticism of certain Christians in Africa against the lapsi or "fallen" persons; that is to say the Christians who have agreed to swear loyalty to the State (there were not only matrons like Saint Blandina in Christianity), and who have been consequently excommunicated. He will then continue in this direction by becoming more and more involved in religious affairs, especially those of the Christian religion.

It cannot be excluded that certain local tensions may have provoked, according to the ratios of involved powers, some attacks of Christians against pagan temples or, conversely, some attacks of pagans against Christian churches.

But during the reign of Constantine, these few clashes were extremely limited and sporadic, and the emperor's overall policy consisted in a strategy of unifying equality aimed at satisfying both the pagans and the Christians.

It is interesting to compare the style in which were written, on the one hand, the edicts that Constantine intended for the pagans, and on the other hand, the letters which Constantine addressed to the bishops. If we compare, for example, the text of the Hispellum decree, intended for pagans, of which a copy was kept at Spello in Italy; and the text of the letters addressed by Constantine to certain bishops, such as those transcribed by Eusebius of Caesarea; It is difficult to believe that these two categories of documents could have come from the same person or be established by the same administrative department.

Constantine was perhaps to dictate, or gave his instructions in Latin, to two distinct secretaries, according to the themes to be developed, or else these two different administrations, one pagan and the other Christian, submitted to him projects that the Emperor ratified, or improved.

In the edicts destined to the pagans indeed there is always the traditional phraseology of the pagan faith, while we find in the letters destined to Christians this very particular style, made of unwavering demonstrative apology so peculiar to Christianity.

This Pagan-Christian coexistence, at the level of the Power, was likely to lead to implacable rivalries and gnawing struggles between two opposing clans; each one aiming at guaranteng a preponderating influence on the mind of the Sovereign. And it appears incontestable that, in the long run, in this decisive battle, it was the Christians who ended in triumphing. This victory, under the reign of Constantine himself, was reflected, for example, among others, in regard to the entourage of the councilors, by the defeat of the leader of the pagan faith, Sopater;* who will be ultimately sentenced to be beheaded, after having been accused by the Christians, of having caused the famine, by practices of magic favoring head winds; thus preventing ships loaded with food from docking in Constantinople (a good proof of obscurantism from the Christians for that matter).

* Sopater of Apamea (243-331). A disciple of Iamblichus and director of a Neoplatonic school had first attended the court of Licinius. After Licinius' defeat in 324, Sopater, knowing Constantine to be open to philosophical ideas, went to his court, probably still in Nicomedia at the time. There his eloquence and persuasion pleased the emperor. He followed his court to Constantinople and composed there a mirror of the princes. His and ten years later would anticipate Hypatia's because he would be the victim of a veritable witch hunt.

In 321, if Constantine began indeed to favor the Christian Church openly, he nevertheless undertook to build within Rome only a monument: the Lateran Basilica. It is true, however, that apart from the city, but still on the same model as the rectangular pagan basilica, with central nave and aisles separated by rows of columns, he will have seven churches built that he will fund himself.

On the site of Paul's supposed (wrongly) tomb, he makes built the church which would become Saint Paul outside the Walls and, above all, he builds the place of worship that would rapidly become the very center of Catholicism. St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, on the other side of the Tiber, which then marked the boundary of the capital of the Empire.

The original site of this new church was, like Saint Paul's Church, a necropolis which housed both pagan graves and Christian graves.

An apocryphal tradition attributed to one of them, above which stood a small commemorative monument, the honor of having been the burial site of Peter; crucified, during the persecution of Christians in the reign of Nero [what is also false]. It is on this tomb, attributed to Peter that Constantine will therefore build the first basilica of St. Peter in Rome, of which the original function was thus funerary and commemorative.

This first basilica without transept is nevertheless already important, since it is more than one hundred meters long by twenty meters wide.

It will also be with this in mind that the anniversary of the birth of Jesus will be fixed on December 25 by Constantine; this day being that of the anniversary of the birth of the Sun-God-or-Demon, (Dies Natalis Divi Solis Invicti: the Day of the birth of the Unconquered Sun God-or-Demon). The Emperor Aurelian had particularly revered this anniversary day, which was celebrated every year with great pomp by the college of priests of the Sun-God-or-demon, in the temple of the Sol God-or-demon.

We are therefore now clearly dealing with a solar Christ, a solar myth, very much in line with S. Acharya's historical essays entitled *The Christ Conspiracy* (1999) or *The Suns of God* (2004).

Below are the two quotations from the part of this book devoted to Jesus.

- The gospel story is an artificial, non-historical work. It has been fabricated from source materials that can be identified and traced to their incorporation into the gospels. There is not a particle of hard evidence that "Jesus of Nazareth" ever existed (Harold Leidner, *The Fabrication of The Christ Myth*).

- I have examined all the known superstitions of the world, and I do not find in our particular superstition of Christianity one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded on fables and mythology. Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make one half the world fools and the other half hypocrites; to support roguery and error all over the earth (Thomas Jefferson).

But let us return to the establishment of Sunday rest.

The weekly celebration of Christians, which was originally that of the Shabbat (Saturday) of the Jews; was sometimes fixed by some Judeo-Christian communities on Friday, to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus; and by other communities, on the first day of the Jewish week, that is, on Sunday, to celebrate the glory of the resurrection of Christ.

In the same way, therefore, and still in the same search for religious syncretism, Constantine, as the supreme pontiff, though still not baptized (or as pagan pontifex maximus?) made the Sunday adopted as a day of celebration and veneration, both of the Sun God-or-demon and of Christ.

The law on Sunday rest. " The Emperor Constantinus Augustus to Helpidius. All the judges and all the urban populations and all the professional activities have to stop on the worshipful day of the Sun. The people who take care of the cultivated lands, on the contrary, freely and without restriction can attend to agricultural activities; in fact, it frequently occurs that there is no other day more fitting for sowing cereals or for planting vineyards, and that moment, given by the sky, ought not to be missed. Posted on the fifth day before the nones of March in the year of the second consulship of Crispus and Constantine Caesars (Justinian Code III, 12,2).

This Constantine decision to amalgamate the day of the Sun God-or-demon and the day of Christ, made all the inhabitants of the empire, both pagans and Christians, to simultaneously glorify the same unified higher God-or-demon. This decision favored the most glorious day of the legend of Christ, that

is to say, his resurrection, of which the celebration became the major event of the Christian week; while it was designed, on the other hand, to coincide also with the celebration of the Sun God-or-demon.

Eusebius of Caesarea gives an account of this important cult and social change, avoiding, however, naming, too precisely, the Sun Deity also revered by Constantine; and in the same passage of his work he thus presents the text of the prayer to be recited on the Sunday that Constantine had caused to be established, both for Christians and for pagans.

Eusebius of Caesarea. The life of the blessed emperor Constantine. Book 4. Chapters 18-20. Constantine asked that the armies revere now the " Lord's day" which derives its name from light, and from the sun.

The emperor freely granted to those among them who were partakers of the divine faith (the Christians), leisure for attendance on the services of the Church of God in order that they might be able, without impediment, to perform their religious worship. With regard to those who were as yet ignorant of divine truth (the pagans) he provided by a second statute that they should appear on each Sunday (day of the Sun God-or-demon) on an open plain near the city, and there, at a given signal, offer to God [Editor's note. The Sun God-or-demon] a prayer which they had previously learned by heart.

Constantine himself wrote this prayer in Latin language, that he ordered the soldiers to recite together.

"We acknowledge you the only god,
We own you as our king,
And implore your succor.
By your favor have we gotten the victory,
Through you are we mightier than our enemies.
We render thanks for your past benefits
And trust you for future blessings.
Together we pray to you
And beseech you long to preserve to us
Safe and triumphant, our emperor Constantine,
And his pious sons."

Editors note. Eusebius of Caesarea has probably changed the text of this prayer by insisting on the oneness of the god-or-demon in question; what Constantine was probably very careful not to do, in order to assemble in a single impulse all the lifeblood of his armies; by carefully avoiding the specific mention of the name of Jesus Christ in this prayer so as not to arouse pagan reticence.

An equivalent prayer for the armies is reported to us by Lactantius (of the manner in which the persecutors died, chapter 46), a prayer which would have been inspired by God to Licinius, before a battle with Maximin Daia. Let us not forget that as a "co-emperor" Licinius was also a high priest or supreme pontiff (pontifex maximus) and that in this capacity he was equally empowered just like Constantine to direct the worship ceremonies celebrated by his men. This prayer uses the expression "Supreme God," which was probably also the initial formulation of the of Constantine's prayer, before the little help that Eusebius gave later to his text.

"Supreme God, we beseech you;
Holy God, we beseech you;
Unto you we commend all right;
Unto you we commend our safety;
Unto you we commend our empire.
By you we live,
By you we are victorious and happy.
Supreme Holy God, hear our prayers;
To you we stretch forth our arms.
Hear, Holy Supreme God."

Particularly noteworthy is the rhythm of this prayer, made to be repeated in chorus, sentence by sentence, as a kind of litany. And which probably resembles much the original prayer that Constantine composed to be recited in common on Sundays by those of his soldiers who were not Christians.

A gap, however, began to widen gradually between the elites who remained faithful to paganism and Constantine. And this quiet disapprobation grew worse with every passing day. The life of Constantine indeed was hardly exemplary. For example, he made his own son, the Caesar Crispus, executed, and made his wife Fausta scalded alive, what was much criticized by the Christians. Oh no, mistake! By the pagans of the time, I am told. The Christians, however, rather strangely, closed their eyes before these crimes, and justified them implicitly, by the moral concern of Constantine, who had established laws aimed at suppressing certain sexual excesses.

Zosimus, resuming the disappeared Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus, reports, in a rather confused manner, this antagonism between the pagan elites of Rome and Constantine, who felt a violent anger. Among other examples, according to Zosimus, Constantine, in 326, refused to ascend the Capitol to perform the rites in force.

It was probably this antagonism, muted, but obstinate, of the pagan elites, towards his behavior; which caused his decision to leave Rome, and to go and build a new capital for his empire, more in conformity with his will and his religious vision.

However, before leaving Rome, in order never to return to it, in a rather paradoxical manner, he appointed the prefect of the city, the head of one of the oldest pagan families in the capital, Anicius Julianus. Still this double personality of the first Christian emperor.

If we know with certainty the date of the inauguration of Constantinople, in 330; it is impossible to know whether the decision to build this new city coincided or not with the decision to make it the other capital of the Empire.

What is certain in any case is that after 326 Constantine left Rome forever, and later made Constantinople, built on the site of ancient Byzantium, the new capital of his empire.

In addition to the archeological data (monuments, sculptures, inscriptions, coins, etc.), some information is available on Constantine's design and its realization; thanks to several texts, particularly those of Zosimus, a pagan historian, or those of Eusebius of Caesarea, without forgetting the Paschal Chronicle.

Zosimus. *New history*. 2, 30.

Being unable to endure the curses of almost the whole city [by the pagans], he sought for another city as large as Rome, where he might build himself a palace. Having, therefore, discovered a convenient site between Troas and old Ilium, he there accordingly laid a foundation, and built part of a wall to a considerable height, which may still be seen by any that sail towards the Hellespont. Afterwards changing his purpose, he left his work unfinished, and went to Byzantium, where he admired the situation of the place, and therefore resolved, when he had considerably enlarged it, to make it a residence worthy of an emperor.

The city stands on a rising ground, which is part of the isthmus enclosed on each side by the Ceras [the Horn : a sound] and the Propontis [the sea of Marma] ... [Follows a brief description of the Byzantium which had been built by Septimius Severus and Caracalla].....This was the extent of the old city. Constantine built a circular market place where the old gate had stood, and surrounded it with double-roofed porticos, erecting two great arches of Praeconnesian marble against each other, through which was a passage into the porticos of Severus, and out of the old city. Intending to increase the magnitude of the city, he surrounded it with a wall which was fifteen stadia (almost three kilometers) beyond the former, and enclosed all the isthmus from sea to sea.

Having thus enlarged the city, he built a palace little inferior to that of Rome, and very much embellished the hippodrome, or horse course, taking into it the temple of the god-or-demons Castor and Pollux, whose statues are still standing in the porticos of the hippodrome. He placed on one side of it the tripod that belonged to the Delphian Apollo, on which stood an image of the god-or-demon Apollo himself. As there was at Byzantium a very large market place, consisting of four porticos [the

former market place of Severus become the Augusteum] , at the end of one of them, to which a numerous flight of steps ascends, he erected two temples; in one of which was placed the statue of goddess-or-demoness Rhea, the mother of the god-or-demons, which Jason's companions had formerly fixed on Mount Dindymus, which is near the city of Cyzicus. It is said, that through his contempt of the goddess-or-demoness he impaired this statue by taking away the lions that were on each side, and, changing the position of the hands. For it formerly rested each hand on a lion, but was now altered into a supplicating posture, looking towards the city, and seeming to observe what the people were doing.

In the other of the he placed the statue of the goddess-or-demoness Fortune of Rome.

Paschal Chronicle (year 330).

"He [Constantine] was first to celebrate a chariot racing contest wearing for the first time a diadem of pearls and other precious stones. And he made a great festival, and commanded by his sacred decree that the anniversary of his city be celebrated on the same day and that on the 11th of the same month of Artemis (may)

Constantine made for himself another gilded monument of wood (identical to the one that had been hoisted at the top of the market-place column) bearing in its right hand a Tyche of the same city (the goddess-or-demoness guardian of the town) , itself also gilded, and commanded that on the same day of the anniversary of the chariot race the same monument of wood should enter escorted by the troops wearing chlamys (mantles), all holding white candles; the carriage should proceed around the further turning post and come to the arena opposite the imperial box ; and the emperor of the day should rise and do obeisance to the monument of the same emperor Constantine and this Tyche of the city."

According to the Christian historian, Philostorgius, it would seem that even the Christian clergy also participated in the cult of the emperor thus deified. Philostorgius was an Arian and his work was forbidden or thrown at the stake, but there are still some fragments handed over by Photius and they bring a perspective noticeably different from the ones which have been transmitted to us by other Christian historians.

Philostorgius. Ecclesiastical History (reported through an abridgement by Photius). 2, 17.

This impious enemy of God (Philostorgius) also accuses the Christians of offering sacrifices to an image of Constantine placed upon a column of porphyry (in Constantinople), and of honoring it with lighted lamps and incense, and of offering vows to it as to God.

Oration of Eusebius Pamphilus in praise of the emperor Constantine pronounced on the thirtieth anniversary of his reign.

"Our emperor, like the radiant sun, illuminates the most distant subjects of his empire through the presence of the Caesars (the three sons of Constantine), as with the far-piercing rays of his own brightness. To us who occupy the eastern regions, he has given a son worthy of himself; a second and a third respectively to other departments of his empire, to be, as it were, brilliant reflectors of the light which proceeds from himself. Once more, having harnessed, as it were, under the selfsame yoke the four most noble Caesars (to the three sons of Constantine being added one of his nephews) as horses in the imperial quadriga (sun chariot), he sits on high like a charioteer (driver of a chariot) and directs their course by the reins of holy harmony and concord; and, himself everywhere present, and observant of every event, thus traverses every region of the world. Lastly, invested as he is with a semblance of heavenly sovereignty, he directs his gaze above, and frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God. And this conformity is granted by the universal sovereign to man alone of the creatures of this earth."

A fine example of hypocrisy! At no time is the name of Jesus Christ mentioned. A pagan rhetorician could have pronounced, in the same terms, this panegyric praising the Divine-Sun Emperor on his Apollonian chariot.

Below, therefore, we can deduce from all these texts.

The inauguration of the city took place in two main episodes. The first ceremony, therefore, consisted in bringing into the city the statue of Constantine-Helios-Apollo-Sun with its radiating head which had been placed on a sun chariot (quadriga). This statue was escorted by a procession of senators, magistrates, public figures and priests, all dressed in white, and carrying an also-white candle. When the procession arrived in front of the monumental column, located in the center of the Constantine market place, the statue was hoisted (by means of a scaffold) and placed on the top of this monumental column, while (pagan) songs and prayers resounded, headed by Sopater. The second main ceremony was the opening by Constantine, in the hippodrome, of (religious) games which would last forty days, with non-stop distributions of food and drink to the population of Constantinople, exactly in the same way as in Rome.

The new city was designed on the model of the imperial Rome, with, among others, Senate, Forum and Hippodrome.

The latter was contiguous to the imperial palace that it adjoined, what enabled the emperor to conveniently preside over the great ceremonies which could be organized in this large space, suitable for gatherings, and which could receive up to sixty thousand persons. Constantine offered great financial privileges to the senatorial class in order to induce him to come and settle in Constantinople.

A silver coin was minted that year to commemorate this inauguration, celebrating both the god-or-demons of Constantinople and Constantine; with, on the obverse, the surrounded with laurel profile of the Emperor, and on the reverse, the goddess-or-demoness of the City (Tyche), seated and holding the Horn of Plenty.

On the strictly religious level, it can be noted that the ceremony of the inauguration of Constantinople did not take place in one of the churches that Constantine built there. On the contrary, by order of Constantine and under his instructions; the pagan philosopher and scholar Sopater, a pupil of Iamblichus, made everything so that the ritual foundation of Constantinople, destined to become the new capital of the Empire, was in conformity with the foundation of Rome by Romulus, and even surpassed it; both in its primitive authenticity and in its pagan symbolism and mysticism.

The late Christian accounts about the construction of Constantinople tried to incorporate symbolic elements of Christianity into the list of the pagan ritual objects used during the inauguration ceremony; such as the nails and wood of the Cross, the staff of Moses, the hammer of Noah, a stone of the rock from which Moses would have caused the water to flow in the desert, and so on.

But the legendary components of this quite unlikely Christian list of ritual objects that would have been used for the inauguration of the new capital; are additions or glosses, that the main narrators of the account of the foundation of the city do not mention, including among others:

-Eusebius of Caesarea, who would have been eager to glorify such objects of the Christian ritual if he had known of them.

-Zosimus, the pagan, who would not have failed, on the contrary, to denounce with sarcasm either their falsehood or with indignation their destructive nature, as for the ancestral beliefs.

In the base of the column in Constantine's market place, which had thus become as the original and ritual "Mundus" of the new capital; Constantine and Sopater placed with the Palladium (or the Replica of the Palladium) twelve baskets, presumably to announce the future prosperity of the new city. The Christians later saw them as a symbol of the twelve apostles. But we can rather conjecture that the pagan scholar Sopater as for him had referred in reality to the twelve vultures that presided over the foundation of Rome by Romulus or to the twelve signs of the zodiac.

It was in this same context of exclusively pagan inauguration that various statues of god-or-demons and goddess-or-demonesses were placed throughout the city, about which Eusebius of Caesarea claims, or pretends to believe, that they had only a sarcastic demonstration role.

But on the one hand, Constantine himself was primarily among the representations of these deities, and on the other hand, the ceremonies of the religious foundation of the city were performed in

accordance with the ancestral rites. Besides, Constantine had several temples built at Constantinople in order to ensure a real worship this time, of these pagan deities.

As we shall see below with the decree of Hispellum, which was enacted after the inauguration of Constantinople; the building of new temples dedicated to the worship of pagan divinities, of the emperor and of his family, was still encouraged, for it flattered the ambition of the divine Emperor Constantine.

On the other hand, it can be seen that Constantine, in his unitary impulse, has indeed adapted, in certain circumstances, some sculptural representations of certain deities in order to better merge them into the new syncretism, which in his mind was to gradually include the god or Demiurge of the Christians.

Eusebius of Caesarea. Life of Constantine. 3, 54.

All these things the emperor diligently performed to the praise of the saving power of Christ, and thus made it his constant aim to glorify his Savior God.

On the other hand, he used every means to rebuke the superstitious errors of the heathen. Hence the entrances of their temples in the several cities were left exposed to the weather, being stripped of their doors at his command; the tiling of others was removed, and their roofs destroyed. From others again the venerable statues of brass, of which the superstition of antiquity had boasted for a long series of years, were exposed to view in all the public places of the imperial city: so that here a Pythian, there a Sminthian Apollo, excited the contempt of the beholder: while the Delphic tripods were deposited in the hippodrome and the Muses of Helicon (sanctuary of Apollon and the muses) in the imperial palace itself.

Comments.

Again, we wonder if we do not dream. What is truth? Asked Pontius Pilate three hundred years earlier. The pagan edifices which are built by Constantine in Byzantium are presented by Eusebius of Caesarea as constructions destined to do the satire and the mocking of the ancient pagan beliefs. This grotesque view of the pagan Constantinople in no way corresponds to the historical reality and here again it is necessary to correct the Christian prism.

The change that Constantine brought in the appearance of the goddess-or-demoness Rhea is probably due to his desire to have, in two symmetrical temples, on the one hand, the goddess-or-demoness Fortune of Rome, and on the other hand, the goddess-or-demoness Fortune of Constantinople; a new divinity that Constantine would thus have created from the mother goddess-or-demoness, mother of the god-or-demons.

In reality, and contrary to the assertions of Eusebius of Caesarea, during the reign of Constantine, no pagan temple was deliberately diminished or damaged. Eusebius of Caesarea could have made an excellent French politician ... of the right wing! Or an excellent journalist.....of the left wing! speaking about Syria.

This professional liar nevertheless makes us able to complete this archeological survey, by indicating that Constantine had also made placed, among other representations of deities, various statues of the God-or-demon-Sun Apollo, as well as, in his palace itself, the statues of the nine goddess-or-demonesses known with the name Muses.

It is true, on the contrary, that Constantine, for the sake of an apparent virtue, and in order to finance his much largesse or constructions, confiscated the treasures of certain temples, the worship of which he deemed unethical. For example, those that involved some prostitution, or some outrageous frolics, as well as too bloody sacrifices, or practices of evil magic.

It is in this same state of mind, of a certain moralizing puritanism, that Constantine, for example, put to death, in Alexandria, the homosexual priests whose worship was supposed to guarantee the beneficial annual flood of the Nile.

On the other hand, Constantine's extremely unifying concern led him also to gather in his capital numerous statues of deities from various temples, without much concern about the reactions or oppositions that such plundering might provoke.

In Constantinople, the capital of the empire, as we could see, the Christianity was nevertheless always strictly adapted, or adjusted, by Constantine, to the idea, one does not dare to say Christian, that he had of his own essence as an emanation of the Divinity. He built four or five churches of considerable size, within Constantinople itself, but which didn't subsist, for they were afterwards replaced by much more ambitious buildings, especially during the reign of Justinian.

The texts, especially those of Eusebius of Caesarea, nevertheless give us a first idea of the design and realization of these churches. In the mind of Constantine, they constituted the manifestation of his idea that Christ was a divine emanation comparable to his own.

The various sculptural representations of the city, as well as the names given to the churches, sustained, moreover, a form of ambiguity which made the upholders of paganism able to find again, in the representations proposed, familiar themes of pagan faith.

Thus, for example, Eusebius of Caesarea mentions statues of the Good Shepherd, or of Daniel with the lions, but which in both cases were common sculptural patterns of pagan mythology.

Constantine also gave the churches in Constantinople names of deities, expressing the virtues peculiar to the pagan designs of the time; like the (Goddess-or-demoness) Wisdom (changed later in Hagia Sophia), the (goddess-or-demoness) Peace (whose equivalent in Rome was the famous Temple of Peace), etc.

All these traditional pagan names were, after Constantine, replaced by the names of male or female saints, sometimes only produced by a simple phonetic analogy (Sophia = wisdom, Irenaeus = peace, etc.)

The intolerance of the first Christians, inherited from the anti goyim Jewish monolatry, and which considers every other religion as perverse and demonic; after having been fought by the Roman emperors, who regarded it as a threat against the State and the intellect; will end by seducing the pretenders to the throne in search of a worship able of restoring the unity of the state threatened on all sides. It is therefore for essentially political reasons that Christianity will triumph, but insofar as it gradually began to adopt some of the ceremonial practices of the former Rome or Greece.

In reality Constantine was a skeptic having used Christianity as an instrument, and taking note of the numerical increase of a sect of which he does not really share convictions; but of which as a Roman emperor he establishes himself as the supreme Pontiff (Pontifex Maximus) in order to reconcile its strength, which had become everywhere present in the Empire.

Concerning the Christian religion, Constantine indeed had the genius to perceive, or to foresee, that the ideological power would infallibly belong to it. He therefore decided to take the leadership of this movement and to control it, just as the Roman emperor had rightfully control over the worship of pagan ideology as Supreme High Pontiff.

And it was in this concern to constantly strengthen the necessary cohesion of Christianity that Constantine, for example, became personally involved in theological conflicts provoked by the various schisms which constantly threatened the unity of the Church. Constantine, never hesitating to resort to force, always watched with care that the minority currents, declared heretics, were eliminated. At least temporarily and not without procrastination on his behalf (see the case of Arianism).

Constantine became all the more easily the undisputed leader of this "great" Church (his pope), that its new "sacred texts" had been changed in a way very favorable to the Romans, and took over many well-known pagan elements. Neither High Priest nor Prophet come at any time, into the new Gospels, and anoint with sacred oil the man Jesus in order to make him a political leader competing with the emperor like Bar Kockba. But this one at his birth receives the offerings of Chaldean wise men, priests of the sun god-or-demon Mithra. Jesus is therefore acclaimed by the shepherds, the habitual companions of this deity at the moment when he is born from a cave or a rock. He becomes a new Mithra, a New Sun (Neos Helios). But practically, what is the value of a literary quotation for illiterate crowds? Constantine used other means to win the loyalty of the Christian communities. This loyalty was bought by the numerous subsidies of all kinds with which he rewarded the various communities.

As the new emperor had been supported by the Christians, as we have said, he treated them as favorites. He made them his high dignitaries, his councilors, his generals; the Christian religion became "a little more equal than the others." In 324, after the defeat and death of Licinius, certain forms of paganism (the most marginal) were even forbidden. The magistrates were no longer allowed to participate in these pagan cults.

Constantine having understood to what extent the Christians claimed to be the new chosen people, he conceded to them, after their appropriation of the Book following the excommunication of Marcion; that, merely virtual, of a country, the Palestine. In Jerusalem, thus become their spiritual capital, he caused the temples erected by Hadrian to be demolished, to build upon their ruins monuments to the glory of Christ the King. These new Palestinians were never equated with some Jews, but nevertheless it is thus that the actual holy places of Christianity were built.

For the rest, besides the preferential treatments granted to the bishops and the placing at their disposal of the public services, in particular of the Imperial Post Service to facilitate their movements; Constantine had enough practicality to understand that the daily life of his empire also depended on the goodwill of his administration; not of the (honestiores) leaders, but of the 35,000 slaves who, overall, carried out the regular performance of its offices. To keep wages and other advantages attached to their status, to outlaw any new anti-Christian persecution in order to guarantee their tranquility, proved imperative conditions for the realization of the political union sought by him.

The Christian religion became the worship of Constantine, sole representative of the single god or Demiurge in his empire in the process of unification. The Christians, originally unconquered, turned into an army whose absolute obedience to the Master constituted the most important thing of their religion, in spite of the crimes committed by the latter, and of whom it is not known whether he died baptized or not. Progressively only the worship of the Christian god or demon was permitted (beginning of religious persecution in Europe) and the Church from now on had the imperial power in order to base its domination. In the first place, the strength of its bureaucracy, secondly, the violence of its weapons. The first use it made of this authority was to pursue those who disagreed with it.

Constantine the Great died on 22 May 337 in Ancyra (now Ankara). Did he make himself baptized on his deathbed? This is by no means certain, for the fact is attested only in the "Life of Constantine" written immediately after his death by Eusebius of Caesarea, which verges much more on hagiography than on History. As for the Emperor himself, Eusebius did not hesitate to rework his biography on many circumstances; according to the events and fluctuations of his desire to please or serve, by erasing names and manipulating the facts or by distorting them. Like any self-respecting right-wing politician or left-wing journalist in the France of this beginning of the twenty-first century. In any case, whatever may have already been the importance of the stranglehold of the Christian entourage of the emperor over the various mechanisms of power; It was not a coin, specifically Christian, which was issued at Constantinople on this circumstance, but a coin showing the ascent to the ether of Constantine on a sun quadriga (chariot); like the one depicted by Eusebius of Caesarea, and through its engraving describing the monarch as *divus*, divine, in line with the apotheosis of the (deceased) pagan emperors.

But it is perhaps indeed with his mausoleum, built in Constantinople, that Constantine revealed us in the best way the substance of his thought.

He built indeed a religious edifice in the city, where his body was to rest after his death. This project constituted a radical break with the apotheosis of the deceased Roman emperors, whose bodies were burned, and whose divinity fled to Heaven in order to meet in it the eternal god-or-demons.

Constantine indeed replaced this principle of the pagan apotheosis by the principle of the resurrection of the beings of a divine emanations, following the example of Jesus Christ. The reading of the Gospels as well as the ceaseless ascent of the Christian Church had sufficiently influenced Constantine to bring him to make an unprecedented merger of Christian ideology and pagan ideology. Thus Constantine proceeded therefore to the fundamental establishment of a rigorously symmetrical architectural and symbolic structure, with, in Jerusalem the foundation of the Holy Sepulcher for Jesus Christ, and in Constantinople the equivalent building of the mausoleum of the divine emperor.

ON THE TRUE ORIGINS OF PRIESTHOOD IN CHRISTIANITY.

(While there are no priests in Judaism since the end of the Temple in Jerusalem, rabbis not being priests, and that there never were some of them in Islam.)

The pagan initiatory quest (for example, in Iona even before St. Columbanus) presupposes an inner adventure in which the being refines itself according to the experiments (imrama, echtraí, and others). Christianity will replace it by a path marked out by constantly renewed acts of obedience to the Church. The various *aislingi* or visions like that of Tondale are very clear on this subject.

As everybody knows or must know.....

The relatedness of the incipient Christianity with the Greek mysteries is nevertheless half-confessed by the apostle Paul, the first disseminator of the doctrine, who refers to the "revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed" (Romans 16, 25).

Here, in fact, is what happened at least according to John Toland (and, of course, in summary) when, during the fourth century, the Roman Empire made the Christian religion official.

Multitudes then professed themselves of the Emperor's persuasion, only to make their court, and mend their fortunes by it, or to preserve those places and preferments whereof they were already possessed. These continued pagans in their hearts; and it may be easily imagined that they carried all their old prejudices along with them into a Religion which they purely embraced out of politic considerations: and so it constantly happens, when the conscience is forced and not persuaded, which was a while after the case of these heathens.

The zealous emperors erected stately Churches, and converted the Heathen Temples, Sanctuaries, Fanes or Chapels, to the use of Christians, after a previous expiation, and placing the sign of the cross in them to assure their possession to Christ. All their endowments, with the benefices of the Priests, Flamens, Augurs, and the whole sacred tribe, were appropriated to the Christian Clergy. Nay, their very habits, as white linen stoles, miters, and the like, were retained to bring those, as was pretended, to an imperceptible change, who could not be reconciled to the Christian simplicity and poverty. But indeed the design fundamentally was to introduce the riches, pomp, and dignities of the clergy which immediately succeeded.

Now their own advantage being the motive that put the primitive clergy upon reviving mystery, they quickly erected themselves by its assistance into a separate and politic body, though not so soon into their various orders and degrees.

For in the first two centuries we meet with no subdeacons, lecturers, or the like; much less with the names or dignities of Popes, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Archbishops, Primate, Suffragans, Archdeacons, Deans, Chancellors, Vicars, or their numerous dependents and retinue. But in small-time mystery made way for those, and several other usurpations upon mankind, under pretense of laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

The decrees or constitutions concerning ceremonies and discipline, to increase the splendor of this new State, did strangely affect, stupefy, and amaze the minds of the ignorant people; and made them believe they were in good earnest mediators between God and men, that could fix sanctity to certain times, places, persons, or actions. By this means the clergy were able to do anything; they engrossed at length the sole right of interpreting Scripture, and with it claimed infallibility, to their body.

The description of the feasts of the inauguration of Hagia Sophia in 562 by Paul the Silentiary (an officer of the court of Justinian); shows well that everything that was not specifically contrary to the morality of late antiquity was incorporated into the new liturgy elaborated by the Christians: procession, songs, lighting effects.

As John Toland very well established in his *Nazarenus*, the first true Christians (Nazarenes, Ebionites ...) were Jews, and followed the law of Moses. Consequently, it can be deduced that what is not of Jewish origin in Christianity is necessarily of pagan origin; and that the changes of this early Christianity which have appeared later are due to the contributions from the Christians of pagan origin.

See also "Christianity not mysterious," section III, para. 67. Early Christianity, by definition (it is called acculturation today) was rapidly invaded by terms, notions, or rituals, of pagan origin. The Christian sects and factions all agree to speak of the mysteries of the Christian religion, adds this author in his vibrant plea of 1697.

As there were several degrees, so there were different sorts of mysteries. The most famous were the Samothracian, the Eleusinian, the Egyptian, and those of Bacchus, commonly known by the name of orgies.

Here is how, by whom, and for what reason, they were introduced into Christianity, according to John Toland.

The pagans interested in Christianity were in greater numbers than the Jews and they have been accustomed all their lives to the pompous worship and secret mysteries of deities without number. The Christians, on the other hand, were careful to remove all obstacles lying in the way of the Gentiles. They thought the most effectual way of gaining them over to their side was by compounding the matter, which led them to unwarrantable compliance, till at length they likewise set up for mysteries.

Editor's note. Contrary to what John Toland thinks, baptism and Supper are far from having been exclusively Christian from the beginning.

Jesus never baptized anyone (he was baptized by his cousin John the Baptist, what is not the same thing). As for the Last Supper, it was perhaps merely a meal of Jewish Pesach. For the rest, and in connection with all these Christian sacraments, John Toland is perfectly right to point out that the first Christians changed them, adding to them pagan mystical rites. They administered them with the strictest secrecy; and, to be inferior to their adversaries in no circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepared or initiated.

And to inspire their catechumens with most ardent desires of participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hidden were tremendous and unutterable mysteries. Christianity was put upon an equal level with the Mysteries of Ceres, or the Orgia of Bacchus. Foolish and mistaken care! as if the most impious superstitions could be sanctified by the name of Christ. But such is always the fruit of prudential and condescending terms of conversion in religion, whereby the number and not the sincerity of professors is mainly intended.

When once the philosophers thought it their interest to turn Christians, matters grew every day worse and worse; for they not only retained the air, the genius, and sometimes the garb of their several sects, but most of their erroneous opinions too. And while they pretended to employ their philosophy in defense of Christianity, they so confounded them together that what before was plain to everyone, did now become intelligible only to the learned, who made it still less evident by their litigious disputes and vain subtleties.

We must not forget that the philosophers were for making no meaner a figure among the Christians than they did formerly among the heathens; but this was what they could not possibly effect, without rendering everything abstruse by terms or otherwise, and so making themselves sole masters of the interpretation.

Things being in this condition, and the rites of Baptism and the Supper being very sensibly augmented, it will not be amiss before I pass further to lay down a short parallel of the ancient Heathen and new-coined Christian Mysteries. And I shall endeavor so to do it, as to make it evident they were one in nature, however different in their subjects.

Their terms were exactly the same without any alteration: they both made use of the words initiating and perfecting. They both called their mysteries *myeseis*, *teleioseis*, *teleiotika*, *epopteiai*, etc. They both looked upon initiation as a kind of deifying. And they both styled their priests *mystagogue*, *mystes*, *hierotelestes*, etc.

The preparatives to their initiations were the same. The Gentiles used several washings and lustrations; they fasted, and abstained from women before initiation; though the wiser sort did laugh at those who thought such actions could expiate sin, or appease heaven.

But the Fathers of the Church, the admired Fathers, imitated them in all these things; and this was the origin of abstinence from certain kinds of meat, of your mock anniversary fasts, and the clerical celibacy.

The Christians kept their Mysteries as secret as the Heathens did theirs. Chrysostom says, "We shut the doors when we celebrate our Mysteries, and exclude the uninitiated. Basil of Cesarea assures us that the esteem of mysteries is preserved only by silence. And Synesius says that the Gentile Mysteries were performed by night, because their veneration proceeds from men's ignorance about them. But why should that deserve blame in others, good Synesius, which you allow in your own party? Or is it that the Christians have a better right to Mysteries than the Gentiles?"

The Fathers of the Church were extremely cautious not to speak intelligibly of their Mysteries before unbelievers or the catechumens; whence you frequently meet in their writings with these or the like expressions, The Initiated know, the Initiated understand what I say. And as the Heathens did by proclamation drive away all the profane from their mysteries, so the deacons of the primitive Church cried aloud before the celebration of Baptism, but chiefly of the Supper: "Go out all you Catechumens, walk out all that are not initiated," or something to this effect, for they often varied the form.

A mighty favor indeed! to bless the world with a parcel of unintelligible notions or expressions, when it was already overstocked with the acroatic discourses of Aristotle, with the esoteric doctrines of Pythagoras, and the mysterious jargon of the other sects of philosophers; for they all made high pretenses to some rare and wonderful secrets not communicable to every one of the learned, and never to any of the vulgar.

Cyril of Jerusalem has a very singular passage to our purpose: Now when catechizing is rehearsed if a catechumen should ask you what the teachers said; tell it by no means to any that is not initiated: for we entrust you with a Mystery, and the hope of the Life to come. Keep this Mystery then to him that rewards: and if any should say unto you, "What harm is it, if I also learn?" Answer him, that so sick persons desire wine: but if it be given to any unseasonably, it makes him frantic, and so two evils happen; both the sick man is destroyed, and the physician is disparaged. Thus if a catechumen hears of those things from any of the faithful, he grows likewise frantic; for not understanding what he heard, he argues against the thing, and laughs at what is said: so the Believer that told it him is condemned as a betrayer of secrets. Now you being one of us, see that you blab out nothing: not that what we say are not worthy to be spoken, but that others are not worthy to hear them.

When you were a catechumen yourself, we never told you what was proposed. But when you have learned by experience the sublimity of those things which are taught, you will then be convinced that the catechumens are unworthy to hear them.

The steps and degrees in both their initiations are the same. The Heathens had five degrees necessary to perfection.

First, common Purgation.

Secondly, more private Purgation.

Thirdly, a liberty of standing among the Initiated.

Fourthly, Initiation.

And, Lastly, the Right of seeing everything, or being Epopts.

Among the Christians likewise there were five steps by which their penitents after having fallen during the persecutions [the lapsi] were re-admitted to communion.

The new converts likewise, under preparation to participate in the mysteries, were styled catechumens; then competents; and, lastly, Epopts, perfect, or believers: which are the very degrees in name and quality, to which Pythagoras obliged his disciples. I could, draw out this parallel much larger, but here's enough to show how Christianity became mysterious, and how so divine an institution did, through the craft and ambition of priests and philosophers, degenerate into mere paganism.

In the second and third century mystery began to establish itself by ceremonies.

To baptism were then added the tasting of milk and honey, anointing, the sign of the cross, a white garment, etc. There was quickly after a farther Accession of Questions and Answers, of antecedent

Fastings and Watchings, Kissing, and unction. Next were added injection of salt and wine into the mouths of the baptized, and a second unction, with the imposition of hands. But in later times there was no end of lights, exorcisms, exsufflations, and many other extravagancies of Jewish, or Heathen original.

From this source sprang not only the belief of omens, presages, apparitions, with other vulgar observations among Christians; but also Images, altars, music, dedications of churches, and in them distinct places for the LAITY, (as they speak) and the CLERGY: for there is nothing like these in the writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contained in the Books of the Gentiles.

There's no degree of enthusiasm higher than placing Religion in such fooleries; nor anything so base as by their fraudulent arts to make the Gospel of no effect, unless as far as it serves a party. But I shall have a better occasion of exhausting the subject of ceremonies elsewhere, I treat of them here only as they made up the Gentile Mysteries, and were afterwards brought in to constitute those of the Christians. But as the vast multitudes of the latter quickly rendered all secret rites almost impossible, so to preserve the Mystery, things were purposely made downright unintelligible, or very perplexed. In this point our pretended Christians outdid all the Mysteries of the Heathens; for the honor of these might be destroyed by discovery, or the babbling tongue of any initiated person but the new mysteries were thus securely placed above the reach of all sense and Reason.

Sophistry was never more in vogue than in the days of Paul; and several out of these sects embracing Christianity, found the way to mix with it their old opinions, which they were loath to quit for good and all. The grossest mistakes and whimsies of the Fathers of the Church have been likely occasioned by the several systems of philosophy they read before their conversion, and which they afterwards foolishly endeavored to reconcile with Christianity, to the entire ruin almost of the latter, as we shall show. When some have advanced the metaphysical nonsense of doting philosophers into articles of faith, they raise a loud clamor against Reason, before whose evidence and light their empty shadows must disappear. For as in philosophy so in Religion every sect has its peculiar extravagancies, and the INCOMPREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES of the latter do perfectly answer the OCCULT QUALITIES of the former. They were both calculated at first for the same ends, viz. to stop the mouths of such as demand a Reason where none can be given, and to keep as many in ignorance as interest shall think convenient.

End of our summary of the position of John Toland, John Toland who concludes, not without humor, that God forbids that he should impute the like nefarious designs to all that contend for mysteries in religion.

But let us be even more Tolandian than Toland, and let us admit that St. Paul himself has probably also ended by squaring with Greek mysticism; and if it was not him, it was those who disseminated these writings, reworking them at the same time by using mixtures, substitutions of words, reorganization in a different order ... or, what amounts to the same thing, by adding in them various elements.

Christians have roughly taken over the various pagan calendars in progress at the time because they had nothing in their worship or in their way of living the year which differentiated them from paganism. In order to have, like the Jews, a sacred calendar, they took on December 25, the date of birth of the god-or-demon Mithra, as the date of birth of their Christ. The pagan festivals of the 24th of March were changed into a holy week, and on the 1st of November, the druidic feast of Samon * in All Saints' Day. The Baptism and the meal of commensality with God or the Demiurge (communion), practiced by the Essenes, Baptists, and early Christians, originally fall within the ritual or symbol, but are in no way rituals or Sacraments having a real magical effectiveness. It was simply a purifying oneself or sharing bread and wine in a group. For the first Christians, only God or the Demiurge was sacred, not his Churches.

The Church which, following Irenaeus or Tertullian, rejected Marcion, nevertheless kept his meal of commensality with God or the Demiurge renamed "Eucharist," while at the same time developing numerous scholastic quarrels as absurd as they were bloody (real or symbolic presence of Christ's body ?)

The first significant change of these symbolic customs was undoubtedly the work of Montanist bishops, in view of the violent reactions aroused by their fanaticism. They made baptism, but also Eucharist (influenced in their case by the meal of commensality with the god-or-demon in the worship of some Phrygian gods) some rituals or sacraments equal to the martyrdom which, according to Tertullian, was a kind of bloody ... and definitive....baptism.

Let us remember once again that the rabbis are not priests (and that imams have never been so).

Born of the Jewish psalmody of the sacred texts, the Christian song originally sought, through the effect of repetition, to strengthen the belief in a single god or Demiurge, and to propagate the essence of the dogma.

It was in short, just like the catechism, based on autosuggestion through repetitions.

This kind of psalmody is indeed both prayer and magic incantation. But the decision of Vatican II to use the vernacular languages ??from now on, has taken away all its mystery from this liturgy whose words have become a lamentable fashion simplistic approach. The replacement of Latin by vernacular languages ??has shown that the words conscientiously chanted throughout the day by Christians were, in fact, an appalling banality. The believer recites monotonously his faith and a simplistic faith.

According to John Toland (second edition of his Christianity not mysterious) Tertullian himself acknowledged that the multiplicity of the signs of the cross and of the other baptismal rites; the sickly fear of making bread or wine falling to the ground or of not receiving them from the hand of a priest, during such ceremonies; especially the meal of commensality with the god-or-demons renamed "Eucharist"; had no shadow of a precedent in the Holy Scriptures. And therefore that all this came only from pagan customs and traditions.

Mocked by Celsus (178) Lucian of Samosata (125-192) and the Emperor Julian known as the apostate (331-363) the devotion to the cross will even arouse controversy within Christianity. A simple sign of recognition in the third century, less known than the sign of the fish besides, it gradually took on a magical significance in the 4th and 5th centuries that it had not at the beginning. This superstition of the cross will enter Christian liturgy only in the eighth century, not without resistance besides. Many centuries later, the followers of John Wycliffe will mention it in the fifth and eighth of their twelve conclusions.

The fifth conclusion is this: that exorcisms and hallowing, made in the church, of wine, bread, and wax, water, salt, oil and incense, the stone of the altar, upon vestment, miter, cross, and pilgrim staffs be the very practice of necromancy rather than of the holy theology.

The eighth conclusion is this: that the pilgrimage, prayers, and offerings made to blind rods and deaf images of tree and stone be near kin to idolatry...."If the cross of Christ, the nails, spear, and crown of thorns are to be honored, then why not honor Judas's lips, if only they could be found?"

It is true that this sun wheel become cross proclaimed everywhere the tyrannical power of the Church. As it had Christianized Jerusalem, it supplanted the ancient worships, stood at the crossroads, marked the cities; and over the consciousness awakening to liberty made always weigh the reminder of the violence with which it could be imposed sometimes (see the life of St. Martin).

* Celtic name of November the first.

THE "UNDECLARED" PERSECUTION OF JULIAN KNOWN AS THE APOSTATE (361-363). OR THE COME BACK OF SECULARISM.

Constantine the Great, cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant, would have converted to the Christian religion on his deathbed.

So it seems! The Senate and his sons seem to have organized a discreet ceremony of apotheosis for him, including on the coins minted on the orders of his son Constantius II for the circumstance and his official biographer Eusebius of Caesarea was not in Rome at that time, so...

Just as finely politician, Constantius II, the son and successor of Constantine, ordered the killing of all his kinsfolk at his accession. All the uncles and nephews of the new emperor were slaughtered by the unleashed soldiery. Only Julian and Gallus, his eldest brother, escaped the massacre, saved by a Christian priest less sanguinary than the others.

On November 6, 355, Julian, again summoned to Milan by his cousin Constantius, was appointed Caesar.

The reasons for this appointment are unclear. Perhaps Constantius hoped secretly that Julian, if he did not find death under the blows of the ferocious Germans, would commit some political imprudence, which would enable him to eliminate him legally, without excessive religious scruples, and without incurring the bitter reproaches of his wife. In order to discredit her new colleague, Constantius had conferred on him only symbolic powers and surrounded his entourage of spies in his pay.

Totally unexpected fact, the young philosopher proved himself an excellent warrior. He crushed the Alamanni at the battle of Argentoratum (Strasbourg 357), repulsed the barbarians on the Rhine, and put an end to the plundering incursions of the Franks into Belgium. He even dared to penetrate to the heart of the forests in Germany, where no Roman army had ventured since the time of Trajan, and where none would venture after him.

In short, the Caesar "Julian" worked so well that in 359, the "imperium romanum" was restored from Pyrenees to Rhine.

In 360, Constantius wanted to requisition the soldiers of Julian for his campaign against the Persians. But the legionaries refused to comply. They had no desire to risk their neck in the Mesopotamian deserts under the command of such a poor war leader as Constantius. Gathered in Lutetia the soldiers revolted and proclaimed Julian Emperor by raising him on a shield, in the Frankish fashion.

Constantius died before the confrontation. Julian was therefore recognized as the only sovereign of the Empire, November 3, 361.

Disgusted by the crimes of Constantius and of his Christian entourage, as well as by the intrigues of the bishops; Julian soon realized that Christianity could not be that religion of love that had allegedly preached the Jesus Christ, that the Christians said to be son of God and god himself ... He undertook therefore to re-establish, by reforming and organizing it, on the model of the Eastern religions, the ancient pagan worship. Then he went back on the privileges granted by his predecessors to the Christian hierarchy. In his zeal to repair the consequences of the fanaticism of the Taliban of Christianity which had prevailed until then: the parabolani as Barsumas), he committed some awkwardness difficult to forgive. For example, he ordered to rebuild the ruined former temples, including the materials that Christians had sometimes taken from them to build churches; what, of course, led to the destruction of the latter ... and earned him for eternity the epithet of apostate.

However, if he gave preference to the pagan worship thus restored, of which he made Helios, the sun God-or-Demon, the supreme deity, he did not forbid any of them, including Christianity; and promulgated, on the contrary, from 360 or 362 (for the whole Empire) "Toleration edicts." He professed that all religions were merely diverse ways of honoring the single God-or-demon Helios (whom he equated apparently to Mithra), and he intended to actively fight only fanaticism or errors of bad faith in this field.

He reorganized not only the traditional religion, but also the administration of the Empire, which he rid of some intriguing or profiteer easterners, and restored to the Senate several of its prerogatives. He reformed the army and replaced the labarum or Constantinian chrism on the standard with the inscription Sol Invictus. Finally, he cleansed the public finances by removing also from the members of the Christian clergy, some of their privileges such as traveling at the expense of the State. The disastrous economic situation of the Empire since Diocletian began to recover, thanks to an active currency circulation.

Anxious to restore truth and honesty wherever it was possible for him, Julian even did research into the archives of the Empire concerning the sentence to the execution on the cross of a certain Jesus in Palestine.

These inquiries having apparently not given the expected results, he undertook to show the Christians that they were mistaken; and wanted then, by taking the opposite of the thesis of Justin according to which the Christians would be the Verus Israel, to prove that Christianity was nothing more than a heresy of Judaism. Wanting, a little naively to tell the truth; to make falsehood the prophecy attributed to the Nazorene Jesus, according to which not one stone would be left on another in the Temple of Jerusalem (Mark XIII, 2). what had been tragically realized after the victories of Titus in 70, and the defeat of Bar Kokhba in 135; he ordered the rebuilding of the sanctuary, thus appearing in the eyes of the Jews as a new Cyrus.

He will also write a lampoon against the Galileans (Christians), in which he will specifically attack those who venerate John and Jesus. In this work, Julian will draw inspiration from both Porphyry and Celsus, but he is, in Harnack's opinion, closer to this than to the latter. This is explained quite naturally if Celsus was one of his acquaintances. He disputes in it, moreover, less the facts recounted in the Gospels than he underlines the contradictions contained in these, and in the doctrine of those who regard them as inspired by God. In his mind, the God of Moses was, of course, also that of the Christians whom he called "Galileans." And whom he considered to be heretical Israelites, since they equated the Jehovah of the Hebrew Bible with the Creating God (of whom Jesus Christ would be the Son while being identical with Him); while the god of Plato, for him, was the immaterial part of Helios, the supreme and perfect Deity.

This evidently could only increase the hatred of the Christians kind Gregory of Nazianzus against that emperor who had abolished the privileges of their clergy, and made the worship of Sol Invictus again honored.

Julian, moreover, handled the pen, or rather the reed pen as well as that he directed his armies. He was the author of several treatises on theology, the most remarkable of which are the "Hymn to the Mother of the Gods," probably written at least in March, 362; and especially the "Hymn to King-Helios," drafted in December of the same year, then made public on the 25th of this month for the Dies Natalis Invictus; what shows that Julian equated the unconquered Sun well to Mithra, since it was on December 25 that the faithful of the latter celebrated the nativity of their god-or-demon. The Hellenists of the time did not hesitate to judge the last writing, worthy of the works of Empedocles and Parmenides. Julian expounded in it, particularly, his design, inspired by what was most praiseworthy in the Gnostic doctrines of his time, of the threefold nature of Helios: his material nature, the sun which is seen shining in heaven during the day; his spiritual nature, that which fills the soul of the righteous persons with an ineffable inner light; and finally his divine nature, which links him Plato's Theos.

In fact, there was not ONE edict of toleration but many legislations going in this direction. That is to say, abrogations of measure making Christianity a privileged religion compared to others.

Andrew Piganiol thinks that Julian published (probably in 362 in Constantinople) an edict which ordered the restitution to the pagan temples of the goods and revenues that the Christians had monopolized during the reigns of Constantine and his successors. Another edict allowed the return to their diocese of the Christian dignitaries who had been exiled by Constantius. The existence of this edict is confirmed by Theophylact of Ohrid (or "the Bulgarian"), an obscure Byzantine historian of the tenth century, who also states that it was posted in Alexandria on 9 February 362.

An echo of these measures is to be found in a less confidential historian, in this case in Ammianus Marcellinus (Histories, book XXII, 5): "By plain and formal decrees he ordered the temples to be

opened, victims brought to the altars, and the worship of the gods restored. And in order to add to the effectiveness of these ordinances, he summoned to the palace the bishops of the Christians, who were of conflicting opinions, and the people, who were also at variance, and politely advised them to lay aside their differences, and each fearlessly and without opposition to observe his own beliefs. On this he took a firm stand, to the end that, as this freedom increased their dissension, he might afterwards have no fear of a united populace, knowing as he did from experience that no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another“.

As during the reign of his predecessor Constantius, the Athanasius' case was the big Christian problem of the reign of Julian.

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, had succeeded in escaping after the victory of the Arians under Constantius.

Julian's edict of toleration allowed him to return.

George of Cappadocia (St. George), the Arian bishop who replaced him on the patriarchal throne, was massacred by the crowd and the shreds of his body thrown into the Nile.

Just returned to power, Athanasius, who considered himself the true leader of Christendom, convoked, with the approbation of Pope Liberius, a synod which allowed the unconditional return to the communion of the Church of the prelates who had subscribed to the canons of the councils in Rimini and Constantinople, and who vilified the Arians.

This was the beginning of the end of Arianism in the Roman Empire.

But the Emperor Julian, who, thanks to the Imperial archives, had become acquainted with Athanasius' troubled past and with his condemnation by four councils, was indignant at seeing a criminal like him usurp an episcopal see as eminent as that of Alexandria. He ordered therefore the dismissal and banishment of Athanasius from Egypt. Taking advantage of a moment of hesitation of the Roman governor, the prudent patriarch returned to his hermitage in the desert. "The Carpenter (= Jesus) is preparing a coffin (for Julian)," announced the Patriarch of Alexandria to the fanatic crowds who came to visit him in his church in the desert.

These tolerant measures are also confirmed by the testimonies of various contemporary authors, including in a negative way by the paranoid or psychopathic delirium of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus.

“He (Julian) became aware of something that to carry on the war openly, and to preside in person over the impious attempt, besides being both rash and stupid, was in all respects most damaging to his object...what was yet more inhuman, he made over the exercise of his tyranny to mobs ...and this he did, not by means of a public order, but by not repressing their outbreaks, making their will and pleasure an unwritten law....But the milder and more kingly part, the way of persuasion, he forsooth takes for himself” (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, first invective against Julian).

In short, Julian was a persecutor because he did not persecute but preferred to negotiate. He thus deprived the Christians of his time, of the crown of martyrdom, and for St. Gregory, it is unpardonable.

Heaven, who had hitherto appeared to favor in all his undertakings this emperor, at the height of his glory, suddenly turned away from him.

Julian had rebuilt a temple dedicated to Apollo at Daphne, a suburb of Antioch, on the threshold of which the Christian bishop Babylas had been buried. The oracles of the sun-god-or-demon becoming rare, the incumbent of the temple, had attributed the thing to this sepulcher, and Julian had therefore ordered his uncle Julianus to make the remains of Babylas unearthed and then transported elsewhere. They were therefore transferred to the cemetery of Antioch, escorted by Christians of the place cursing the worshipers of statues noisily. However Julianus died shortly afterwards, under unexplained circumstances, and on October 22, 362, a violent fire destroyed the temple of Apollo in question.

These catastrophes provoked an extraordinary agitation among the Christians. They did not fail to interpret them as encouragement from their god, and they were more and more frantically opposed to those of the Emperor's decisions, which they thought they could not accept, or even more began to conspire against him more and more actively. They will even get ready to assassinate the emperor without hiding. In a dialogue between Libanius and a Christian, Theodoret; a parabolanus whose fanaticism will be measured by the very fact that he is none other than this bishop of Cyrus who will

later boast of having burned texts considered heretical by him; asked Libanius to this other Taliban of Christianity: "What the carpenters' son is now doing ? "The god who made the world, whom you ironically call the son of the carpenter," replied his interlocutor, "is making a coffin for your master."

There were, moreover, other provocations from the Parabolani or Taliban of Christianity.

The sabotage of the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The destruction of the temple of Fortune at Caesarea in ??Cappadocia.

The destruction at Pessinum, before his own eyes, of the altar of Cybele, mother of the gods, a deity to the glory of whom he had composed a magnificent treatise, one of the most beautiful that antiquity has handed down to us.

However, Julien did not avenge these insults (even those crimes) except by a brilliant lampoon, the *Misopogon* (= "beard hater"). This biting satire, as much directed against his own person as against the frivolous inhabitants of Antioch, is a real masterpiece! A psychological document of the first order. As important (and certainly much more enjoyable to read) than the famous "Confessions" of the sinister St. Augustine.

"The song that I now sing has been composed in prose, and it contains much violent abuse, directed not, by Zeus, against others - how could it be, since the law forbids? - but against the poet and author himself. For there is no law to prevent one's writing either praise or criticism of oneself. Now as for praising myself, though I should be very glad to do so, I have no reason for that; but for criticising myself I have countless reasons, and first I will begin with my face. For though nature did not make this any too handsome or well favored or give it the bloom of youth, I myself out of sheer perversity and ill temper have added to it this long beard of mine.....

.....But now I come to ponder the matter I find that I have committed yet other terrible sins. For though I was coming to a free city which cannot tolerate unkempt hair, I entered it unshaven and with a long beard, like men who are at a loss for a barber. One would have thought it was some Smicrines he saw, or some Thrasyleon, some ill-tempered old man or crazy soldier, when by beautifying myself I might have appeared as a blooming boy and transformed myself into a youth, if not in years, at any rate in manners.....

.....Are you not aware that we here are far from being Celts or Thracians or Illyrians? Do you not see what a number of shops there are in this city? But you are hated by the shopkeepers because you do not allow them ...

.....Therefore do not be surprised if I now feel towards you as I do, for I am more uncivilized than he, and fiercer and more headstrong in proportion as the Celts are more so than the Romans. He was born in Rome and was nurtured among the Roman citizens till he was on the threshold of old age. But as for me, I had to do with Celts and Germans and the Hercynian Forest from the moment that I was reckoned a grown man, and I have by now spent a long time there, like some huntsman who associates with and is entangled among wild beasts. There I met with temperaments that know not how to pay court or flatter, but only how to behave simply and frankly to all men alike.....

.....With respect to the slanders which both in private and publicly you have poured down on my head, when you ridiculed me in anapaestic verse, since I too have accused myself I permit you to employ that method with even greater frankness; for I shall never on that account do you any harm, by slaying or beating or fettering or imprisoning you or punishing you in any way. Why indeed should I? For now that in showing you myself, in company with my friends, behaving with sobriety - a most sorry and displeasing sight to you - I have failed to show you any beautiful spectacle, I have decided to leave this city and to retire from it; not indeed because I am convinced that I shall be in all respects pleasing to those to whom I am going, but because I judge it more desirable, in case I should fail at least to seem to them an honorable and good man, to give all men in turn a share of my unpleasantness, and not to annoy this happy city with the evil odor, as it were, of my moderation and the sobriety of my friends. etc.etc.(Julian, *Misopogon*.)

THE DEATH OF THE LAST PHILOSOPHER EMPEROR.

In 363 Julian left this Christian city, which had so badly received him, and went on a campaign against the Parthians, who had long been a serious danger for Rome. It was skillfully designed and mastered.

A first corps of 30,000 men, under the command of General Procopius, had crossed the Tigris; had made his junction with the king of Armenia, allied to the Romans, and had spread in Western Media to rejoin the army of Julian at Ctesiphon (south of Irak). With 45,000 men, the latter marched on Babylon, in the neighborhood of which he expected, by encircling him, to crush the Parthian army of King Shapur or (Latin) Sapor II.

But the division had settled in the army commanded by Julian. In addition, a series of ominous events occurred again. One of the councilors of the emperor, Maximus of Ephesus, who was also a soothsayer (we would say today clairvoyant), urged him to ignore it, provided only that he avoids "entering the Phrygian fields" . Julian took this prediction literally: Phrygia being far behind him; he had nothing to fear.

Alas! The last engagement he led, victoriously, on June 26, 363, took place near a place called precisely, but he knew it too late, Phrygian Fields!

It was during this battle, when it evolved to the advantage of the Roman legions, that the Emperor was attacked by a javelin which went deep into his right flank, piercing the liver. Had this shaft been unleashed by a Christian legionary? This is not proved, but it is more than likely. Julian tried to extract it from his wound, himself. But, losing his blood in abundance, he understood that it was the end. He died a few hours later, to the great amazement of his soldiers.

According to Edward Gibbon in his work on the fall of the Roman Empire. "He reproved their grief; and conjured them not to disgrace, by unmanly tears, the fate of a prince, who in a few moments would be united with heaven, and with the stars..... Such was the end of that extraordinary man, in the thirty-second year of his age."

The Christians exulted. "God and his Christ have vanquished," will exclaim Theodoret. One of the first decisions of Jovian, the successor of Julian, will be to call back from exile the patriarch Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus will outline of him the hateful portrait that we have mentioned above.

Christian historians believe that Julian, if he had reigned longer, would end up in really persecuting Christians. But that was not the case. There was only a placing on an equal footing of the ancient pagan cults as well as Christian sects or heresies such as Arianism.

Some authors like Gregory of Nazianzus see in this measure a weapon to weaken Christianity. It is possible, but we can also simply think that the emperor wished only to strengthen the ideological unity of the Empire before his great war against the Persians.

THE LAST SECULAR PAROXYSMS (UNTIL THE 4TH CENTURY UNTIL 390).

The pagan intellectuals, of course, denounced very early the various deceptions of Christianity. Such a polemic has existed from the beginning or almost; and the writings of the "fathers of the Church" themselves indicate sufficiently that they have constantly found themselves in the necessity of defending what the "pagan" intelligentsia regarded as an absurd and forged fable; without the slightest beginning of historical evidence.

This pagan criticism of Christianity was twofold. It succeeded both the pagan criticism of Judaism but also in a way the Jewish criticism of Christianity.

The Greek and Roman intellectuals of the first three centuries of our era consider the Christians, quite rightly besides, as a sect aiming at conquering the whole mankind, although claiming to despise the things of this world.

One of the first examples of them is Lucian (125 - 192) satirical writer born in Samosata in Syria (modern Turkey). He traveled throughout the Roman Empire before settling in Egypt where he died. His numerous writings deal with all genres, including that of religion. For him all is allegory. This is a very good example in his essay about Hercules, which is typical in this respect. He ascribes to a druid of Marseilles his own ideas about Hercules and democracy: preferring words and speech to the using brute force.

His "passing of Peregrinus" written shortly after 165 is among the most famous works, because of his allusions to Christians. It is indeed one of the very first satires of Christianity and it shows the independence of mind with regard to the religions (all the religions) impossible today in countries like France or the Netherlands.

Lucian shows in his book, not without humor, how Christians are people not interested in philosophers, but very gifted to make them appear like rabbits emerging from the hat of a magician. The hero of his novel is indeed a crook of the worst kind, just as some neo-druids of today with initiatory names ending in -os; who take advantage of the naivety of the audience, in order to extract money from it, for the greater glory of God, of course; and become one of their charismatic leaders, by claiming to be a martyr.

Peregrinus really existed as we have seen. His history begins in the Roman colony of Parium, on the Hellespont, where he was born, in 95, in a well-to-do family. After a conflict with his father, he would have converted to Christianity and become a "prophet," or even as St. Paul one of the leaders of the community; he explains the Jewish-Christian writings and writes himself several books on the subject. But if Peregrinus really existed as a Christian leader, he was nevertheless probably caricatured by Lucian. We must acknowledge it, Lucian having always shown a total intellectual freedom as regards this current of thought, as all the others besides. This is far from being the case with our pseudo-intellectuals today. If Lucian has fun in telling this story of which he laughs, that shows well the state of mind that still prevailed during the second century. Lucian's pamphlet is a direct testimony to the religious feeling and the beliefs of his time. Reflecting an experience that favors the individual, Lucian's opusculum makes us discover complex personalities that complement each other. Lucian laughs at the experience of Peregrinus, an idealistic and vain, itinerant preacher in search of fame, who goes so far as self-burning, in order to show men how to despise death. If it is necessary to take his testimony with some distance, it enlightens the way in which the crowds could be seduced.

Another of the great intellectuals of that time was Celsus.

Celsus held the Neo-Platonic philosopher Jamblichus in high repute. So it was probably under his inspiration that the famous "True Word against Christians" was written, which, after a brief preamble, begins by a tackling against Jesus by a Jew. Celsus' "True Word" is directed against all Christians indiscriminately, "Orthodox" or "Heretics." On several occasions, moreover, he emphasizes the multiplicity of their sects, and also attacks the affirmations of the Gnostics. What he reproaches Christians, whatever they are, is the totally irrational nature of their beliefs. Indeed, Celsus accuses several times Jesus of practicing goetia, in other words, of being a sorcerer or a magician.

Philostratus, born about 175 in Lemnos, wrote the history of the life of Apollonius of Tyana. Apollonius of Tyana was born in Cappadocia (now in Central Turkey), in the year 4 before our era, precisely the year that is supposed to be that of the birth of Jesus. He was tall, handsome, and remarkably

intelligent. When he was fourteen years old, his masters could not continue to instruct him, for he already knew more than themselves. When he was sixteen years old, he entered the Temple of Aesculapius and took the Pythagorean vows. Living an ascetic existence, he soon developed, to a surprising degree, his gifts as a seer and a therapist.

At the same time, he endeavored vigorously to defend social justice by attacking those who exploited the poor. Philostratus reports an incident about a speculation on grains which have become too expensive for the disadvantaged persons. Dismayed, the young Apollonius thus shouted to the corn merchants: "The earth in her justice is the mother of all," he exclaimed, "but you in your injustice have made her mother to yourselves alone. If you do not stop, I will not even let you stand on the earth's face." His threat produced the expected effect and for a time stopped unscrupulous speculators. Too bad he did not live in the 21st century!

Another of the most celebrated representatives of this pagan reaction was Porphyry of Tyre (232-305), a Hellenized Phoenician, expert in comparative religions, whose original name was Malkos, which means Prince, in Phoenician language. He began by studying philosophy in the schools of Athens for about six years with a rhetorician called Longinus. Some authors think that Longinus would have advised him to change his name from Malkus to Porphyrius, the purple being the color of the princes, a specialty of his native city. Porphyry quickly became an expert in allegorical interpretation, which later enabled him to see how much the Christians were abusing it (contradictions changed into mysteries, erroneous presentations of facts changed into paradoxes and so on).

The exact meaning of the texts of the Bible has always been a problem for Christians. How could Jesus, for example, have been taken to the summit of a mountain from which all the kingdoms of the world could be seen (Matthew 4: 8; Luke 4: 5), SINCE SUCH A MOUNTAIN DOES NOT EXIST ! Defense of the Christians of the time and today: the Bible is not always to be taken literally. It is an immense series of allegories inspired by God, full of paradoxes or mysteries.

Like many other philosophers of that time, Porphyry then sympathized with various movements of thought, before definitively engaging in the Neoplatonism. Some authors think that Porphyry was also tempted by Christianity. The thought of Porphyry resembles it very much on certain points (the soul in search of God never finds rest, etc.). This annoyed particularly St. Augustine, who admired him, and was obliged to admit that he was not always completely wrong.

The resemblance between certain Christian ideas and those of Porphyry is due, above all, to the fact that Porphyry knew Christianity very well, and placed himself on its own ground to fight it. Porphyry knew the Bible well (he was one of the first to point out that it was impossible for Jonah to be swallowed by a fish or a whale), especially the prophets; and the gospels (which he found lacking any philosophical or even literary value, given the poor quality of their Greek language). He also presumably attended preaching or public readings by Origen in Caesarea (of which he left disappointed). Saint Jerome wrote his great commentary on the Book of Daniel only to counter his devastating analysis of biblical prophecies (prophecies always written afterwards, of course, and not before, which would be too good). Porphyry also was very well acquainted with Palestine, Syria, and Alexandria, whom he had visited as a young man, what enabled him to see that certain evangelical accounts were inaccurate; such as those relating the history of the Gadarene demoniacs (Matthew 8: 28-34, Mark 5: 1-20, Luke 8: 26-39).

In Rome Porphyry wrote in Greek language a book in 15 parts, later known as the *Logoi Kata Christianon* (Words against Christians). Very read until 311, when Galerius promulgated his edict of Toleration, this work became the target of all the attacks of the new sect. Becoming State religion the victorious sect got the public burning of all the existing copies and these 15 essays against Christians were therefore sentenced to be burned.

The title *Logoi Kata Christianon* is not the original title given by Porphyry to his book, and is only attested in the beginning of the Early Middle Ages. What we know about it comes from references, quotations or paraphrases, of course, critical, spread here and there in the writings of an entire army of Christian authors from the third to the fourth century, such as Eusebius or Apollinaris.

Most of these quotations were transmitted to us by Macarius Magnes, who grouped them in his own way and according to the plan which seemed to him the most able to serve his purpose, of course. With transitions of his own, in a book titled in Greek *Apocriticos*, and which stages, in the form of a

dialogue, an imaginary pagan opponent. This book describes a five-day public verbal sparring between an anonymous pagan philosopher and a Christian. The pagan adversary aligns several sets of objections against some passages of the New Testament, against Christ, the Apostles, St. Paul, or against Christian doctrines. The Christian then replies to each of these series of objections. This text was found in 1867 in an incomplete manuscript published in 1876. The literary and historical problems it raises are numerous: who was Macarius? Where and when did he live? Is the verbal sparring he staged real or fictitious? Has he invented the objections he attributes to the pagan adversary, or has he borrowed them from an already existing tract? And in this case, who is the author of it?

The sparring is probably fictitious, but Macarius perhaps did not invent the objections he ascribes to his opponent.

Often, in his reply, he shows that he has not understood its full, historical or philosophical, scope, of them. It is generally believed that Macarius borrowed these objections from the lost treatise in fifteen books written against the Christians by Porphyry of Tyre. We would have there, consequently, the vestiges of the polemic directed against the Christianity by his greatest adversary.

If it seems at times imaginary as we said (unlike the Celsus seen by Origen), it is because Macarius rewrites the quotations he makes of it.

Whatever it be, all refer to Porphyry as being the source: the themes, the approach, the conclusions and even the style. Whether it be Porphyry himself, a disciple of Porphyry, Hierocles, or someone else. These quotations of Porphyry made by Macarius in an order which was by no means that of the original book, and with transitions due to his pen; criticize the key figures and the beliefs and doctrines of Christianity at the time, for Porphyry knew about what he was talking (Marcella his wife was a Christian).

Porphyry, writing between 270 and 280 his great work in two books against the Christians, had kept himself aloof from politics. It was not the same thing with Hierocles. His book entitled *Friend of Truth* (in Greek *Philalethes logoi*, a work in which he draws the parallel between Jesus and Apollonius of Tyana), known by Lactantius's summary and Eusebius's answer; pointed out the many contradictions of the New Testament and pointed out that, as far as miracles or ethics were concerned, the Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana was clearly above Jesus.

The thesis of Hierocles against Christians, as far as we can judge from his refutation, seems to have been the following. You proclaim Jesus a god on account of some prodigies reported by the evangelists; but there are writers more educated than yours and more concerned with truth, who do not make him a god, and consider him only as a man "beloved by the gods." This is practically all that Eusebius tells us about the work of Hierocles, published under the heading "Philalethes."

Hierocles accused the Christians of plagiarizing the life and work of Apollonius of Tyana. It is true that no one knows precisely what Hierocles wrote, for Eusebius took great pains to burn all the copies of the work of his formidable adversary. Eusebius admits that Apollonius of Tyana was a great philosopher; but mocks his miracles, which he considers false and impossible, emphasizes the blanks of his biography, and concludes that if the miracles of Apollonius really took place, then it is they were performed with the help of the Devil. Lactantius and Saint Jerome also attributed his miracles to magic.

Emperor Julian, who was called an apostate by the Church, succeeded the "good Christian" Constantius II (a fanatic murderer, a true Christian Taliban, a parabolanus like Barsumas), but three times, alas, for the Orthodox Catholic Church, convinced Arian) will authorize again the newly forbidden pagan cults.

To stop the massive expansion of Christianity, pagan writers will resort to the Platonic exegesis of the ancient myths, thus conferring on them a powerful symbolism. Celsus in the second century, Porphyry in the third century, Emperor Julian, the Syrian pagan party, and the Platonists Macrobius and Servius at the end of the fourth century; will oppose to the Christian totalitarianism a pluralistic religious vision, with Platonic hermeneutics, striving to recover and ennoble all the beliefs of the past. The elites will still feed on these beliefs until the fall of the Empire, after what they will continue their subterranean existence in Byzantium.

Until the 4th century, four or currents of thought will confront each other. Philosophical and thoughtful paganism, Manichaeism, Gnostic Christianity, Arianism and the future official Orthodox Catholicism.

At this point of our paper, in order to aerate or flush out our minds, let us remind of a few words what the situation of paganism was at the time.

There existed in Rome, at the Curia, an altar dedicated to the Victory. On entering, each senator burned there a little incense. With the triumph of Christianity, this altar and its statue, symbols of religious tradition, were removed from the chamber of the Senate sessions. In 384 Symmachus, then prefect of Rome, sent an official report (relatio) to the Emperor Valentinian II, demanding the relocation of the altar. This was for the ancient world the occasion for a final plea in favor of secularism and religious tolerance.

Here is the text.

"Everyone has his own customs, everyone his own rites. The divine Mind has distributed different guardians and different cults to different cities. As souls are separately given to infants as they are born, so to peoples the genius of their destiny 1). Here comes in the proof from advantage, which most of all vouches to man for the gods. For, since our reason is wholly clouded, whence does the knowledge of the gods more rightly come to us, than from the memory and evidence of prosperity? Now if a long period gives authority to religious customs, we ought to keep faith with so many centuries, and to follow our ancestors, as they happily followed theirs.....We ask, then, for peace for the gods of our fathers and of our country. It is just that all worship should be considered as one. We look on the same stars, the sky is common, the same world surrounds us. What difference does it make by what pains each seeks the truth? We cannot attain to so great a secret by one road"(Symmachus' relation sent to the emperors Valentinian Theodosius and Arcadius in 384).

Symmachus gives us here the design of the cultivated pagans of his time. It contrasts sharply with the obscurantist, even sanguinary, image that certain Christians give of it; but it is to be remembered that the Romans would undoubtedly have included Christianity in their religious heritage, and the god-or-demon of the Christians in their pantheon; if the Christians had not categorically refused this prospect.

1) The city of Lyons also had its genius. Just as there is a Slav soul /mind, there was also, for example, the dea Bibracta. And triads of "Mothers" (fairies of the type Matrae, Matronae).

The reply of Bishop Ambrose now.

"Since the illustrious Symmachus, Prefect of the city, has sent petition to your Grace that the altar, which was taken away from the Senate House of the city of Rome, should be restored to its place; I presented a request the moment I heard of it, I am replying in this document to the assertions of the Memorial.

In the first proposition of the illustrious Symmachus Rome complains with sad and tearful words, asking, as he says, for the restoration of the rites of her ancient ceremonies. These sacred rites, he says, repulsed Hannibal from the walls, and the Senones from the Capitol. And so at the same time that the power of the sacred rites is proclaimed, their weakness is betrayed. So that Hannibal long insulted the Roman rites, and while the gods were fighting against him, arrived a conqueror at the very walls of the city..... And why should I say anything of the Senones, whose entrance into the inmost Capitol the remnant of the Romans could not have prevented, had not a goose by its frightened cackling betrayed them? See what sort of protectors the Roman temples have. Where was Jupiter at that time? Was he speaking in the goose? ...

By one road, says he [the illustrious Symmachus] , one cannot attain to so great a secret. What you do not know that we know by the voice of God. And' what you seek by fancies, we have found out from the very Wisdom and Truth of God. Your ways, therefore, do not agree with ours."

Letter from Maximus of Madaura sent to St. Augustine in 390.

"Desiring to be frequently made glad by communications from you, and by the stimulus of your reasoning with which in a most pleasant way, and without violation of good feeling, you recently attacked me, I have not forborne from replying to you in the same spirit, lest you should call my silence an acknowledgment of being in the wrong. But I beg you to give these sentences an indulgent kindly hearing if you judge them to give evidence of the feebleness of old age.

Grecian mythology tells us, but without sufficient warrant for our believing the statement, that Mount Olympus is the dwelling-place of the gods. But we actually see the market place of our town occupied by a crowd of beneficent deities and we approve of this. Who could ever be so frantic and infatuated as to deny that there is one supreme God, without beginning, without natural offspring, who is, as it were, the great and mighty father of all? The powers of this Deity, diffused throughout the universe which He has made, we worship under many names, as we are all ignorant of His true name, the name God being common to all kinds of religious belief. Thus it comes that while in diverse supplications we approach separately, as it were, certain parts of the Divine Being, we are seen in reality to be his worshipers in whom all these parts are one....

Such is the greatness of your delusion in another matter, that I cannot conceal the impatience with which I regard it. For who can bear to find Mygdo honored above that Jupiter who hurls the thunderbolt; or Sanæ above Juno, Minerva, Venus, and Vesta; or the arch-martyr Namphanio 1) (oh horror!) above all the immortal gods together? Among the immortals, Lucitas 2) is also looked up to with no less religious reverence, and others in an endless list (having names abhorred both by gods and by men), who, when they met the ignominious end which their character and conduct had deserved, put the crowning act upon their criminal career by affecting to die nobly in a good cause, though conscious of the infamous deeds for which they were condemned. The tombs of these men (it is a folly almost beneath our notice) are visited by crowds of simpletons, who forsake our temples and despise the memory of their ancestors, so that the prediction of the indignant bard is notably fulfilled: Rome shall, in the temples of the gods, swear by the shades of men 3).

But, O man of great wisdom, I beseech you, lay aside and reject for a little while the vigor of your eloquence, which has made you everywhere renowned; lay down also the arguments of Chrysippus, which you are accustomed to use in debate; leave for a brief season your logic, which aims in the forth-putting of its energies to leave nothing certain to anyone; and show me plainly and actually who is that God whom you Christians claim as belonging specially to you, and pretend to see present among you in secret places. For it is in open day, before the eyes and ears of all men, that we worship our gods with pious supplications, and propitiate them by acceptable sacrifices and we take pains that these things be seen and approved by all.

Being, however, infirm and old, I withdraw myself from further prosecution of this contest, and willingly consent to the opinion of the rhetorician of Mantua. Each one is drawn by that which pleases himself best 4).

After this, O excellent man, who hast turned aside from my faith, I have no doubt that this letter will be stolen by some thief, and destroyed by fire or otherwise. Should this happen, the paper will be lost, but not my letter, of which I will always retain a copy, accessible to all religious persons.

May you be preserved by the gods, through whom we all, who are mortals on the surface of this earth, with apparent discord but real harmony, revere and worship Him who is the common father of the gods and of all mortals."

1) One of the martyrs of Madaura according to St. Augustine. The whole passage is a critique of the madness of martyrdom among the early Christians.

2) Another martyr of Madaura.

3) Lucan.

4) Virgil, Eclogue III.

The answer from Augustine to Maximus of Madaura.

"Are we engaged in serious debate with each other, or is it your desire that we merely amuse ourselves? For, from the language of your letter, I am at a loss to know whether it is due to the weakness of your cause, or through the courteousness of your manners, that you have preferred to show yourself wittier than weighty in argument. For, in the first place, a comparison was drawn by you between Mount Olympus and your market place, the reason why I cannot divine, unless it was in order to remind me that on the said mountain Jupiter pitched his camp when he was at war with his father, as we are taught by history, which your religionists call sacred; and that in the said market-place Mars is represented in two images, the one unarmed, the other armed, and that a statue of a man placed over against these restrains with three extended fingers the fury of their demonship from the injuries which he would willingly inflict on the citizens. Could I then ever believe that by mentioning that market place you intended to revive my recollection of such divinities, unless you wished that we should pursue the discussion in a jocular spirit rather than in earnest? But in regard to the sentence in which

you said that such gods as these are members, so to speak, of the one great God, I admonish you by all means, since you vouchsafe such an opinion, to abstain very carefully from profane jesting of this kind. For if you speak of the One God, concerning whom learned and unlearned are, as the ancients have said, agreed, do you affirm that those whose savage fury— or, if you prefer it, whose power—the image of a dead man keeps in check are members of Him? I might say more on this point, and your own judgment may show you how wide a door for the refutation of your views is here thrown open. But I restrain myself, lest I should be thought by you to act more as a rhetorician than as one earnestly defending truth.....

But if you have a penchant for ridicule, you have among yourselves ample material for witticisms—the god Stercutius, the goddess Cloacina, the Bald Venus, the gods Fear and Pallor, and the goddess Fever, and others of the same kind without number, to whom the ancient Roman idolaters erected temples, and judged it right to offer worship; which if you neglect, you are neglecting Roman gods, thereby making it manifest that you are not thoroughly versed in the sacred rites of Rome; and yet you despise and pour contempt on Punic names, as if you were a devotee at the altars of Roman deities. In truth however, I believe that perhaps you do not value these sacred rites any more than we do, but only take from them some unaccountable pleasure in your time of passing through this world: for you have no hesitation about taking refuge under Virgil's wing, and defending yourself with a line of his: Each one is drawn by that which pleases himself best.

If, then, the authority of Virgil pleases you, as you indicate that it does, you will be pleased with such lines as these:

First Saturn came from lofty Olympus,
fleeing before the arms of Jupiter,
an exile bereft of his realms 1)

and other such statements, by which he aims at making it understood that Saturn and your other god-or-demons like him were men. For he had read much history, confirmed by ancient authority, which Cicero had also read, who makes the same statement in his dialogues, in terms more explicit than we would venture to insist upon, and labors to bring it to the knowledge of men so far as the times in which he lived permitted.

As to your statement, that your religious services are to be preferred to ours because you worship the gods in public, but we use more retired places of meeting, let me first ask you how you could have forgotten your Bacchus 2), whom you consider it right to exhibit only to the eyes of the few who are initiated. You, however, think that, in making mention of the public celebration of your sacred rites, you intended only to make sure that we would place before our eyes the spectacle presented by your magistrates and the chief men of the city when intoxicated and raging along your streets; in which solemnity, if you are possessed by a god, you surely see of what nature he must be who deprives men of their reason. If, however, this madness is only feigned, what say you to this keeping of things hidden in a service which you boast of as public, or what good purpose is served by so base an imposition? Moreover, why do you not foretell future events in your songs, if you are endowed with the prophetic gift? Or why do you rob the bystanders 3) if you are in your sound mind?

Since, then, you have recalled to our remembrance by your letter these and other things which I think it better to pass over meanwhile, why may not we make sport of your gods, which, as every one who knows your mind, and has read your letters, is well aware, are made sport of abundantly by yourself? Therefore, if you wish us to discuss these subjects in a way becoming your years and wisdom, and, in fact, as may be justly required of us, in connection with our purpose, by our dearest friends, seek some topic worthy of being debated between us; and be careful to say on behalf of your gods such things as may prevent us from supposing that you are intentionally betraying your own cause, when we find you rather bringing to our remembrance things which may be said against them than alleging anything in their defense. In conclusion, however, lest this should be unknown to you, and you might thus be brought unwittingly into jestings which are profane, let me assure you that by the Christian Catholics (by whom a church has been set up in your own town also) no deceased person 4) is worshipped, and that nothing, in short, which has been made and fashioned by God is worshipped as a divine power. This worship is rendered by them only to God Himself 5), who framed and fashioned all things. These things shall be more fully treated of, with the help of the one true God, whenever I learn that you are disposed to discuss them seriously.”

COMMENTARY BY DELACRAU.

Pagan theology thus remained faithful to the tradition of a divinity twice transcendent expressing its unity in a variety of manifestations or god-or-demons, whose mortals were separated by the body. There is a lack of cultural relativism or religious comparatism in St. Augustine's argument (Saint Augustine knows of Mankind only in the Roman world, and yet!), quite comparable to the currently dominant in our country political discourse, what is not to say much; for politicians or intellectuals of the ruling camp never have been so sickening, never have shown so little intellectual honesty! Using and abusing euphemisms or sophisms repeated endlessly by idiots or obsequious courtiers, with a supple backbone (there exists in popular language a clearer term to designate this kind of individual, which has always existed in society, from school to business), suffering from psittacism. In short, a flood of lies not even by omission, intended to cover the selfishness of the powerful (confusion between rich persons and wealth creators, income taxes and indirect taxes, etc.) see the reactions or remarks on the web of certain parrots knowing use a computer keyboard, which are confusing of stupidity: no personal reflection, a lot of received ideas (coming from other actors in society), very little lucidity, backwardness or long-term perspective. It is enough to make you disgusted with democracy and under these circumstances a good king is better!

COMMENTARY OF THE VERY UNJUSTLY FORGOTTEN FROM THE FRENCH OF TODAY GREAT PHILOSOPHER: VOLTAIRE.

" We know not what was signified by these two statues, of which no vestige is left us; but not all the statues with which Rome was filled — not the Pantheon and all the temples consecrated to the inferior gods, nor even those of the twelve greater gods prevented "Deus Optimus Maximus" — "God, most good, most great"— from being acknowledged throughout the empire. The misfortune of the Romans, then, was their ignorance of the Mosaic law, and afterwards, of the law of the disciples of our Savior Jesus Christ — their want of the faith — their mixing with the worship of a supreme God the worship of Mars, of Venus, of Minerva, of Apollo, who did not exist, and their preserving that religion until the time of the Theodosii. Happily, the Goths, the Huns, the Vandals, the Heruli, the Lombards, the Franks, who destroyed that empire, submitted to the truth, and enjoyed a blessing denied to Scipio, to Cato, to Metellus, to Emilius, to Cicero, to Varro, to Virgil, and to Horace. None of these great men knew Jesus Christ, whom they could not know; yet they did not worship the devil, as so many pedants are every day repeating. How should they worship the devil, of whom they had never heard?"

1) Virgil, Aeneid VIII. St. Augustine, like Tertullian, therefore adopts there the same point of view as the Greek philosopher Euhemerus. The god-or-demons are only men who have been gradually deified by later generations. The same can be said, of course, of the man Jesus. Saint Augustine seems to forget it. For information below what Tertullian had already written on the subject, and that Augustine obviously only resumes. Some Christian writers adopted indeed an astonishing attitude: they denigrated pitilessly the pagan allegory while applying this same process (allegory) to their Scriptures. Tertullian thus also denigrates the allegorical interpretation that Varro had given of Saturn.

" Shall I now, therefore, go over them one by one, so numerous and so various, new and old, barbarian, Grecian, Roman, foreign, captive and adopted, private and common, male and female, rural and urban, naval and military? It were useless even to hunt out all their names: so I may content myself with a compend; and this not for your information, but that you may have what you know brought to your recollection, for undoubtedly you act as if you had forgotten all about them. No one of your god-or-demons is earlier than Saturn: from him you trace all your deities, even those of higher rank and better known. What, then, can be proved of the first, will apply to those that follow. So far, then, as books give us information, neither the Greek Diodorus or Thallus, neither Cassius Severus or Cornelius Nepos, nor any writer upon sacred antiquities, have ventured to say that Saturn was any but a man. He first gave you the art of writing, and a stamped coinage, and thence it is he presides over the public treasury. But if Saturn were a man, he had undoubtedly a human origin; and having a human origin, he was not the offspring of heaven and earth. As his parents were unknown, it was not unnatural that he should be spoken of as the son of those elements from which we might all seem to spring. For who does not speak of heaven and earth as father and mother, in a sort of way of veneration and honor? Or from the custom which prevails among us of saying that persons of whom we have no knowledge, or who make a sudden appearance, have fallen from the skies? In this way it

came about that Saturn, everywhere a sudden and unlooked-for guest, got everywhere the name of the Heaven-born. For even the common folk call persons whose stock is unknown, sons of earth. I say nothing of how men in these rude times were wont to act, when they were impressed by the look of any stranger happening to appear among them, as though it were divine, since even at this day men of culture make god-or-demons of those whom, a day or two before, they acknowledged to be dead men by their public mourning for them. Let these notices of Saturn, brief as they are, suffice. It will thus be also proved that Jupiter is as certainly a man, as from a man he sprang; and that one after another the whole swarm is mortal like the primal stock."

Editor's note. All this can also very well apply to the Jesus of the Christians, of course!

2. An allusion to the mysteries of Bacchus. Bacchus is the name under which the Romans adopted the Greek god-or-demon Dionysus. Son of Jupiter and of a mortal woman, he is the divinity of wine and mystical delirium.

Originally, he was celebrated by turbulent processions in which masks represented the genies of the earth and fertility. It was these ceremonies which gave birth to the first theatrical performances. The actors remained for a long time masked in Greece. Saint Augustine, of course, can only make ridicule of such catharsis, though quite comparable to certain spectacular manifestations of the Catholic religion, notably to commemorate the sufferings and the passion of Jesus, or of Shiite Islam. In any case, the Roman authorities seem to have been of the same opinion as Saint Augustine, since in their time (186 before our era) they persecuted harshly the followers of this cult. See the bacchanalia affair.

The Scandal of the Bacchanalia is a well-known affair, thanks to the detailed account of it given by the Roman historian Livy in his book XXXIX. And by the very text of the *senatus-consultum De Bacchanalibus* engraved on a bronze tablet and found in the Bruttium in 1640. Livy devotes a special place to it, for it occupies twelve of the fifteen chapters devoted to the year 186, what is exceptional.

But despite the wealth of sources, our information regarding this matter remains uncertain and unreliable; because of the partiality of the account of Livy, who presents only the official version of the facts, and does not hide his hostility towards the Dionysian sect.

The Bacchanalia scandal has its origins in a story looking as a minor news item, but the fundamental reasons for the repression which follows this discovery are essentially political.

The Bacchanalia provoked the reprobation of the Romans because of the too exotic and "nonconformist" nature of the ceremonies of this Eastern sect; But also because they put into practice a reversal of the social order considered dangerous by the authorities, who strive to make religion an element of cohesion. Moreover, the religious rules of these private associations are opposed to those of public religion. Most of the priestly functions are occupied by women, the members undergo an initiation followed by a taking the oath, the worship promises survival after death and individual happiness; whereas the official Roman religion is only concerned with the interests of the community. It seems, therefore, that the Senate has carefully prepared a case capable of provoking scandal and justifying the conviction of the initiates. For this hit uses elements belonging to the Bacchic worship and known by the public, but so demystified or deviated from their nature that they become the components of an odious criminal organization.

Yet the cultural elements that we see through the testimony of Livy have nothing revolutionary compared with what is known about the Hellenistic mysteries. Thus the accusations of false wills or of illicit financial profit relate to the constitution of mutual funds by the Bacchic associations. During the cult, the participants consume the raw flesh of the victims, the model of the sacrifices in the Dionysian worship being omophagy, and large quantities of wine. They seek to reach a state of trance, to be possessed by the divinity and to identify with it for some time.

The Senate will mobilize all the magistrates in a terrible repression. The city is put on a state of alert and checked by the police who arrest the initiates of whom many prefer the suicide to the breach of the initiatic secrecy. The call for denouncement makes it possible to arrest quickly those responsible, who are mostly executed on the spot. The celebration of the Bacchic cult will now be closely monitored

by the authorities, but in spite of the exceptional severity that the Senate has shown, in fact, it will not seek to suppress it completely.

3. During the consecrated ceremonies of Dionysus, it was customary for the participants to engage in all kinds of jests.

4. And the worship of the saints or of the martyrs now then ???

5. One god yes but in three persons who, that, etc. See the non-stop controversies over the idea of Trinity.

SUMMARY SHAPED CONCLUSION.

“GREAT” CHURCH OR FUTURE MASS CHRISTIANITY. We will group under this name from now on, those Christians who are neither Judeo-Christians nor Marcionites, nor Gnostics, nor Montanists, or more exactly who borrow much from this last current, a little less from the previous three. It is this last current indeed which will end in prevailing because of its capacity for the elimination of the others, and which will become therefore the dominant Christianity at the end of the third century.

If the Christianity as we know it today (Reformist Orthodox Catholic) has survived alone; it is probably because it was able to show more stratagems in its way of living on and especially, since injustice is always an advantage in this field, by turning out pitiless towards its heretics.

Some of these early Christians (particularly the apologists, as we have seen) will prove to be cynical courtiers, flattering as much as possible with their fanaticism, the Roman imperial authorities. These first apologies sent to the emperor Hadrian after his edict against Christianity, by Quadratus and Aristides. Melito of Sardis, Athenagoras, Miltiades, and Apollinarius of Hierapolis, sent apologies to Marcus Aurelius.

An apologist like Justin, for example, excels in showing how Christianity, far from being a threat for the state, is on the contrary a chance for it. It can reconstruct around the notion of single God, the sacred union which is now lacking in the Empire. In these doubtful pleadings of the kind *Pro Fonteio* by Cicero, the Christians asserted to the political authorities that they were honest citizens, respectful of the laws, devoted to the emperor, active and even exemplary in private or public life. A little like the Muslim fundamentalists of today besides. But they did not succeed in convincing in their time, apparently, that Christianity was something other than an absurd belief (*credo quia absurdum*) and a danger for the Empire. In what they differ from the Muslims of today, on the other hand. Tertullian himself will find that apologies were little read by the pagans to whom they were destined. On the other hand, they laid the dangerous theoretical foundations of the later union of the army and of the clergy, that is to say, the confusion between religion and politics, between church and state.

The second century of our era was a pivotal period of Christianity, that of the third, fourth and fifth generation of Christians; a period which was no longer that of the New Testament, but which was still very far from the great councils like Nicaea. Orthodoxy was just beginning to express itself, and there was a great diversity in Christianity. Beyond the Jewish Bible, the Christians of this period were probably already reading the evangelical texts (not absolutely the present gospels) and the first apostolic texts. At the beginning of the 2nd century, circulated indeed in the Christian milieu, some collections of "Jesus's Words" (Greek *logia*); and at the same time (the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century), Paul's first collections of letters also circulated, always as texts read by the Christians.

As we have said, Christian doctrine was born from the meeting of the Jewish Gnosticism (and therefore from the meeting between Greek philosophy and Judaism) and of the evangelical myth (with its more or less imaginary biography of Jesus).

The incipient Christianity, especially in the megalopolis of Alexandria, has indeed gradually taken over some of the ideas of the Greek philosophy (the notion of *logos* or word for example) for two reasons. Firstly, because it was necessary for it to develop a vocabulary, and therefore a speech adapted to the Greek language, given its role in this region of the world.

Secondly, because it had to fight the dominant paganism of the time (Neoplatonic Gnosticism) on its own ground.

Christian theology, born from the theology of the Christian Gnostics and from Greek philosophy, will try, as best it can, to marry the mysteries of his revealed religion with the Greco-Roman rationality, in a very contestable union.

But Aristotle and Plato in fact will complicate more the Christian theology, wanting to emerge from its original contradictions.

This being so, with Marcion, as we have already seen, appeared a crucial debate about the following question: How is it necessary, when you are a Christian, to read the Jewish Bible?

First type of answer. Clement known as "of Rome" around 95. He is a "champion" of the continuity between the Old and the New Testaments. For him, the whole Jewish Bible prefigures, including in its smallest details, the life of the Church. Clement seeks to show parallels between certain biblical Jewish texts and the concrete realities of the Christianity of his time. What concerns the Levitical order is, for example, used to explain and justify the hierarchy in the Christian Church; what concerns Moses is used to speaking of the bishop function; etc.

Second type of answer.

The epistle of "Barnabas" (Christianity in Asia Minor or Egypt - beginning of the 2nd century). It is much more distant as for the Jewish Bible, whose texts seem to be relegated to a past without actuality, while the author insists on making these texts a Christian rereading, especially a prophetic or Christological reading. Barnabas thus endeavors to show, on characteristic chapters, that the biblical text conceals a very different Christian meaning. It is still a way of appropriating the Jewish Bible, but in a critical way and in opposition to the Jewish reading.

We may also mention Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd century), he also a supporter of a Christian, but critical, reading, breaking with the Jewish reading. He speaks explicitly of the Gospel as a reading key of the Old Testament.

As we have also seen, Marcion goes further than Ignatius and Barnabas. He invented the first of all the canons in the history of Christianity (by keeping only certain texts and not the others), and broke radically with the Jewish reading. As a result, the Jewish Bible is completely devalued and remains only a kind of moral code, perhaps useful, but of little value compared with the god of the Gospel and Jesus.

It was only in the middle of the second century of our era, exactly in the year 144, when Marcion and his followers were excommunicated; that the Church (especially that in Rome) will condemn "those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (2nd Epistle of John 1: 7). Until then, this thesis could be supported and preached without contradiction, by Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus ... Without forgetting the authors of the Revelation, in the beginning of the second century of our era, who were still expecting the coming of Christ on earth. It is only in this time that the myth of a Jesus crucified in his flesh, hitherto unknown (even by the authors of the epistles attributed to Paul) will begin to circulate. And it is therefore probably at this time, as the controversy progressed; that will be added to the Gospels accounts of the earthly life of a Jesus, very different from the purely heavenly being only known by many Christians before the year 150 of our era.

The myth Jesus Christ went therefore through the following three phases.

1 - The Christ of the type "angel" or "Aggelos Christos" (whose body was ethereal) of the Gnostic or Docetic Christians (Marcionites, Basilidians, Valentinians, etc.) secondarily and temporarily descended into the body of the man called Jesus but not from his birth.

2 - The heavenly Christ of the Pauline (attributed to Paul) Epistles.

3 - The very human and "earthly" or "historical" Jesus of the canonical Gospels.

Unlike the Gnostic Branch, in this last current, Christ will be no longer presented as an angel sent by God and returned to his side after a brief embodiment on Earth; but in the guise of a true human having been put to death. This historicity, very relative, however, of the human Jesus, will be the rational foundation on which will be based the unexplainable one of the Christian religion. Where ends the exploration of the reason, will begin the field of the transcendent and inaccessible to knowledge, truths.

As we have seen, Justin (d. 165) will be the first to speak of the four gospels (memoirs of the apostles). What means that their writing was therefore started, but not yet completed, in his time ...

Like Tatian, Theophilus, Athenagoras, Minucius Felix ... he does not yet speak of the Nazorene Jesus whose history is still not worked out.

It is only after them that people will gradually begin to develop an earthly biography of Christ, using quotations from the Jewish Bible about the coming of the messiah (midrashim of peshet type).

"The fate of being conceived of a virgin is dictated, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as a messiah. What removes all real value from the narrative which can no longer be regarded as recording a fact, but arranged for the circumstances "(Henry Lizeray, *The Secret Doctrine*).

A profile revised and corrected after the events therefore, in order to better make it stick to the theory, but also got by plagiarizing the ancient worships (Jesus changes water into wine ... as Bacchus did before him, worship of Cybele = worship of the hyperdulia type paid to Mary and so on) .

The "pious fraud" (expression which will become famous) begins. The Proto-Catholic or pre-Orthodox Branch, in order to better fight the Gnosticism among its believers, will add various narratives in its Gospels; intended to emphasize in the minds of the readers the idea that Jesus was truly a man (the son of a carpenter crucified in the reign of Tiberius, etc.).

Dionysius of Corinth and Irenaeus of Lyons will even condemn this traffic of texts. Appearance of certain letters of Paul (long dead) as the 2nd Epistle to Timothy. An obvious forgery! The adjective Chrestos, which was used by the Marcionites as a synonym for good (particularly to qualify the higher god), is gradually replaced by the word Christos which means "anointed," "messiah," what is not at all the same thing. . Cf. the inscription on the lintel of the church of Lebaba in Deir Ali, south of Damascus. The name of Jesus is joined to the word Christ, and produces the expression "Jesus Christ." Previously, it would have been considered ridiculous to give a proper noun to a mythical figure.

The tendency "great Church" of the Christianity has therefore fought fiercely against Gnosticism while trying to recover it. This did not happen without a certain "loss of creative freedom," in favor of an institution anxious to defend its place in the sun. The double discourse of the big names of the great Church about Gnostic Christianity therefore will be to distinguish a false gnosis (that of their competitors) from a genuine gnosis (evidently theirs).

The thinkers of the Great Church presented themselves as "true gnosis" on the basis of St. Paul (1 Cor 2: 7-8, 2 Cor 12: 2-4, Col 2: 2-3) and of St. John (Jn 17: 3; 1 Jn 2: 20-27). Paul indeed knows two trilogies: faith, hope, knowledge (gnosis). Faith, hope, charity.

This first literature consists of letters from bishops or from leaders of churches to their communities or other communities: Clement (and the Church) in Rome wrote to the Church of Corinth in 96. He insists much on the "Knowledge" (gnosis), depending, it seems, on Didache 10, 2 (cf. Clem 36, 2; 40, 1; 41, 4 ...). Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110), sent seven letters to the Churches, who saluted him on the way to his martyrdom. For him, "The gnosis of God is Jesus Christ" (Eph. 17, 2). Polycarp of Smyrna, this "true and good shepherd to whom Ignatius did not hesitate to commend the flock at Antioch" (Eusebius, H. E. III, 36, 10), will send a very beautiful pastoral letter to the Philippians. A letter "on righteousness," that is to say about the manner of behaving as a Christian, and an exhortation to flee the divisions or the vain speculations (mataiologia, cf. 1 Tim 1: 6). The Epistle attributed to Barnabas invites the Christians who come from Judaism who "possess the gnosis of the way of righteousness" - that is, Christ-to follow the way after him (V, 4). The Didache, or Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles, is a privileged and very ancient witness (perhaps of the eighties) of the first catechetical, liturgical and canonical, documentation. As for the Shepherd of Hermas, it is the longest writing of this period. It is made particularly interesting by its apocalyptic literary genre, its message on post-baptismal penance, and by the description that it leaves us of the Church in Rome about 150: read Vision III and Similitude IX.

In this very first speech which immediately follows the canonical letters of the New Testament is expressed an undeniable Gnosticism.

With Clement of Alexandria (died about 215), for example, gnosis will be again allowed besides; since some authors judge that his gnosis underwent the influence of the heterodox gnosis and represents an absorption of Christianity into a typically Hellenistic intellectualism. For Clement indeed, philosophy is a preparation for true gnosis. But I hope we will be allowed to doubt somewhat the profundity of the philosophical-historical reflection of this Father of the Church, by seeing him putting on an equal footing the Hindu Brahmins and the druids.

" Thus philosophy, a thing of the highest utility, flourished in antiquity among the barbarians, shedding its light over the nations. And afterwards it came to Greece. First in its ranks were the prophets of the Egyptians; and the Chaldeans among the Assyrians; and the druids among the Celts; and the Samanæans among the Bactrians; and the philosophers of the Celts; and the magi of the Persians (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, XV).

It is perfectly true that the high-knowers of the druidiaction (druidecht) were in a way the Brahmins of the West, but to put them on an equal footing is a little excessive.....

For Clement, however, the only help that can positively guide to the authentic understanding of the divine Word remains still the Church canon; that is to say the Tradition kept in the Great Church (the current in the process of prevailing over others). Only those who lend themselves to the ascetic and ethical discipline of the Church can hope for this passage from a belief simply confessed with the mouth to the gnosis that takes our entire being. (Birth of the idea conveyed in Latin by the famous expression: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.)

True gnosis develops on the only basis of faith, hope and charity. It is to be sought only for the growth of charity. It aims beyond the intelligible realities - the object of philosophy - to reach spiritual realities. Gnosis is received from Christ when, putting ourselves to the School of the Church, we listen to Himself commenting on the Scriptures.

Here we should quote chapters 60 to 168 of *Stromata VI*, where a "portrait of the true Christian Gnostic is depicted. A summary of it is given at the beginning of *Stromata VII*, I, 1.

"The Gnosticos alone is truly pious, so that the philosophers, learning of what description the true Christian is, may condemn their own stupidity in rashly and inconsiderately persecuting the [Christian] name, and without reason calling those impious who know the true God. And clearer arguments must be employed, I reckon, with the philosophers, so that they may be able, from the exercise they have already had through their own training, to understand, although they have not yet shown themselves worthy to partake of the power of believing. The prophetic sayings we shall not at present advert to, as we are to avail ourselves of the Scriptures subsequently at the proper places."

But in a second time, or concurrently, there will be a polemic ready to do everything in order to discredit the Gnostic Christianity, as it can be guessed in Montanus, and as we can see it at work in his disciple Tertullian. Without forgetting Justin's lost works: a book "against all heresies" and one "Against Marcion."

There are traces of other works against the heresies, by Hegesippus for example, from which Irenaeus is inspired.

St. Irenaeus even went so far as to insert in the Acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp * an astonishing condemnation of Marcion, that we shall not resist the retrospective pleasure to quote below.

Appendix of the Moscow Manuscript.

"This account Gaius copied from the papers of Irenaeus. The same lived with Irenaeus who had been a disciple of the holy Polycarp. For this Irenaeus, being in Rome at the time of the martyrdom of the bishop Polycarp, instructed many; and many most excellent and orthodox treatises by him are in circulation. In these he makes mention of Polycarp, saying that he was taught by him. And he ably refuted every heresy, and handed down the Catholic rule of the Church just as he had received it from the saint. He mentions this fact also that when Marcion, after whom the Marcionites are called, met the holy Polycarp on one occasion, and said "Recognize us, Polycarp," he said in reply to Marcion, "Yes indeed, I recognize the firstborn of Satan." The following statement is also made in the writings of Irenaeus, that on the very day and hour when Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna Irenaeus being in the city of the Romans heard a voice as of a trumpet saying, "Polycarp is martyred." From these papers of Irenaeus then, as has been stated already, Gaius made a copy, and from the copy of Gaius, Isocrates made another in Corinth. And I Pionius again wrote it down from the copy of Isocrates, having searched for it in obedience to a revelation of the holy Polycarp."

N.B. Since he fights and effectively, Christian Gnosticism, Irenaeus of Lyons can be regarded as the true founder of present-day Christianity. He rejects dualism, affirms the historicity of Jesus, appropriates biblical texts, unjudaises the Messiah, calls for a federation of churches around the bishop of Rome; and supports the monarchical power of the bishops, according to the model of organization advocated by Marcion, while rejecting Marcion himself.

Hippolytus (circa 240) produces a refutation in which we see the description of 33 sects appear.

Hippolytus casts a wide net because he even attacks druidism.

"The Celts esteem the druids as prophets and seers, on account of their foretelling to them certain (events), from calculations and numbers by the Pythagorean art; on the methods of which very art also we shall not keep silence, since also from these some have presumed to introduce Schools of thought [hairesis or heresy in Greek]. (Saint Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutations of all heresies*, 1, 2, 17, and I, 25, 1-2), still quoted by the catechisms of today.

With the "Panarion" of Epiphanius, we will have some 80 heresies.

And these are only the large traces of this kind of work. There are others that we will not enumerate. At the time of Augustine, the heresies recorded were 88 in number.

With St. John of Damascus (676-749), we will reach the figure of 101. John Damascenus being Arabic-speaking after having read the Quran and not without hesitation (several pages in his *Peri Hairéseon*. instead of a few lines for the other heresies) he will put Islam in it, in 101st and last position precisely.

What do we learn from all these handbooks? The general idea is simple, expressed in the 2nd century, both in Greek (Irenaeus) and Latin (Tertullian). Originally, there was the Orthodox Christianity; then, as it developed, there were born heresies, as branches of the same trunk.

Nothing is more false than this thesis let us remember it, for every orthodoxy makes it marks only by opposing currents or ideas that it describes as heretics. Orthodoxy is built in and against diversity. To speak of heresy at a time when orthodoxy is not yet well defined is therefore nonsense.

As we have had the opportunity to see it precisely and repeatedly in what is previous (refer to it) certain sincere Christians were, of course, accused of deceit and swindling by pagan intellectuals such as Celsus, Porphyry, Lucian of Samosata, but also by many of them as Irenaeus or Origen. The suppression which began even before this current became a state religion, for example in the regions of Asia where it became a majority; (Montanist churches destroyed by Christians of other obedience, riots orchestrated by narrow-minded bishops, beatings, see the martyrdom of the unfortunate counselor of Constantine, Sopater, and of the unfortunate poetess and scientist of Alexandria named Hypatia, etc. ;) went on increasing over the centuries, and will gradually silence the opponents (same process as in the Yathrib/Medina of the early days of Islam). This current of ideas, on the way to becoming dominant, will therefore suggest that there existed from the start a reality or a truth, that the condemned or rejected movements would have distorted, falsified, misunderstood (same thing with Islam). For this, its "thinkers" will be, of course, obliged to antedate their main ideas and to condemn, a posteriori, those who ignored them, or had only sketched them. So it is in this time that appears the hunt for the "heretics" who formed the various branches of early Christianity (Elchasaism of the Homilies falsely attributed to Clement, Tatianism, Gnostic Christians ...). Orthodoxy multiplies heresies by using several names in order to designate the same current of thought; for example, by speaking of Docetism (from the Greek *dokein*, to seem or to appear) in order to describe supporters of the idea of ??Angel-Christ (Aggelos-Christos), yet contemporary of the belief in an historical Christ, even earlier. This current therefore will endeavor to show that the Messiah was a historical being, whose human existence was attested, by taking over various writings.

To answer the objections of the Greeks and Romans like Lucian, Celsus Hierocles or Porphyry, more and more hostile to the mystery worships (that John Toland will denounce again many centuries later); that Pagan Christianity ancestor of the future Catholics Orthodox Reformists will therefore join its forces with the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem in order to historicizing at the maximum the Angel Christ or Aggelos Christos of the Pauline current (see the Epistle to the Hebrews) and to reduce to a few revelations the mystery of the divine transcendence.

From the Christian Gnosticism, the official Christianity will keep only, in the form of mysteries; the notion of revealed religion or truth, the embodiment of the spirit in a man, the birth from a virgin, the bread and wine in which the flesh and blood of the god Christ Messiah are really present. And lastly the notion of a trinity, born from the Gnostic speculation and from the pagan symbolism, cause of so many quarrels, that there is no other recourse than to place it beyond any attempt at a rational explanation (*credo quia absurdum*).

For more details about all this see what is previous.

In the 1st half of the third century is therefore gradually formed, a dogma made of various elements from the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Jewish Gnosticism, the Greek Gnosticism, the Marcionism, the Montanism. These tendencies, which form in a way the raw material of the future Catholics Orthodoxes or Reformists, are nevertheless disowned as heretical, or schismatic as for the Montanism. Official Christianity then invented for itself an imaginary Orthodox tradition; based on the Paul discovered by Marcion (duly revised of course) the anti-Gnosticism of Irenaeus of Lyons (himself also revised) as well as on the works of Clement of Alexandria; the whole supplemented with a list of popes sometimes more fictitious than real.

Again for more details on all this see the various chapters of this booklet.

While the idea of ??Trinity is worked out that the gospels tend to prove the historicity of Jesus, that a connection is established between the Angel Christ, his apostles and the official Christianity, the institutional fragmentation of origin begins to diminish .

The study of this period leaves appear indeed a tendency to the centralization of power around a chief, the episcopos or bishop. Every bishop or almost having his favorite gospel.

First appearance also of a synodal system (meetings of bishops decide for the whole of the communities).

N.B. These synods are said "general" when they are supposed to gather all the bishops in office.

This unification of the Hellenized or Paganized Judeo-Christianity and, little by little, deprived of its Jewish nature, does not prevent nevertheless that its various bishops compete fiercely.

Around the end of the second century, a certain number of churches began to group together, but until about 250 the Great Church was only a federation of local bishop churches.

The second phase of unification will consist in subjecting the bishops of these different churches to the authority of the bishop in Rome, what will considerably strengthen and the number and the power of Christians of this tendency in the Roman Empire. A large gathering will take place therefore consequently around the bishop of the capital of the Empire, the only able to assert to the authorities the weight of the movement.

* In 167, in Smyrna, Bishop Polycarp was accused of atheism within a completely formal procedure. The accuser meant that the one who did not worship the gods and especially the emperor (then deified in his lifetime) was an atheist. In accordance with the rule that the accused should be given a chance to abjure his error, he was asked to shout "Death to the Atheists," what Polycarp did, but in a way showing that he designated thus clearly his accusers. It should be noted that the fanaticism of Polycarp also seems, apparently, to have caused that he was used as a scapegoat in a settling of scores between Jews and Christians.

"Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, be strong, and show yourself a man, O Polycarp! No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, Have respect to your old age, and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists. But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, Away with the Atheists. Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ; Polycarp declared, Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior? And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, Swear by the fortune of Caesar, he answered, Since you are vainly urgent that, as you say, I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretend not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and you shall hear them. The proconsul replied, persuade the people. But Polycarp said, To you I have thought it right to offer an account; for we are taught to give all due honor (which entails no injury upon ourselves) to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God. But as for these [the Jews and the pagans] I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me.

The proconsul then said to him, I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, unless you repent. But he answered, Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous. But again the proconsul said to him, I will cause you to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent.

But Polycarp said, You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.

While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it not fall as if troubled by the things said to him,

but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished, and sent his herald to proclaim in the midst of the stadium thrice, Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian. This proclamation having been made by the herald, the whole multitude both of the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods. Speaking thus, they cried out, and besought Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. But Philip answered that it was not lawful for him to do so, seeing the shows of wild beasts were already finished. Then it seemed good to them to cry out with one consent, that Polycarp should be burned alive. For thus it behooved the vision which was revealed to him in regard to his pillow to be fulfilled, when, seeing it on fire as he was praying, he turned about and said prophetically to the faithful that were with him, I must be burned alive.

This, then, was carried into effect with greater speed than it was spoken, the multitudes immediately gathering together wood and fagots out of the shops and baths; the Jews especially, according to custom, eagerly assisting them in it....

When he had pronounced this amen, and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And as the flame blazed forth in great fury, we, to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like flesh which is burned, but as bread that is baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odor, as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there.

At length, when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. And on his doing this, there came forth a dove, and a large quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished....

The centurion then, seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it. Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold”.....

Interrogations of a great philosopher of the Enlightenment that the French have completely forgotten ... (Voltaire.) “True philosophers cannot even make up their minds to believe the miracles performed in the second century. Even eyewitnesses to the facts may write and attest till the day of doom, that after the bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp, was condemned to be burned, and actually in the midst of the flames, they heard a voice from heaven exclaiming: “Courage, Polycarp! be strong, and show yourself a man”; that, at the very instant, the flames quit his body, and formed a pavilion of fire above his head, and from the midst of the pile there flew out a dove; when, at length, Polycarp’s enemies ended his life by cutting off his head. All these facts and attestations are in vain. For what good, say these unimpressible and incredulous men, for what good was this miracle? Why did the flames lose their nature, and the axe of the executioner retains all its power of destruction? Whence comes it that so many martyrs escaped unhurt out of boiling oil, but were unable to resist the edge of the sword?”

THE CREEPING CHRISTIANIZATION.

The end of the fourth century will be a crucial period for the history of Christianity. It had to accentuate his struggle against paganism to impose a Church and to prevent the imperial support of the ancient worships or of the heresies.

As we have said, Constantine had, as early as 335, divided power between his three sons, Constantine II receiving the government of Britain, Gaul and Spain; Constans that of Italy, Illyria, Africa, Macedonia, and Greece; and Constantius II. that of Thrace (with Constantinople), of Asia Minor, of Syria, and of Egypt. Constantius II, supported by Eusebius of Nicomedia - a defender of Arian Christianity once again become an official religion - resolved to get rid of his rivals. Eusebius of Nicomedia invented a hypothetical plot, revealed to Constantine on his deathbed, and Constantius caused his cousin Julius Constantius, son of Constantius Chlorus, to be executed; and all his family, except his two sons Gallus and Julian, who were miraculously spared and entrusted to Eusebius. Constantine II on his side having confronted Constans, he was defeated by the latter and then killed in 340 at the battle of Aquileia. Constans and Constantius therefore divided the Empire, the first becoming emperor of the West and the second emperor of the East.

Constantine the Great had never been a Christian, Constantius II was a Christian, and his principal counselor was, as we have just seen, an Arian bishop named Eusebius of Nicomedia. Constantius II was even more concerned than he was about restoring the understanding between the various Christian churches. He had several synods or councils convened for this purpose, with, besides, various fortunes.

From 338 to 350, Constantius II defended the eastern borders of the Empire against the Persians... Very difficult military campaigns against a particularly tough enemy, and in which the Roman armies came very close to the disaster more than once.

Concerning religion, Constantius II supported therefore Arianism, which was promoted by him to the rank of official religion; as much by theological conviction as to embarrass his brother Constans, who, in the meantime, had become master of the West and who was in favor of Catholic orthodoxy.

Constantius II persecuted the Orthodox or Catholic Christians in the territories under his control. He even convoked a council at Antioch in 341. This assembly confirmed the sentence of the council of Tyre, and asked for the support of the public force to compel the anti-Arian Athanasius to leave his bishopric of Alexandria. Athanasius therefore fled from Egypt and took refuge in Rome. The Pope begged the Emperor Constans, brother of Constantius, to assemble in turn another general assembly of the Church. This council met in Serdica (present-day Bulgaria) the same year. The Christian Church was as divided as the Empire! The prelates could not reach a consensus. The Eastern bishops, who sat separately, confirmed the previous decisions, while the Westerners took the bishop of Rome as an arbitrator. The latter, to please the Emperor Constans, gathered an assembly of Italian bishops who agreed with Athanasius. The death of Constans (350), assassinated by the usurper Magnentius, changed the situation once more. Constantius II became the only master of the Empire, and two councils assembled in a row, one in Arles, the other in Milan, which both condemned Athanasius.

Armed by these decisions, Constantius II (once again!) made the bishop Athanasius expelled from his see of Alexandria and tried to rally the bishop of Rome (Liberius) behind his point of view. Persuasion having had no success, the emperor ordered his arrest. Liberius was chained and sent into exile to Berea, in the middle of Thrace, in 356. After three years, exhausted, he capitulated fully and accepted to disown the Orthodox Catholic belief (with which he had agreed until then: 2nd council of Sirmium. In exchange for his submission, Liberius found again his see, while nevertheless being forced to share it with the antipope Felix.

Meanwhile, Constantius II had promulgated an edict against the Orthodox Catholics condemning to death all those who refused to receive communion from the hands of an Arian Christian priest. Civil war broke out. The mouths of the communicants were opened with white-hot clamps to introduce the host in them, the girls' breasts were burned so that they open their mouths, or they were pressed between two boards with nails.....

One would have thought that he had returned to the horrors thus described by Celsus.

Celsus: " Christians at first were few in number, and held the same opinions; but when they grew to be a great multitude, they were divided and separated, each wishing to have his own individual party: for this was their object from the beginning. Being thus separated through their numbers, they confute one another, still having, so to speak, one name in common, if indeed they still retain it. Because this

is the only thing which they are yet ashamed to abandon, while other matters are determined in different ways by the various sects ".

As the Empire threatened to sink into anarchy, Constantius II was forced to resume the struggle against the Persians. To defend the West, also threatened by Germanic tribes, he promoted Julian, his cousin, to the dignity of Caesar (associated emperor) on November 6, 355. Against all odds, the latter managed very well, and although he was almost deprived of military means or political authority, he succeeded in repelling the Germans beyond the Rhine.

As for him, Constantius II, a rather poor chief of war, when it was a question of fighting against external enemies, trampled in his war against the Persians, exhausting himself by besieging uselessly the most impenetrable enemy fortresses. To reinforce his troops, he ordered his Caesar Julian to send him his best soldiers. Unfortunate idea! The soldiers refused and acclaimed Julian as emperor (Lutetia, February 360).

They went straight to the civil war when death suddenly struck Constantius II on November 3rd, 361. A suspicious death that could not be imputed to Julian nevertheless.

He was the only heir to his brother-in-law and cousin, so he naturally acceded to the Empire. Now, if he had first been educated or raised in the Christian religion by Eusebius of Nicomedia, then by George of Cappadocia; fortunately, Julian also had some time for his private tutor a former slave of his mother, Mardonius, who had made him acquainted with ancient and classical Greek literature. Then he had known in Constantinople a pagan philosopher named Hecebolus, whose thought wavered between Greco-Roman paganism and eastern religions. He had probably been initiated into the mysteries of the Mithraism, perhaps also to those of Eleusis.

However, it was too late to turn back because the Christians had become too numerous and were everywhere. The eastern part of the Empire had become Christian, as deplored by Ammianus Marcellinus and the unfortunate Emperor Julian himself.

Ammianus Marcellinus Book XXII chapter V.

"He summoned to the palace the bishops of the Christians, who were of conflicting opinions, and the people, who were also at variance, and politely advised them to lay aside their differences, and each fearlessly and without opposition to observe his own beliefs. 4 On this he took a firm stand, to the end that, as this freedom increased their dissension, he might afterwards have no fear of a united populace, knowing as he did from experience that no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another. And he often used to say: "Hear me, to whom the Alamanni and the Franks have given ear.'

But it was a wasted effort if we believe what the Emperor Julian wrote to the citizens of Bostra Syria on August 1st, 362.

"I thought that the leaders of the Galilaeans would be more grateful to me than to my predecessor in the administration of the Empire. For in his reign it happened to the majority of them to be sent into exile, prosecuted, and cast into prison, and moreover, many whole communities of those who are called "heretics"[2] were actually butchered, as at Samosata and Cyzicus, in Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and among many other tribes also villages were sacked and completely devastated; whereas, during my reign, the contrary has happened. For those who had been exiled have had their exile remitted, and those whose property was confiscated have, by a law of mine received permission to recover all their possessions.[3] Yet they have reached such a pitch of raving madness and folly that they are exasperated because they are not allowed to behave like tyrants or to persist in the conduct in which they at one time indulged against one another, and afterwards carried on towards us who revered the gods. They therefore leave no stone unturned, and have the audacity to incite the populace to disorder and revolt, whereby they both act with impiety towards the gods and disobey my edicts, humane though these are. At least I do not allow a single one of them to be dragged against his will to worship at the altars; nay, I proclaim in so many words that, if any man of his own free will choose to take part in our lustral rites and libations, he ought, first of all, to offer sacrifices of purification and supplicate the gods that avert evil. So far am I from ever having wished or intended that anyone of those sacrilegious men should partake in the sacrifices that we most revere, until he has purified his soul by supplications to the gods, and his body by the purifications that are customary."

THE FIRST OFFICIALLY CHRISTIAN STATE IN THE WORLD: ARMENIA.

Armenia occupied all of eastern Anatolia in antiquity, and consequently it was ten times larger than present-day Armenia.

The Armenian chronicles tell us that about 314 (shortly before the Council of Nicaea), the first Christian king of Armenia, Tiridates, demolished all the pagan sanctuaries in his country. There remained only that in Garni, which was preserved because, at the time of the Christianization of Armenia, it was no longer a temple: it was part of the royal palace.

Even if things have not gone quite so, we can admit that the Armenians did the same thing as what is explicitly told to us in the Muslim chronicles a few centuries later. Military expeditions were sent to the villages; the inhabitants are asked to give the statues representing deities up, and they are destroyed at once; if the villagers refuse to give the statues up, the chief military moves towards them with his saber and obliges them to execute.

To understand what this conversion to Christianity was, we must have a certain idea of ??what religion was before.

From the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, the popular oral traditions of these countries were collected. In the south, that is to say in Armenia, have been collected folklore, stories and legends, which are very interesting in so far as they can be compared with medieval historians. We know that these tales which are told as stories for children were actually stories for adults, religious stories, but which were "defused." In Georgia, the situation is even more interesting. Crossing with the distinction between west and east (Colchis and Iberia), there is another division that of wine and beer. Up to a certain altitude, it is possible to cultivate the vineyard; above it, because it is too cold, we have barley and man makes beer; and in all regions where beer is made, the most stable cultural value is paganism, which in the range of the greater Caucasus has remained alive up to our time. Let us illustrate this fact with an anecdotal episode, revealing the vivacity of such traditions. While driving a group of tourists to Georgia, the historian J.-P. Mahe had a Turkish driver, and as interpreter a girl from the mountains, who was called Xat'ia (that is, idol). This name suited her very well. She had a rather round face, heavily made up, her lips and eyes painted, her eyes rather vague, and her features perfectly expressionless. She said absolutely nothing, except a few words in Turkish: on the left, on the right after the bridge, to eat, stop, etc.

One day, the historian managed to speak to her in Georgian language. He then learns that she was not Georgian, but Svan, that is to say she came from the country called Svaneti on the map, situated in the greater Caucasus. It is a valley located at more than 4 000 m of altitude. Its inhabitants are neither Christians nor Muslims, but authentically pagan. In these valleys, even in summer, people move on sleds pulled by oxen, even on the grass. People live by entire family clans in high tower shaped houses, and there is always a watchman at the top of the tower who shoots by sight on anyone being a member of an enemy clan; and God or the Demiurge knows if there are any of them. No marriage between clans is possible without abduction of a woman and a woman abduction automatically leads to bloody revenge. When they go on hunting, they speak a special language, called the language of the god-or-demons, with secret words, so that the beasts, which are sometimes divine animals endowed with supernatural faculties, don't hear them.

This guide spoke about her grandfather's house, where she lived with her father and all her uncles or cousins, and she explained that, to tell the truth (it was after independence), most of them had gone to Russia, Georgia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, to work. But once every three years, on July 28, each one returns to the country for the Kvirikoba. That is to say the feast of Kviria, the Lord, the higher god-or-demon, who has two acolytes, the archangel St. Michael and St. George. But do not be deceived! Under these Christian names are hidden in reality some Khatias, that is to say, idols, some living images, represented by old Georgian icons of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of which people have taken possession, that they have "recycled" in a way, and which are venerated as true fetishes: they are kept in small stone chapels. There are living rites here. All the words of the prayers are known by the ethnographic surveys and refer to a mythology that dates back to the first or second millennium before or era, at the time when the Svans separated from the Georgians and other southern Caucasian peoples.

If we take the case of the Armenians, we can distinguish a national mythology, of Indo-European origin, which settled in a Caucasian environment and was successively covered by Zoroastrianism, then

Hellenism, then Christianity. For example, in the plain of the Aras River, 40 km west of Yerevan, is the archeological site of Armavir. The remains of the Urartian town of Arguishtikhinili (ninth century before our era) which lasted until the beginning of the 6th century before our era, then was captured by the Medes in 590. At the top of the acropolis was a temple dedicated to the great god-or-demon in Urartu, called Haldi (in the Museum of Anatolian Cultures in Ankara, we see this god-or-demon standing on a lion, with his body literally radiating) . His temple was therefore at the top of the hill, and on the slopes of this hill were sacred plane trees, which delivered oracles in his name (as in Dodona, Greece, the priests interpreted the murmur of the foliage) .

In 590, the Armenians arrived with the Medes. They enter the city. They recognize in Haldi their solar god-or-demon, whose name was Areg. They establish him in the temple with his sister the moon and the oracle continues to function as in the past. Then the Persians appear in the fifth century before our era. Haldi-Areg is then venerated under the name of Mhir, that is to say Mithra, since Mithra was fire and even the great fire by definition that is to say, the sun. His sister was venerated under the name of Anahit, the warrior and chaste goddess-or-demoness. When the Achaemenid empire collapsed, under the blows of Alexander the Great, the local satraps proclaim themselves kings and call Greek poets to their court. Mhir and Anahit are then replaced by statues of Apollo and Artemis. The oracles of the plane trees are no longer delivered in Armenian language, but in Greek language (we know it, for we found in 1904 and 1911 blocks of rock bearing these oracles as well as answers made to the king, dated 188 before our era). Thereafter, Apollo-Areg- Haldi will be interpreted as the sun of righteousness, and all his attributes then will be attributed to Christ. The matins service, for example, is called the "coming of the sun" in Armenian language; we can take the first two stanzas of this ode, not a Zoroastrian priest or a magus would have protested against this hymn addressed to Jesus Christ.

The arrival of Christianity in Armenia. Traders settled in the cities of Mesopotamia have always traveled to the Caucasus for various reasons. First there was the slave trade, then the trade in metals, for there were many mines in these regions, and finally the trade in horses, for these regions were also one of the principal breeding places of the horse. But the cultural exception exists only in the minds of French politicians. With goods you necessarily import ideas as well as deities. A very good example is the fact that in the south of Armenia was venerated a god-or-demon who was called Barshamin, a name that can easily be compared with that of Baal Shamim, Lord of the heavens in Syria, all the more so because he is called in Armenian language "lord of white glory," for he had a statue that was in crystal, silver and ivory.

We can believe therefore that at the beginning Jesus Christ followed the same path as Baal Shamim, that he was an imported Syrian god or demon in southern Armenia, perhaps also not concerning the Armenians themselves, for a number of towns in the south of Armenia, such as Diarbekyr, were Hellenistic cities in which there were, as the historical sources say explicitly, many Eastern merchants, including Jewish merchants.

It is possible that, as in neighboring Cappadocia, Christianity was preached in Armenia as early as the apostolic age, but the traditions which evoke the intervention of Simon and Bartholomew appeared only late in the eighth century and seem to have only as a function the justification of the will of independence of the local Church.

Another legend is that two days before his death, Jesus received a letter from King Abgar of Osroene, capital Edessa, a town in northern Syria on the Euphrates. King Abgar wrote to him, in Syriac language, to tell him his faith, to ask him for his cure and to offer him an asylum in his stronghold. In the absence of bringing the good doctor, the messenger would have reported to the king of Osroene the portrait of Jesus (the famous mandylion) and a double promise: that of sending him an apostle and of protecting his city.

The legend about Thaddeus seems solid. This disciple of Jesus would have converted the king of Osroene.

Upon the death of this sovereign, his nephew Sanatruk would have martyred Thaddeus in 66, as well as his own daughter become Christian.

During the reign of Abgar the Great, on the other hand, Christians were favored in the kingdom of Osroene.

This first evangelization concerns only southern Armenia but nevertheless left traces in the Armenian vocabulary relating to religion, since many words are of Syriac origin. From the end of the second century it appears indeed that Christian communities, evoked by Tertullian, originally formed by

missionaries from Edessa, exist in Armenia. Minority, Christianity then developed in clandestinely alongside pagan cults.

A second wave of Christianization will take place in the 4th century, with the conversion of the Armenian sovereign, which is told to us in very fantastic legends that we will try to narrate briefly here below.

Tiridates had been brought up among the Romans; he had accomplished extraordinary exploits at the time of the war against the Goths, and to reward him the Romans had restored him to the throne of his forefathers in Armenia. Twenty years earlier, his father had been assassinated by the traitor Anak, and the Persians then invaded Armenia and expelled the Arsacid dynasty. When Tiridates is restored to the throne, the son of the murderer, Grigor (the future saint Gregory the Illuminator), who was brought up, himself, as Christian, and who wants to expiate his father's fault, goes incognito to the court of Tiridates and begins to serve the king of whom he becomes the friend. But one day he refuses to sacrifice to the goddess Anahit, he is unmasked and then immediately put to death.

Twelve absolutely atrocious tortures are imposed upon him, but at the end of these twelve tortures not only he lives still but even he speaks. And what does Grigor say? He unceasingly recites the Book of Wisdom (this apocryphal of the Old Testament, attributed to Solomon, in reality written by an Alexandrian Jew about 188 before our era) precisely the appropriate book to fight against idolatry. The executioners are exhausted; the king is furious with rage, and they decide to throw Grigor into the Khor-Virap, a deep pit full of poisonous serpents, whose whistling alone is enough to kill. But, as we know, Jesus gave his disciples the power to tread with snakes and scorpions. As soon as the serpents saw Grigor, they fled at full speed, and Grigor could survive, like the prophet Elijah, thanks to the alms of a widow who threw every day to him a piece of bread and this for thirteen years.

Now, at that time, the Emperor of Rome was no other than Diocletian. He sends painters throughout the Empire who go from house to house, and made the portraits of all the young women of good family; not sparing even the religious houses. Thus Diocletian's painters one day enter a house where there are forty nuns, under the leadership of the Abbess Gayane. The most beautiful of them, of noble birth, is called Rhipsime.

Sensitive to her beauty, the painters of Diocletian make her portrait. But Gayane, the Abbess, sensing what is going to happen, takes all the nuns to the other end of the Mediterranean, as far as Armenia. No problem, Diocletian sends a letter to the king of Armenia, Tiridates, saying, "Find them and send me Rhipsime." Tiridates then found the nuns, but, seeing them in turn, thought it would be a pity to send them back to their country. Even worse, he falls in love with Rhipsime up to the point of wanting to marry her. But this one resists. Finally, the king locks himself alone with her in a room, and undertakes to make him accept this marriage by will or by force. But at that moment Rhipsime, suddenly endowed with a supernatural force by the Holy Spirit, succeeded in repelling this formidable warrior.

The king, mortally offended, decapitates immediately Rhipsime and the forty nuns. But he will be immediately punished because he is changed into a wild boar. His clothes crack and he rolls into the mire of the marshes. At that time, the sister of King Tiridates has a vision; she learns that Grigor is still alive at the bottom of his pit. He speaks to the king for forty days and the king, converted, recovers his human form at the end of this long period of metamorphosis.

Written more than one hundred and fifty years after the event, this story, absolutely improbable, is, in fact, copied from the novels of the time. It is enough to think of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius; it is the same story that is told to us, it is traditional.

It is known from the Acts of the Church of Caesarea in Cappadocia that there was indeed a king Tiridates III, a contemporary of Diocletian, who had been restored to his throne by the Romans, and who had consecrated in 314 first bishop of Great Armenia, a man named Grigor 1). When had this king converted? If we take literally the chronicle we have, he would have participated in the persecution of Diocletian, so he could have converted after the abdication of Diocletian in 306. But this date is too far from that of 314 we have just indicated. It is more likely that the persecutions in which Tiridates took part are later than those of Diocletian (those of Maximinus Daia for example ...) and that the facts must be placed towards 311-312.

It is certain, however, that in this case the official conversion of Armenia would have been previous to the promulgation in 313 of the Edict of Milan, by which Constantine decided to tolerate Christian worship throughout the Empire. Armenia was well, therefore, within a few months, the very first "administrative entity" to establish Christianity as a state religion.

In short, Tiridates decides the destruction of the pagan temples and Gregory receives the bishop consecration from the hands of Archbishop Leontius in Caesarea of Cappadocia. The first Armenian patriarch will thus depend on this town. On his return, he baptizes the king and his entourage in the waters of the Euphrates and undertakes the evangelization of the kingdom. I

this one is performed with difficulty, but Saint Gregory undertook to enforce the Edict of Tiridates by traveling the country at the head of fanatical armed bands of Parabolani in order to impose the new religion. He founded bishoprics at Vagharshapat, Artashat and Dwin. Around 330-340 Armenian Christianity succeeded in imposing itself. But if Armenia could quickly adopt Christianity as a state religion, it was probably because it was a tiny kingdom, much more "monolithic" than these "universal," multicultural and multi-ethnic, that were Rome and Persia.

We may wonder to what religious reality corresponds the conversion of Tiridates. It is always possible to say that Tiridates believed, that he was enlightened by the Gospel. That's an explanation! But we must also see the significance of this conversion from the political point of view.

At that time the situation was as follows. In the countryside, there were traditional cults, popular religion, with a certain number of syncretisms, with the Iranian and Greek religions. The nobility, on the other hand, adhered to the "reformist" Zoroastrianism of the Sassanids, the latter claiming to return to the true faith of Zoroaster. Attitude to which the nobles had an interest, for it allowed them to keep favored relations with the king of Persia and at the same time to win independence from the king of Armenia. Finally, there were the populations of the towns in which Judaism had penetrated, and in its wake Christianity. By adopting this very minority religion, the king decides between the two camps and, above all, restores royal authority. For several centuries indeed, precisely since the defeat of Artavasdes before Mark Antony, the king of Armenia reigned in the name of the divine Caesar, which made him a simple representative of the Emperor. Henceforth he becomes again a king of divine right. This conversion of Tiridates, even if it matched deep convictions was also quite beneficial to his authority from the political point of view.

It should be noted, however, that the date of the final Christianization of Armenia remains controversial: it ranges from 278 to 314, the most frequently retained years being 294 and 314.

Of course, if we consider the Manichaeism as a Christian heresy, the Persian Empire might have become a "Christian" state by the middle of the third century ... But did the King Shapur I (Latin Sapor I) mistrust of the power of the Zoroastrian magi to the point of changing the doctrine of Mani into a "state religion?" This is far from being sure!

And if he had reigned longer, the Roman emperor Philip the Arab, who was probably a Christian, could have admitted Christianity as a "lawful religion" sixty years before Constantine?

1). Gregory the Illuminator was the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church. The cathedral of Etchmiadzine dates back to Gregory, who built it in 303 on the remains of a pre-Christian temple. Jesus himself will say the legend, had chosen the place and he appeared to Gregory to communicate it to him. This explains the name of Echmiadzin, which means "the place of the descent of the only begotten."

THE SECOND STATE IN THE WORLD OFFICIALLY CHRISTIAN: ETHIOPIA (330).

The history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church begins at its foundation, around the middle of the fourth century by Frumentius of Aksum. It is one of the first Christian churches on the African continent. After its establishment in the kingdom of Aksum, Christianity spread westward and southward.

Before the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia, various cults, both polytheistic and monotheistic, were practiced by the local population; this presence can be explained by the trade contacts maintained with the countries of the Middle East. Traditional and archaeological sources reveal the existence of a Zoroastrian cult; a snake, corresponding to a description of the Avesta, is engraved on one of the stelae at Aksum. From the first century Before Common Era. The Sabean migrants imported a new polytheistic religion. Astar (Astarte), corresponding to Aphrodite and Venus of the Greek and Roman world, and the moon god Shams and the sun god, were widely worshipped in Ethiopia. Later, with the introduction of Greek culture, the worship of its pantheon became widespread. In the well-known Greek inscription, left at Adulis by an anonymous Ethiopia Emperor, mention is made of Zeus, Poseidon and Aries. On the reverse of the monument appear engravings of another Greek god and demigod, Hermes and Hercules, Aries was in fact the personal god of the Ethiopian emperors of the pre-Christian era, as shown in the frequent references made to him in epigraphic inscriptions. Archaeological traces of this period remain, among them the temple of Yeha, dedicated to Almuqah, and a temple at Aksum dedicated to Aries. Finally, part of the Ethiopian population practiced pre-Talmudic Judaism.

Before it became the state religion, Christianity was practiced in Ethiopia, especially in large cities such as Aksum and Adulis. All began with a voyage to India by Meropius, a philosopher from Tyre, accompanied by two members of his family, Frumentius and Aedesius; when supplies ran short, the ship stopped. The local population, hostile to Roman citizens, massacred the crew but spared the two young men who were taken back to the Aksum ruler. The latter offered them a job in the royal administration and permission to return to their country after his death. On the death of the king, the queen asked them to remain at their posts until the arrival of her son on the throne. In Aksum, Frumentius dealt with religious matters, encouraged Roman merchants to establish places of prayer, and promoted the spread of the new religion.

Around 330, Ezana, King of Aksum, converts and Christianity becomes the state religion; a phenomenon that is not strictly religious but also affects politics, culture and society in general. Several elements prove Ezana's conversion: in his early inscriptions, he is styled "Son of Mahrem the Unconquered"; following his victory over Nubia, he speaks of the "Lord of heaven and earth" and describes how he destroyed the "images in their temples," thus asserting that he is in line with traditional Judeo-Christian intolerance or incitement to hatred against goyim and then against pagans. Not to mention that his coins after 330 will be struck with the sign of the cross, whereas those of the beginning of his reign were decorated with a crescent and a disc.

The appointment of Frumentius's successor, as Bishop of Aksum marks the beginning of a long period of sixteen centuries during which the Ethiopian Church was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Alexandria. The principal missionaries who contributed to the spread of Christianity in Ethiopia were the Nine Saints, some monks who came from the Eastern Roman Empire (some from Syria or Constantinople) and were welcomed by Ella Amida in Aksum in 480. Their support for non-Chalcedonian doctrine had led to their expulsion from the Roman territory; before their arrival in Aksum, they had lived for a few years in the monastery founded by Pachomius the Great in Egypt. Once in Ethiopia, they studied the language and familiarized themselves with local customs, and then set out to convert the people and introduce monastic institutions. The process of Christianization was carried out without persecution of the new converts who enjoyed the support of the ruler of Aksum.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST CANON.

Canon. Official list of sacred books or books considered divinely inspired by a religion.

-The present Jewish canon was developed by a group of Pharisaic rabbis at the end of the first century, settled in Yamnia (or Yavne) a little south of present-day Tel Aviv.

-The elaboration of the Christian canon lasted longer. The final point for the Catholic Church besides, was not put until the Council of Trent on April 8, 1546. The process had begun in 367 with the festal letter 39 of Athanasius of Alexandria.

Festal letter 39.

But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 11:3, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and should henceforth read other books — those called apocryphal— led astray by the similarity of their names with the true books; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the Church.

.....

There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; these are,.....

Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are,.....

These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these.....

But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness.....

But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.....

Athanasius ordered therefore the Christians in Egypt to get rid of all these Gnostic writings.

The list will be ratified by the Council of Hippo in 393 then Carthage in 397. Thus was born the list of books that we know today under the name of New Testament.

In 369 Valentinian will establish Damasus, the bishop of Rome, supreme judge of all the other Christian bishops in the West, giving thus satisfaction to this old claim from the bishops of his capital. From then on, more than ever, Christianity was above all Roman, and the fury of its followers, drunk with their triumph and seeing themselves definitely masters of the power, will unleash.

The cult of Mithra was, it seems, one of the favorite targets of the Christian Taliban (the Parabolani). In 361 already, at Alexandria, Bishop George had stormed a Mithraic temple, had left it to the pillagers, and had exhibited skulls of bull having served for worship. Later, probably in 377; the Christian Taliban ransacked the Mithraeum in Rome, destroying all stucco works, frescoes and liturgical objects, then demolishing the building from top to bottom and discharging trash from a neighboring cemetery; in order to edify triumphantly on these ruins a basilica dedicated to Saint Prisca, an obscure Christian woman of the 1st century. Moreover, the Christians of the fourth century did not tackle only the worships of Helios, Mithra, and other pagan god-or-demons; but to all the other religions, especially in Gaul, to the religion of the last high-knower of the druidiaction (druidecht), who had supported yet, as we have seen, Constantine; but then also Julian, and this is probably what caused their downfall, as Christians hated the latter. By acting as they did, the Christians applied literally a dictate of the part called Deuteronomy in the Jewish Bible: "Destroy completely all the places where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places." (12: 2-3). The Illyrian Martin, a former Roman legionary who had been ordained, who had been appointed bishop of Tours in 373, founded several monasteries, notably that of Liguge; of which he made a kind of barrack of priests, charged to systematically proceed to the plundering of the pagan temples or to the destruction of the standing stones. These Christian exactions took place, if not with the participation of the authorities, at least without their intervention, when they were not an accomplice of that through their passivity (just as today, *mutatis mutandis*). In 378, at the request of

Damasus, the emperor Gratian ordered the prefects of Italy and Gaul to execute the disciplinary measures rendered by the bishop of Rome; what was acknowledging implicitly the primacy of the Church over the civil authorities?

This second half of the fourth century was marked by internal struggles in which the figure of St. Jerome (around 347-420) appeared to be particularly aggressive.

He translated the Bible into Latin, and it was his text, completed in 383, known as the Vulgate, which would then be an authority in the West, even if it distorted the Hebrew or Greek source text. Roman Christianity is no longer the early Christianity, whatever the idea we may have of it, and under Theodosius, who succeeded Gratian in 379, its triumph will be definitive.

Theodosius the First known as the great (Spain 346 - Milan 395) will be the last emperor to rule alone over the whole Empire (on his death, it will be divided between his two sons, Honorius for the West, and Arcadius for the East).

The predecessors of Theodosius had rallied to such religion or religious expression, had favored it, but had adopted a certain toleration with regard to other beliefs, in so far as they permitted them to subsist. Theodosius will put an end to this toleration by establishing a state religion obligatory for everybody.

ARIAN CRISIS.

Arianism is a theological current of early Christianity, due to Arius, an Alexandrian theologian at the beginning of the fourth century, whose central point concerns the respective positions of the concepts of "God the Father" and "His Son Jesus." The thought of Arianism affirms that if God is divine, his Son is first human, but a human having a share of divinity. It is in fact the traditional Judeo-Christian position and in this sense Arianism is only a resurgence of the Judaism of the first Christians, or of the common sense if you want.

The First Council of Nicaea, summoned by Constantine in 325, rejected Arianism. It was then called heresy by the Trinitarian Christians, but the controversies over the dual nature, divine and human, of Christ, continued for more than half a century or more.

The emperors succeeding Constantine returned to Arianism, and it was to this faith that most of the Germanic peoples, which joined the empire as federated peoples, were converted.

Arianism is therefore the doctrine due to Arius (256-336), an Alexandrian theologian of Berber origin and of Greek language, of the Theological School in Antioch.

The origin of Arian Christology remains controversial. Its first detractors presented it as the teaching of Paul of Samosata, already condemned by several local synods particularly at Antioch in 319, but who kept partisans.

The first Arianism adopts Origen's point of view: the subordinationism, according to which the Son is not of the same nature as God, uncreated and eternal, whereas Jesus is created and temporal. If the Son testifies of God, he is not God, and if the Son possesses a certain degree of divinity, it is of less importance than that of the Father. For Arius, the Father alone is eternal: the Son and the Spirit have been created.

The Arians do not profess therefore the consubstantiality, subsequently adopted by the churches.

The arguments of the philosophical Arianism are derived from the Middle Platonism about the absolute and divine transcendence, and follow a negative theology in order to head towards a strict monotheism in which God is beyond the reach of the mere means of comprehension of the human being.

The quarrel between the Arians and the Trinitarians quickly took a political turn. With the reign of Constantine, Church and State intermingled closely. The emperor appears as the leader of the Christians and presents himself as "the bishop of outside," charged with managing the external affairs of the Church. He intervenes in the church management, marks certain councils with his personal mark, inflects the theological debates, many in this fourth century. One of them, moreover, will preoccupy the emperors for more than half a century: the quarrel about the Trinity.

Arianism starts from a statement of common sense: how can God or the Demiurge be one and three at the same time, even if it appears as such in Scripture? Arius replies that the Word (Christ) is only a creature, having received the privilege of being a Son only by adoption.

Between 318 and 325, therefore the East will tear apart around the doctrines of this Arius, a priest in Alexandria, who gave his name to the doctrine called Arianism. This austere man claims to preserve the pre-eminent rank of the Father, to whom no one, not even the Son, can be compared. Moreover, the Son does not exist from all eternity as the Father, but was created from nothing by the Father. It takes no more to spark things off. Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius and his followers. Indeed, in his eyes the Word (the Son) coexists with the Father from all eternity, so it was not created, and the nature of the Son is equal to that of the Father. Arius did not accept the decision of his bishop and appealed to his supporters, numerous in the East.

It was not the first time this question had been asked, but now that Christianity had become an official religion, it soon became a state affair, and everybody wanted to get involved. The stir of this incident crossed Egypt and caused trouble in other provinces of the Empire. There were even fights in the

streets of the towns, and the Christians became the laughing stock of the pagans, who made fun with parodying their disputes in the theaters.

In order to appease the public nuisances arising from the anti-Arian crisis, Constantine gathers a council in his palace of Nicaea (present-day Turkey). In less than a decade, the bishops thus passed from the opposition to the imperial honors. They were received with great pomp, but also forced to subscribe to the decisions of the council. These decisions were not due to chance; they had been determined by tactical maneuvers and various imperial pressures. Constantine had every interest in the reign of peace in the Church founded by him.

The condemnation of Arius and the profession of faith of Nicaea were to serve this purpose. Constantine Therefore will impose his views without worrying about the Bishop of Rome (at the time the obscure Sylvester I).

In Nicaea the notion of divine generation appears: Jesus, son of God, was begotten in the bosom of the eternal father and not created. The Church adopts the title of Christ to qualify Jesus. If God and His Son exist, we can also wonder about the oneness of God ... but Jesus's resurrection, basis of Christian belief, implies and engenders this inconsistency that Christians are much difficulty to explain. The Council of Nicaea will consecrate therefore the triumph of the pre-Catholic tendency (from which the Reformists were born) or pre-Orthodox.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325).

As we have seen it many times, the Christian religion is based on a whole series of rather complicated beliefs if one does not want to make it a form of ancestral paganism. As far back as ancient times, it can be seen that it was common to worship gods or demons in groups of three (triads). After the death of the first Christians (of Jewish origin), this notion gradually invaded Christianity. As Will Durant wrote very well, Christianity did not destroy paganism; he adopted it. At the end of the third and fourth centuries, in Egypt, ecclesiastics of Alexandria, like Athanasius, handed down this influence by the ideas that they expressed, and therefore which led to the Trinity. These men themselves acquired great notoriety, and Alexandrian theology was the intermediary between the Egyptian religious heritage and Christianity. For although it is true that Christianity has triumphed over paganism, the fact remains that paganism has succeeded in influencing Christianity. The Trinity is not a doctrine taught by Jesus and his apostles, but a fiction due to the School of the Late Platonists. With the Athanasian creed, the Trinity received a more worked out definition. Athanasius, who was an ecclesiastic, supported Constantine during the Council of Nicaea.

The creed which has his name today declares: "we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal."

Some scholars believe, however, that this creed, quoted for the first time by Caesarius of Arles, was not expressed by Athanasius and that it was probably written in the sixth century in the West, where the Celtic Roman paganism with its triads had once been very flourishing. For the influence of this creed seems at first to have been felt in the sixth and seventh centuries, in the south of France and in Spain. The Church of Germany in the ninth century, and a little later that of Rome, then integrated it into their liturgy.

One of the best ways to get an idea of ??Christian belief is to look at one of its basic texts, its basic credo, also called the Nicene-Constantinople creed; from the name of the two councils (Nicaea and Constantinople) which resulted in this document. This profession of faith is considered ecumenical by the Latin, Reformist and Eastern confessions, and thus characterizes at least 90% of Christians.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS OF THE COUNCIL.

The Ecumenical (or general) Council of Nicaea began on 19 June 325 and ended around 25 July. It was prepared by several meetings of Eastern bishops held at the beginning of the year. It was originally planned to gather it in Ancyra (Ankara, Turkey), but Constantine decided to summon it in Nicaea in order to facilitate the coming of the Western bishops. The apostolic seat in Rome, however, sent only two representatives. Practically, therefore, the audience, with 318 Fathers (conventional figure), was composed only of Eastern bishops. The Arian question, it is true, did not trouble much the minds in the West and it was agreed that the bishops and "faithful" of this part of the Empire would execute in any case the will of the Emperor.

What role Constantine, who was not baptized, did play during the Council of Nicaea? Let us first note that it is he who summons this general council in Nicaea (today Izbik in Turkey). This is the first of its kind. Until then, the councils had not exceeded the regional level. The debates were usually presided over by Constantine himself; during his absences he was replaced by his counselor: Hosius, former bishop of Cordova.

"Constantine, who had gone from Nicomedia to Nicaea, at the news of the arrival of the prelates, wished to take part in their deliberations. On the day marked for the decision of all questions, the bishops went to the great hall of the palace, where they sat according to their rank on seats prepared for them; awaiting, with seriousness and modesty, the arrival of this prince. As soon as they heard the signal, they stood up; and at the very hour he entered, dressed in his purple, covered with gold and diamonds, accompanied, not by his ordinary guards, but only by his Christian ministers. He passed among the bishops, to the front of the assembly, where he stood, until the bishops had prayed him to sit down; after having asked permission, he sat down on a small seat of gold, and immediately all sat down after him at his command. At the same time the bishop, who occupied the first place on the side, stood up and delivered a speech addressed to the emperor, in which he thanked God for the favors with which he had filled this prince. When this bishop had finished speaking, and had sat down, the

whole assembly remained silent, with their eyes fixed on the emperor. Then he looked at them all with a cheerful and pleasant look; and having gathered himself a little, he told them with a gentle and moderate tone, without standing up, that he had desired nothing so much as to see them assembled in the same place; but that he considered the disputes which had arisen in the Church as more dangerous than the wars which had been excited in his dominions.

"Pray," said he, "dear ministers of God, faithful servants of the savior of all men, let peace and concord put an end to your disputes. In this you will do something very pleasing to God, and which will be very advantageous to me." He added, according to Theodoret, but perhaps on another occasion, that as there was no longer any one who dared to attack the Christians, people could not see without pain that they were fighting themselves; especially on subjects for which they had the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. "For the books of the gospels and of the apostles," said he, "and the oracles of the ancient prophets, teach clearly what to believe of the Divinity. It is from these books inspired by God that the explanation of the points which are contested is to be drawn." Constantine having thus spoken in Latin, and an interpreter having explained his speech in Greek language, he allowed the Presidents of the Council to deal with the questions which disturbed the rest of the Church. They began with that of Arius. This heresiarch, who was present, advanced the same blasphemies, of which we have spoken elsewhere, and maintained, in the face of the whole council, and in the presence of the emperor, that the Son of God was born of nothing, that there was a time when he was not. The bishops, among others Marcellus of Ancyra, fought him strongly. Saint Athanasius, who was still only a deacon, discovered with a marvelous insight all his deceit and all his tricks.... Before the Fathers of the Council separated, Constantine wanted that they also took part in the solemn feast of the twentieth year of his reign, which began on the 25th of July in the year 325. He invited them all to his palace, and made their principal ones eat with him, the others at tables placed on both sides of his. This prince, having noticed that some of these bishops had the right eye torn off, and learned that this torture had been the reward of the firmness of their belief, kissed their wounds, hoping to get a particular blessing from this touch. After the feast, he distributed to them a number of presents, in proportion to their merit, and added letters to them, in order to deliver every year in each church a certain quantity of corn to the ecclesiastics and the poor. Then he exhorted them to peace and union, asked them to pray to God for him, and let them return each to their Church." (Adolphe-Charles Peltier, Universal and complete dictionary of the councils).

Hosius of Corduba was one of the principal actors of this Council in Nicaea, and presumably presided over it in the absence of the Emperor, as we have seen. He undoubtedly played a decisive role in the adoption of the term homoousios, "consubstantial" which appears in this text. Hosius was appointed by Constantine to write the document, and Hermogenes, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to write and read it. The original text was therefore written in Greek language. Here it is !

" We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousios) with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence [from the Father] or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion--all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them".

This last paragraph, of course, targeted Arianism. It is nevertheless important to note that the bishops gathered at Nicaea did not really set up the dogma of the Holy Trinity. They mainly ruled on the nature of Jesus.

The role of Constantine was therefore decisive. After two months of fierce debate among the bishops, this pagan emperor decided in favor of those for whom Jesus was God. Why that ? Certainly not because of a conviction nourished by the Scriptures. Constantine had, so to speak, no understanding of the questions raised by the Greek theology. What he understood very well, on the other hand, was that the religious division was a threat for his empire, whose unity he wanted to consolidate.

But tensions continued. The Greek term *homoousios* added by Hosius of Corduba and Constantine, and which means that the Son is perfectly equal to the Father, triggered, once the Council of Nicaea ended, a theological spar which will end only at the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Eastern bishops having retracted, Constantine would not hesitate to excommunicate these recalcitrant ones, who had difficulty with the word "*homoousios* (consubstantial)."

The missionary work of the partisans of Bishop Arius, very active in Germany, continued nevertheless more than ever, with all that this could imply as quarrels among Christians. His condemnation and the profession of faith of Nicaea had as its only object the restoration of peace in the empire. As the expected result was lacking, the Emperor Constantine himself, relying on the advice of his advisers, reversed his decision. He retracted and cleared Arianism. (His successors will align themselves with this position, with a few nuances, except Julian, later called the Apostate, and Valentinian - 364-375 - who will remain faithful to the Nicene belief.) As early as 329, Eusebius of Nicomedia, leader of the Arians at the Council of Nicaea, gets back into the good graces of the imperial court.

In 330, an Arianizing council deposes Eustathius of Antioch, one of the first adversaries of Arius, for sabellianism and immorality; In Egypt itself, a coming together occurs between the Arians and the older schism of Meletius, then directed by John Arcaph. In 330, Eusebius of Nicomedia sent a message to Athanasius asking him to readmit Arius and his group into the Church of Alexandria; the refusal of Athanasius led to the issue of an official letter from the emperor in the same sense. However, a delegation of Meletian bishops to the Imperial Palace of Nicomedia complains of illegal financial abuse from Athanasius.

The Arian party did not give up: a file is pieced together against Athanasius (under the supervision of Eusebius of Nicomedia), accusing him of a tyrannical, even criminal, management of the Egyptian Church.

Finally, it is decided that an assembly of bishops will meet in Tyre in the summer of 335, when all the dignitaries will converge towards Jerusalem where the great church of the Holy Sepulcher is to be inaugurated. About one hundred and fifty bishops will be present under the presidency of Eusebius of Caesarea and in the presence of a representative of the emperor, Count Denys. Athanasius is very firmly urged not to shirk it.

At this council of Tyre, the Arians are present in force, around Eusebius of Nicomedia himself. The debates are very violent and full of sudden developments, the most serious charges are fired from all sides. Finally, a commission is appointed to carry out a further investigation in Egypt, but it is largely dominated by Arians, and can count for its investigations on the support of Flavius Philagrius, newly appointed prefect of Egypt and a notorious Arian sympathizer. Meanwhile Athanasius, accompanied by four Egyptian bishops, embarked for Constantinople, where he arrived on the 30th of October. They approach the Emperor, who is on horseback; the latter, annoyed by their presence, at first refused any interview, but facing their insistence agrees to receive them, and finally writes to Jerusalem in order to convoke in the capital all the bishops who were present at the Council of Tyre.

Meanwhile, the commission having returned to Tyre, the council adopted a resolution deposing Athanasius from his seat.

To finish, then, Arius himself got back in the good graces. After five years in exile, he was invited to resume his duties by the Synod of Jerusalem in 336. But on the eve of the day announced for his official reinstatement, he disappeared suddenly. According to a posthumous anecdote, spread by his sworn enemy Athanasius, Arius would have died in the latrine, of a violent dysentery. "Soon after a faintness came over him, and together with the evacuations his bowels protruded, followed by a copious hemorrhage, and the descent of the smaller intestines: moreover portions of his spleen and liver were brought off in the effusion of blood, so that he almost immediately died."

It is to the reader to appreciate the symbolic significance of this and in the mind of the historian (Socrates Scholasticus) who reported it to us the result of the poisoning of Arius.

When the imperial convocation arrived, it was decided that most of the bishops would return home quietly, and only six of them (including Eusebius of Caesarea, president of the council, and Eusebius of Nicomedia) would talk over in front of Constantine. They make a very serious accusation against Athanasius (leaving out the others besides): he would have threatened to interrupt the annual deliveries of Egyptian grain to Constantinople. Athanasius replied that he would have considerable trouble doing this, that he had no power to do so, but it's no use: on February 5, 336, he had to go into exile in Trier (a measure besides very lenient in view of the enormity of the accusation: Constantine, with no real conviction, probably wanted to get rid of a problem.

But as a miracle, Constantine also died but it is perhaps by an Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia precisely, that he is baptized on his deathbed.

Between 337 and 361, supported by Emperor Constantius II, the Arians re-established their political and religious preponderance, especially during the councils of Sirmium. Constantius II supports Arianism, probably more for political than religious reasons: being himself in Arles in Provence he decides that a council will be held in it to bring to heel the Patriarch Athanasius of Alexandria who opposes not only Arianism, but above all the authority of Constantius II. It is the Council of Arles of 353, presided over by the Bishop of Arles Saturninus. Constantius II arbitrates the sittings and demands the condemnation of Athanasius.

From 361 to 381, the Trinitarians counterattack. The emperor Theodosius I, who favors them, summons the first council of Constantinople, which decided in favor of Trinitarian and anti-subordinationist orthodoxy.

Editor's note.

In the middle of the 4th century, the bishops Photinus in Sirmium, Valens in Mursa in Pannonia and his neighbor Ursacius in Singidunum in Moesia are still Arian. This Arian integration close to the Danube will contribute to the conversion to Arianism of the Visigoths and of the Vandals by the half-Goth half-Greek bishop Ulfilas (311-383). During the dissolution of the Roman Empire, Arianism will fail shortly to prevail over Catholicism. In 589, the Arian king, Reccared I, Visigoth king of Spain, will be the last to convert to Catholicism and the Lombards will be Arian until the middle of the 7th century.

And in 1553, the Spanish scholar and Protestant Reformist Michael Servetus, seen by many Unitarians as a founding figure of their movement and author of the work *De trinitatis erroribus* (On the Errors of the Trinity) will be sentenced to death and burned by his Reformist co-religionists, including John Calvin.

THE EDICT OF THESSALONICA (380).

The edict of Thessalonica was promulgated by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I on February 27, 380. He officialized the Orthodox Catholic worship and made it the only licit religion in the Roman Empire thus prohibiting all the cults known as "pagan." Following this edict the Stoic, Epicurean, Neoplatonist, and skeptic philosophers, were also persecuted.

"Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius Augusti. It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation should continue to profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity.

We want that the followers of this law assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict.

Given in Thessalonica on the third day from the calends of March, during the fifth consulate of Gratian Augustus and first of Theodosius Augustus“.

It should be noted, however, that this formalization of the Christian worship did not benefit the Orthodox Catholic Church. The year following the promulgation of the edict of Thessalonica, the same emperor Theodosius summoned the first council of Constantinople. Its aim was to reconcile Orthodox Catholicism with the sympathizers of Arianism and to deal with the problem of the Macedonian faith. There was also question in it of confirming the Nicene Creed as official doctrine.

ADDITIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

Summoned by emperor Theodosius I in May 381.

This First Council of Constantinople;

- Will ratify therefore the condemnation of Arius,
- Will clarify the doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit: he is God, as the Father and the Son;
- Will approve the symbol of Nicaea (In square brackets the words already existing in the previous version, that of Nicaea).

[Maker] ... of heaven and of earth ... [begotten from the Father] ... before all the ages ... [He came down] ... from the heavens ... [became incarnate] ...from the Holy Spirit, and the virgin Mary He was crucified on our behalf under Pontius Pilate, he suffered, was buried [and rose up on the third day] ... in accordance with the Scriptures ... [he went up into the heavens] and is seated at the Father's right hand , he is coming again with glory ... [to judge the living and the dead] ... his kingdom will have no end ... [and in the Spirit the holy] ... the lordly who is lord and who gives life. It proceeds from the Father.

FINAL RESULT THEREFORE.

"We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

And [we believe] in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us, humans, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. He rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

[We believe] in one holy universal and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

This creed, with a nuance, is today still shared by the three main Christian denominations, and the Christian liturgy still proclaims the same thing today, but with an addition: "It proceeds from the Father ... and the Son": filioque.

This formula - the filioque - which appeared in the 4th century was officially admitted in the West only much later by the Councils of Lateran IV (1215) and Florence (1439). And not in the East in the Orthodox churches.

FIRST COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (431).

(Still the difficulties of Holy Spirit to express itself.)

The Council, convened by the Emperor at the request of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, aims to reconcile the Church as a result of the polemic around the title "Theotokos" "Mother of God" given by popular fervor to Mary. Nestorius proposed to use rather "Christotokos" "mother of Christ or Messiah" which seemed to him to result more from the Scriptures. For Nestorius, the Virgin Mary was only the mother of the man Jesus. In doing so he introduced a subtle distinction (known as hypostatic) between the divine nature (Jesus co-eternal son of God) and the human nature (Jesus son of Mary) of Christ.

Background. End 428, Nestorius writes to the bishop of Rome Celestine I to support his thesis, unfortunately he writes to him in Greek (homoousios christoktos) and not in Latin (consubstantialis). At Easter 429, Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, attacked the theses of Nestorius in his homilies and in a letter to the monks. During the summer of 429, he addresses directly to Nestorius (Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius). Then he makes to be carried to Rome, by the deacon named Posidonius, a Christological file translated into Latin with the mission of accusing Nestorius of being an adoptionist, that is to say, someone who designs Jesus Christ as a man whom God would have invested with his authority symbolized by a dove on the occasion of his baptism by John. Nestorius tries to defend himself and succeeds in persuading the emperor to convene a general council on November 19, 430. He also asks for the support of John of Antioch, Andrew of Samosata and Theodoret of Cyrus.

Simultaneously Cyril gathers on his side a regional synod in Alexandria, which condemned Nestorius again. He sent him a third letter containing 12 very questionable anathemas.

The proceedings of the First Council of Ephesus

The Council was summoned for Pentecost, that is to say on June 7, 431. The convocation letters are addressed to all metropolitan bishops of the Eastern Empire and to some Western bishops.

Only Nestorius, accompanied by fifty bishops and Cyril, at the head of a delegation of eleven bishops, arrived at Ephesus on time. The fifteen bishops of Palestine will not arrive until 12 June under the leadership of Juvenal of Jerusalem. John the Patriarch of Antioch and his 27 bishops who support Nestorius, blocked by bad weather, arrived only on 26 June, the Roman legates on 10 July alone. Memnon, the bishop of Ephesus, is an ardent supporter of Cyril, to the point of giving Nestorius military protection, for fear of the excessive devotion of his parabolani.

On the day after the date fixed for the opening of the debates, and in spite of the delays, Cyril decides to open the council without further delay and against the advice of Candidian, the Imperial envoy.

The council opened on June 22, 431, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, accompanied by sixteen bishops, faced Cyril of Alexandria and his one hundred and ninety-eight episcopi.

The decision to condemn Nestorius is made the same day and Nestorius is deposed.

On June 26, the 27 Eastern bishops who surrounded John of Antioch arrived, who, finding the council already begun and Nestorius deposed, met, furious and organize a "counter-council" through which they intended to "excommunicate" Cyril, Memnon, Bishop of Ephesus and their followers, and cancel the already taken decisions.

On 29 June, Theodosius II cancels the decisions of 22 June.

On July 10, the Roman legates arrived finally, Arcadius and Profectus, and the priest Philip, delegated by the bishop of Rome Celestine I, who at once support Cyril.

On July 11, the papal legates validate the decisions of June 22 in the name of the bishop of Rome, then they depose John of Antioch, Theodoret of Cyrus and about thirty bishops.

Another "heresy" will also be broached during the Council of Ephesus, the Pelagianism, and the Council condemns the Pelagian Coelestius.

On the 22nd of August, Theodosius, extremely displeased, sent Count John to put a little order in all this. Finally, everyone ends up in jail. But while Cyril came out pretty quickly, Nestorius was banished to Petra and then, in 435, to an oasis in the desert (Mecca ?). He remained there until the end of his life. Hence Islam according to some authors.

In 433, John of Antioch, wishing to reconcile himself with Cyril, sent him a letter containing a confession of belief due to Theodoret of Cyrus, one of the great theologians of the Antiochian party; a confession of belief, of which the text made Cyril say, " Let the Heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad! " and therefore received his approval. This is what is called the Formula of reunion of 433, which is usually presented as the dogmatic solution of the Council of Ephesus.

".... We confess, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man composed of a rational soul and a body, begotten before the ages from the Father in respect of His divinity, but likewise in these last days for us and our salvation from the Virgin Mary in respect of His manhood, consubstantial with the Father in respect of His divinity and at the same time consubstantial with us in respect of His manhood. For the union of two natures has been accomplished. Hence we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord...."

Mary being thus defined "Mother of God," Christians find a suitable grave to her and they build a Church to her. Mary's imagery is inspired by ancient statues, of goddess-or-demonesses or fairies and child (mopates) and notably by the statues of Isis, Moon Egyptian goddess-or-demoness, or fairy, with a blue star-studded coat, who holds the child Horus in her arms. The month of May, now consecrated to Mary, was formerly consecrated to Cybele.

Editor's note. The Church of Persia, which was not represented in the First Council of Ephesus, refused its conclusions of the council, and was the first in the East to separate from the Church of Rome.

SECOND COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (449).

Known as "Robber Council of Ephesus" by the supporters of Rome and the Catholic Church and those who do not admit the validity of its decisions.

On the day after the Formula of Union, it is found, in the Alexandrian camp, that too great a part was given to the people of the School of Antioch; those who insist on the two natures, true God and true man, and who are called for that Dyophysites. The Bishop of Constantinople, Flavian, was moved by it, and asks for a provincial council at Constantinople to reject the formula. Eutyches was condemned in 448, but, not agreeing, appealed to the new bishop of Alexandria, Dioscorus. Theodosius II decided to summon a new general council to settle the matter. It will be at Ephesus again in 449. Dioscorus takes advantage of it. He arrives at Ephesus; he is all-powerful, leads the debates and, like Cyril the first time, acts with brutality.

Under the influence of the Patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, the Council caused Flavian to be deposed (he was even beaten by parabolani monks led by a certain Barsumas, a Syrian archimandrite who, at the head of a thousand monks as savage and barbarous as himself, come from Egypt especially, and armed with enormous staves, gave chase to the Nestorians, or destroyed the churches, burned the monasteries, killed or expelled the bishops whom he did not think orthodox.

"At this moment four bishops came to throw themselves at Dioscorus' knees, and begged him to reflect about what he was doing; Flavian, they said, not having deserved the deposition. But Dioscorus repulsed them by saying that he had done his duty. Then, as the bishops insisted, others rushed to inquire what was happening, he stood up angrily, and then appealed to the emperor's officers. The latter, believing that Dioscorus was in danger, brought in the soldiers, who, some with their swords in their hands, others carrying chains as if they were fastening criminals, rushed into the church where they moved aside brutally the bishops who continued to implore Dioscorus.

The tumult was then at its height. Men of the people, the parabolani of Dioscorus, the monks of Barsumas with their clubs, had also invaded the church, uttering ferocious cries: "Death to those who do not want to obey Dioscorus ."

The frightened bishops fled in every corner, but the doors had been closed beforehand in order to collect the voices of this conclave. The bishops of Egypt, joined to the monks and the parabolani, beat all those who pretended to protest. It was decided by Dioscorus that each would sign a blank paper with these words: "I subscribed." And then Dioscorus, accompanied by two scary looking men, went from bench to bench to collect the signatures. Seized with terror, the bishops signed, those who tried to refuse were threatened or even beaten.

The last and most frightful scene of this iniquitous trial remains to be said. Flavian had withdrawn to a corner of the nave, waiting for the moment to go out. Dioscorus saw him and ran towards him, while insulting him; then he struck his face by using his fists, and two of his deacons, seizing the unfortunate bishop by the waist, threw him to the ground. Dioscorus trampled him, striking his ribs and breast with his heel, while the monks of Barsumas, excited by their master, cried out, "Kill him, kill him!" struck Flavian with their sticks and trampled him under their sandals.

Flavian dragged out by the soldiers was thrown half-dead into a dungeon. He was to be taken into exile, but he died en route three days after his condemnation. Such was the triumph of Eutyches and Dioscorus. The latter hurried to Constantinople to set up there a new patriarch. On his return he also stopped at Nicaea, where he improvised a synod of the Egyptian bishops who accompanied him, and then excommunicated the bishop of Rome, as a heretic.

This wrote to Princess Pulcheria, the beloved sister of the Emperor: Ephesus was not a judgment, but a "Robber council." A robber council during which many bishops were deposed (Theodoret of Cyrus, Ibas of Edessa, Domnus of Antioch, Flavian of Constantinople and many others), mostly bishops of the Antiochian tendency. The Monophysite doctrine was thus reinstated, and the Council of Constantinople was annulled. The Patriarch of Alexandria took his revenge.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451).

Fourth and last of the great ecumenical councils which will structure Christianity after Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431).

The Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo I, having refused for various reasons 1) to recognize the Second Council of Ephesus, held in 449, excommunicated the participants in it, and never ceased to try to make convoked a new Council but the Emperor Theodosius refused. His death in 450 changed the situation at the political level.

A new council was therefore summoned to abrogate the decisions of the council of 449, now known as the "Robber (latrocinium) Synod of Ephesus" 1) on the Roman side.

This council will deal with very subtle theological quarrels, but which will have important and still relevant consequences for the Christians in the East.

Summoned by Emperor Marcian, it was opened at Chalcedon on October 8, 451.

During the first session, the proceedings of the "Robber Council" of Ephesus will be re-examined. The Archbishop Flavian of Constantinople is cleared.

On October 13, Dioscorus of Alexandria was summoned to appear, but vainly. He is deposed for having excommunicated the pope, deposed Flavian of Constantinople, received Eutyches in his communion, and also evidently refused to appear.

On October 17, at the request of the imperial commissioners, the council proclaims unanimously the conformity of Leo's Tome (a letter of the bishop in Rome) with the creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, after the bishops of Illyria and Palestine up to this point reluctant, had publicly shown their adherence.

At the sitting of October 22, the council began the elaboration of the definition of the faith. A project is presented by Bishop Anatolius of Constantinople. It provoked the opposition of the Roman legates who threatened to go back to Italy if the Tome of Leo did not appear in the creed. To avoid the separation, a commission is constituted, on the proposal of the imperial commissioners. It gathered, around Anatolius of Constantinople and the three Roman legates, various bishops. It results in a definition of faith, unanimously approved and officially promulgated at the solemn sitting held in the presence of the Emperor Marcian on 25 October.

The monks of Egypt were then admitted into the council, some of whom were abbots, others simple guardians of churches of martyrs, and others who were not known; they were eighteen in all. Among them were Barsumas the Syrian and the Bishop Calepodius. They were made recognize the request they had first presented to the Emperor, and then it was read; another request was made, which they addressed to the council. In the first, they asked the Emperor for protection against the persecution of the clergy, who wished to demand forced subscriptions from them, and to expel them from their monasteries and other churches where they lived. In the second, they prayed that Dioscorus and the bishops who had come with him from Egypt should be present at the council. At these words the bishops exclaimed: Anathema to Dioscorus; and demanded that these monks be expelled. As their request tended chiefly to the re-establishment of Dioscorus, whom they called the custodian of the faith of Nicaea, and threatened to renounce the communion of the council, if their demand was refused; the archdeacon Aetius read the fifth canon of Antioch, which orders that the priest or deacon, who separates himself from the communion of his bishop to hold separate assemblies, must be deposed and then dismissed away as seditious by the secular power, if he persists in his schism. The bishops said: "The canon is right. The magistrates asked these monks whether they should submit to the decisions of the council? They replied that they knew the faith of Nicaea, in which they had been baptized. Aetius urged them on the behalf of the council to condemn Eutyches; They refused, saying that the gospel forbade them to judge.

The session considered to be the fifth took place on 22 October. At the request of the magistrates, they read a definition of faith drafted by the principal bishops of the council. It had already been read

on the 21st, which was a Sunday, before the bishops, who had approved it. It is the creed of Chalcedon:

"Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the Self-same co-essential with us according to the Manhood; like us in all things, sin apart; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Mother of God Ttheotokos) as to the Manhood."

On the 25th of October, the bishops being assembled, the Emperor Marcian came to the council, accompanied by the magistrates who were accustomed to be there, and by several other officers. He harangued the bishops in Latin, which was the language of the empire, then in Greek language....

The seventh, eighth and ninth sessions are dated October 26, because they were held all three on that day. In the seventh, the council confirmed the agreement between Maximus of Antioch and Juvenal of Jerusalem, by which Phoenicia and Arabia remained under the jurisdiction of the Church of Antioch, and the three Palestine under the jurisdiction of the Church of Jerusalem. Theodoret's affair was dealt with in the eighth. He had already been restored to his seat by Pope St. Leo. In the presence of the council he anathematized Nestorius, and whoever did not say that the Virgin is Mother of God, and whoever divides the only Son in two. Etc., etc.

The 28th canon of this council will give the second rank to the Church of Constantinople: "The Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honored with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom."

This canon is not found in the collection of Dionysius the Little, nor in the other Latin collectors, nor even in the ancient Greek collections.

It was written in a small group in order to respond to the intrigues of Anatolius of Constantinople following the fifteenth session of the Council; and became the subject of a great dispute between the Eastern bishops and the legates of the pope, who complained of it in the sixteenth session of November 1. St. Leo would never approve of it. Besides these twenty-eight canons, there are two others in Balsamon, Zonaras, Aristenus, and the other Greek commentators but it appears that they are from a more recent hand.

The 1st declares that a bishop should never be reduced to the rank of priests.

The second granted a time to the bishops in Egypt to subscribe to the letter of St. Leo to Flavian, until the election of a bishop of Alexandria instead of Dioscorus.

The magistrates, without asking for any further explanations, concluded, after having known from the bishops that they had voluntarily subscribed, that the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon would be complied, with this reservation, that when one of the metropolitan primates of the dioceses in Asia, Pontus and Thrace would be elected, and that the decree of his election would have been brought to Constantinople, it would be the choice of the bishop of Constantinople to summon the elected one to ordain him, or to give the permission to have him ordained in the province. The bishops declared that this was their opinion, and asked that they should be allowed to return. But as the legates could not suffer that the apostolic see was lowered in their presence, they demanded either that all that had been done the day before to the prejudice of the canons was revoked, or that their opposition should be inserted in the acts, in order that the Pope could make his judgment on the contempt of his see and the overthrow of the canons. Their remonstrance was without effect. The magistrates concluded the session, which was the last, by saying that the council had approved all that they had proposed.

The bishops, before separating, addressed a speech to the Emperor Marcian. The title attributes it to the whole council, which is called holy and universal; but it is believed that it was composed by the legates; what appears not only in the fact that the style of the Latin text is more elegant and natural than the Greek one; but above all because this discourse has no other reason than to justify the letter of St. Leo to Flavian.

Saint Leo, not very sensitive to a title that his successors regarded as profane and imprudent, approved all that had been done in the council of Chalcedon for the cause of faith; but he opposed the twenty-eighth canon vigorously, which regards the prerogatives of the Church of Constantinople, saying that this canon was contrary to those of Nicaea.

The definition of the person of Christ voted at Chalcedon is that which is still today considered orthodox by the Catholic Church but not by some other Churches. The Emperor Marcian, through the intransigence of his attitude in the Council of Chalcedon, caused nevertheless many divisions in the Church, between East and West, and even within the Church of the East.

At the Council, the formulation of the "profession of faith" was contested by the Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria. The destitution (for disciplinary reasons) of the patriarch led to the refusal by the Church of Alexandria of all the decisions of the council. The Church of Antioch, also for the Monophysite formula (a single nature uniting the divine nature and the manhood) followed the Church of Alexandria in its refusal, thus creating the scission known as Monophysite. The Church of Armenia, which was not represented in the Council of Chalcedon, will join them in 506.

And the Bishop of Rome, on his part, refused therefore to accept the twenty-eighth canon of the council, which, by attributing to the city of Constantinople the title of "New Rome," thus granted it the primacy over the other Patriarchates in the East.

1) The Bishop of Rome and his followers put forward the role played in this council by the parabolani of the Archimandrite Barsumas.

During the Second Council of Ephesus held in 449, they were indeed guilty of all kinds of violence. Robber synod of Ephesus (in latin *latrocinium*) is the name commonly given by its opponents, including the Roman Catholic Church, to this council, which took place from August 8 to 22, 449. It was summoned by Theodosius II to settle the case of Eutyches, condemned by the Patriarch of Constantinople Flavian, for having taught that Christ had only one nature after the Incarnation. The Council brought together some 140 bishops, including two legates of the Roman Patriarch who opposed the debates. Under the influence of the Patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, the Council caused Flavian to be deposed (even beaten by the parabolani monks) 2 led by a certain Barsumas, a Syrian archimandrite who, at the head of a thousand monks as savage and barbarous as him, had come especially from Egypt, and armed with enormous sticks, gave chase to the Nestorians. See above.

2) A name that ecclesiastical authors give to monks who devote themselves to the treatment or funerals of the sick and especially of the plague-stricken. In French (according to my usual pen friends): parabolains, parabolans, parabolants.

The origin of the word gives rise to a polemic. A gladiator specialized in the fight against animals was also called parabolos or parabolarios,

It was the personal guard of certain bishops, responsible for the burial or cremation of the dead, and especially the dead of the plague. There were some of them in all the great Churches of the East as soon as they were legalized by Constantine. The city of Alexandria housed the largest number of them. The violence and intolerance that they showed under the patriarchate of St. Cyril, against the unfortunate Hypatia, prompted the Emperor to deprive him from the right to choose them, and to reduce their number to five or six hundred. They were forbidden to attend shows, public meetings, even trials, unless they were personally involved, or to represent their fraternity. And in this case they were not allowed to be more than two at a time. But these restrictions were transitory and ineffective. The princes and magistrates regarded them as a kind formidable men, accustomed to despise death, and capable of the worst violence, if, going out of the bounds of their functions, they dared to interfere in what concerned the government.

FALL AND END OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE.

In 382, the military situation of the Roman Empire in the East was improved. The following year (383), in order to establish his dynasty, Theodosius elevated his son Arcadius, barely three years old, to the dignity of Augustus (co-emperor). But if Theodosius had been rather "soft" with the external enemies, his behavior towards the internal, political and / or religious opponents, on the other hand, was marked by much less evangelical gentleness.

A fanatical supporter of the theses of the Council of Nicaea, Theodosius authoritatively imposed the Nicene canons and, consequently, energetically opposed Arianism. As soon as he arrived in his capital of Constantinople, he summoned the Arian patriarch and ordered him to choose between a conversion to orthodoxy and a rigorous exile. The obstinate prelate chose exile. Deploying his troops in the vicinity and in the cathedral himself, Theodosius, who had just been baptized, immediately enthroned Gregory of Nazianzus, a fanatical orthodox Christian Taliban (a parabolanus), instead of the exiled heretical bishop. Theodosius then sent the army to the four corners of his empire in order to force all the Arians to submit under death penalty. The heretical churches were destroyed and the sacred books of the Arian Church given up to the flames, in merry public burnings.

The Arians were not the only ones to incur the inquisitorial rage of this Taliban or Parabolanus of Christianity. The heretics of all kinds were not the only persons to undergo his wrath! In fifteen years of reign, the emperor promulgated not less than fifteen edicts of persecution. One per year.

Around 385, the military situation began again, alas, to get worse for him, and Theodosius was compelled to leave Constantinople in order to deal himself with Western businesses.

Revolted against the emperor of the West Gratian, the legions of (Great) Britain had proclaimed emperor their commander-in-chief Maximus (Magnus Maximus, Welsh Macsen Wledig). The latter equipped a fleet and invaded Gaul. All the forces of Gratian immediately rallied to him with enthusiasm. The emperor of the West, seized with panic, fled precipitately, accompanied only by a few cavalry men who had remained faithful to him. All the towns closed before him with the exception of Lyons. It was there that killers in Maxim's pay caught up to him and cut his throat (25 August 383).

The first care of Maximus was to attempt to be recognized by his counterpart Theodosius, who ruled the Roman East. He succeeded in it without too much trouble. The Emperor of the East was, in fact, much too weakened by his war against the Goths to think of avenging Gratian, to whom, nevertheless, he owed his crown.

This precarious peace therefore ensured to the usurper the free possession of (Great) Britain, Gaul, and Spain.

Maximus settled his capital at Augusta Treverorum (Trier), today in Germany. He became a popular emperor although also persecuting the heretics. In particular he made executed the bishop of Avila named Priscillian, a striking figure of the heresy having his name: Priscillianism.

His teaching was strongly influenced by Gnostic theories ...

- The soul is created by God, body and matter by the principle of Evil.
- The stars and the Zodiac determine the destiny of the soul.
- The three names of the Holy Trinity designate one person. According to Raymond Brown, the source of the Johannine Comma would be the Priscillian's "Liber Apologeticus." Specialists call Johannine comma a short incision or interpolation having been until a recent date in the biblical text of the first letter of John 5: 7-8 , that is to say the following words: "The Father, the Word and the Spirit and these three are one. "

These beliefs led him to practices deemed suspect: fasting on Sundays, and especially desertion of church for retreats in the country. The sect allowed women to teach within it.

This heresy, also inspired by Manichaeism and pantheism, was condemned for the first time at the Council of Saragossa on October 4, 380. Two bishops, Ithacius, Bishop of Ossonuba, and Hydatius, Bishop of Merida, asked the Emperor to take action, what was perhaps the first intervention of the secular power in the affairs of the Church. Priscillian and his disciples were exiled; they went to Rome to get a pardon from Pope Damasus I. who refused it. An imperial official nevertheless dispensed them from their exile by a rescript, and Priscillian therefore returned triumphantly to Spain at the end of 382.

Hydatius then flees from Spain, and goes to meet in Trier the new emperor Maximus, who was of Spanish descent. The latter convoked Priscillian before a council at Bordeaux, but the bishop preferred to be tried by a secular tribunal in Trier. He is nevertheless condemned (for civil reasons: magic) with his disciples (seven capital punishments and several condemnations to exile) and Euchrotia, a woman who would have welcomed him with a little too eagerness in Bordeaux.

Met by Ambrose of Milan (delegated by the young Emperor Valentinian II), Saint Martin of Tours asks for the life spared for Priscillian. Ambrose renounces, threatened with death by the Emperor but Martin gets that the disciples of Priscillian are not prosecuted. Subsequently, Martin of Tours still refused to take part in the bishop assemblies, which, with his efforts to save Priscillian from death, caused him to be suspected of heresy in turn.

Thereafter Emperor Theodosius I annulled Maxim's decisions in this matter; Ithacius was deposed a few years later, and Hydatius resigned his office of his own.

The ascetic teaching of Priscillian left a deep mark in the north of Spain and the south of Gaul; where mystical asceticism then often led to extremes in different forms (see the Cathars). But the official teaching of Rome did not allow this asceticism to be imposed as an ideal and a duty to every Christian. Priscillian therefore perished perhaps for having too much insisted on this ideal.

Some writings of Priscillian, recognized as orthodox, were not burned. They contain a strong incitement to personal piety and asceticism, especially celibacy, and deprivation of meat and wine. He also affirms that slavery must be abolished among Christians, and that differences based on sex are not relevant. This did not go without saying in Christendom at that time. He also affirms that divine grace spreads over all believers, and that the study of the Scriptures takes precedence. Like many Christians of the fourth century, Priscillian also worked much on writings later considered apocryphal.

Priscillian was long honored as a martyr, especially in Galicia, and in northern Portugal, where it is claimed that his body would have returned. Some claim that the body found in the eighth century and identified as that of Santiago - de Compostela- would be in fact that of Priscillian.

The Priscillianist bishops made their submission to the first council of Toledo (400), but the heresy continued to spread as well in Spain as in Gaul, in spite of the measures taken against it. In 412, Lazarus, Bishop of Aix-en-Provence, and Heros, the Bishop of Arles, were dismissed from their sees for this reason. Proculus of Marseilles and the metropolitan primates of Vienne or of Narbonese Gaul, were also very close to them.

Turibius, the bishop of Astorga, undertook to suppress this heresy, by having a new council summoned at Toledo in 447; and the Priscillianist profession of faith was again condemned in 563 to the first council of Braga, if any proof were needed, of the establishment of its doctrine. His astrological determinism is still evoked in a homily of Pope Gregory the Great, after 600.

But let us return to Valentinian II, the younger brother of Gratian. He was only twelve years old at the time and it was Justina, his mother, who ruled his "rump-Empire" in his place (in fact, Italy and North Africa).

Not for a long time ! Maximus began to eye the territories held by the last representative of the Valentinian dynasty. It is true that the political situation was most favorable to him: the Empress-mother Justina, a fanatical Arian, and the very Orthodox Bishop Ambrose of Milan, were even no longer able to stand their sight. The bad-tempered prelate gave rise daily to violent riots against the empress, while the heretic Justina chewed over dark plans for the assassination of the bishop and the massacre of his followers.

An edict of Toleration, promulgated by Justina and putting Arians and Catholics on the same footing, seemed somewhat to neutralize the crisis, but this respite was short-lived. From the top of his pulpit Ambrose began again to incite his flock to civil disobedience, wanting clearly some heavenly intervention which would save orthodoxy from the mortal danger that the young emperor and his heretical mother formed!

It was not the heaven that heard the plea of the Archbishop of Milan, but the usurper Maximus. Imitating the strictest orthodoxy, and with the support of the partisans of Ambrose, he invaded Italy (387). Valentinian and his mother could not resist this landslide. They fled to the East to demand justice and compensation from the Emperor Theodosius, ally or in debt person of the Valentinian family.

Theodosius remained insensible neither to the tears of the young Valentinian, nor, it is said, to the charms of his mother Justina. Posing as only precondition for his intervention in Italy the renunciation to their heretical beliefs (for Theodosius was a good Catholic), he at once promised to restore the young emperor on his throne.

The winter of 387-388 was spent in military preparations. In the spring, having assembled all the forces of the East, both Roman and barbarian, Theodosius attacked Maximus. The Roman emperor of the East had prepared for a long and trying campaign, but two months were enough to defeat the murderer of Gratian. On the Sava (an affluent of the Danube), the Hun, Alan, and Goths cavalry men of Theodosius defeated the Germans and the Gauls of Maximus. The usurper fled from the field of battle, sought refuge in the stronghold of Aquileia, but was given up to the Emperor (of the East), who caused him to be executed (August, 388).

The destiny of the family of Maximus is not known to us although it seems certain that they survived and that its descendants continued to occupy important functions. A daughter of Maximus, Sevira, is perhaps known by a stone engraved of the Early Middle Ages in Wales, the Pillar of Eliseg, which claims that she was the wife of Vortigern, king of the Britons. Another of his daughters was perhaps the wife of Ennodius, proconsul of Africa (395). Their grandson, Petronius Maximus, was another emperor of fatal destiny, governing Rome for only 77 days before being stoned to death by fleeing the Vandals on 24 May 455. Among his other descendants are Anicius Olybrius, emperor in 472, as well as several consuls and bishops such as St. Magnus Felix Ennodius, Bishop of Pavia (514-21).

Theodosius entered as a victor in Milan, and restored his young protege to his imperial functions. Bishop Ambrose, who had prudently avoided supporting Maximus too openly, was not troubled. It is true that Valentinian II and his mother had deprived him of all reason to do so, since they had abjured the Arian heresy.

Having sent Valentinian II to Gaul, Theodosius reserved for himself the administration of Italy, and therefore remained at Milan.

Theodosius was apparently a good general, but we can doubt his qualities as a statesman.Indeed, he hid under his look of devout (even fanatical) good a cruel and sanguinary temperament. The case of Thessalonica (390) was the dramatic example of it.

Theodosius went even farther! Also in 390 he published an edict which forbade the worship of the gods throughout the Roman Empire.

This edict, which Christian historians still present today as a blessing, was the occasion of a gigantic antipagan pogrom. From north to south, from east to west, the hatred of Christians for the ancient civilization manifested. In Gaul, our good Saint Martin of Tours, who was satisfied with a half-cloak in winter, a kind of Christian Taliban too, traversed the countryside, accompanied by a horde of uncultivated and fanatical monks; destroying all the symbols of ancestral religion, and converting the recalcitrant pagans, one wonders how (some demonstrations or deployments of power ??).

As we have seen it, in the East also, Theodosius had taken measures against paganism, and had ordered the closure of temples in Asia or Egypt. Many temples were destroyed by popular fury. In Alexandria of Egypt, it was even a civil war. The eager bishop Theophilus, impatient to seize the riches of the temple of Serapis, made the building which was defended by a few determined pagans attacked. The temple was destroyed and the unfortunate pagans massacred by hordes of uneducated monks (parabolans) come from the four corners of the desert. All the gold of the statues, melted, went to fill the bishop treasure ...

For good measure, these Taliban of Christianity also plundered the magnificent library, burning the books which testified to the genius and wisdom of the crumbling civilization. In Rome, Theodosius imposed, at the instigation of Pope Siricius, a solemn oath to the Roman senators. They had to swear loyalty to Christ. The conscript Fathers complied, hoping for revenge ...

This was not long in coming.

On the 15th of May, 392, the head of the Roman armies of the West, a pagan Frank named Arbogast, assassinated the emperor Valentinian II, to whom Theodosius had given up the Gaul government, and who was staying (more a prisoner than an emperor) in Vienne. Arbogast replaced the last offspring of the Valentinian dynasty by Eugenius, a former professor of rhetoric, who became master of offices. Eugenius was a moderate Christian.

Confronted with the hostility of Theodosius (who was the brother-in-law of the murdered Emperor Valentinian), Arbogast and Eugenius had no other recourse than to rely on the pagan party. In 392, therefore, the restoration of the worship of the former gods was proclaimed in Rome.

But the gladness of the pagans was but a flash in the pan. The armies of Theodosius, composed of Gothic barbarians, crushed the Frankish or Roman soldiers of Arbogast and Eugenius at Aquileia in 394. Arbogast threw himself upon his sword, while Eugenius, given up to Theodosius, had his head cut off on order of the victorious emperor.

Theodosius had, for the last time, restored the unity of the Empire and made the Cross definitively triumph. He could die, his task was accomplished.

This is what he did on January 17, 394.

His death, of course, sounded the death knell of paganism, but also of the unity of the Empire. The latter was divided between the two sons of the devotee Theodosius. The incapable Honorius (11 years old) would govern the West and the weak Arcadius (13 years old) the East.

One emperor never would reign over the whole of the Roman world.

The decay of the Empire will increase the audacity of the popes. Leo I (418-427) will replace with his power the declining authority of the Emperor and the Church will succeed directly to the Roman empire by taking over its bureaucracy as well as its legal formalism.

The sons of Theodosius, Honorius (395-423) in the West, Arcadius (395-408) in the East, went farther; the first especially continued to demolish the temples and even excluded the pagans from public office. During the reign of the successor of Arcadius, Theodosius the Younger (408-450), there were also horrible violences.

The monks and bishops excited against the pagans and the Jews, the Christian peoples, and led fanatical bands to the attacks of temples or synagogues.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria roused the crowd, at least, according to John Toland; The Christian Taliban (the male nurse and grave diggers called Parabolani) enter the city, they massacre those of the Jews or of the pagans whom they meet, they kill Hypatia, burn the libraries (they are the men of one book); and drive out all that is not Christian, in accordance with the old Jewish tradition of the herem or of the scapegoat.

Editor's note. According to John Toland and his book Tetradyms, Hypatia was an intellectual of Alexandria, also famous for her beauty; but this poetess animator of a great school of (non-Christian evidently) philosophy, besides the fact that she was a woman, and a free woman; preferred to remain faithful to the tradition of his forefathers, in the literal sense of the word, since his father was also a scientist and a renowned philosopher.

Below what Socrates Scholasticus says about her:

" Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed. For as she had frequent interviews with Orestes, it was calumniously reported among the Christian mass that it was she who prevented Orestes from being reconciled to the bishop. Some of them therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called Caesareum, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burned them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril, but also upon the whole Alexandrian church. And surely nothing can be farther from the spirit of Christianity than the allowance of massacres, fights, and transactions of that sort. This happened in the month of March during Lent, in the fourth year of Cyril's episcopate, under the tenth consulate of Honorius, and the sixth of Theodosius."

Reaction of the state authorities of the time ?? No one ! This ignoble racist murder remained unpunished!

In 435, Theodosius II and Valentinian III even issued an edict ordering the destruction of the temples " If still there are any standing" this on death penalty. Here is the text.

Theodosian Code 16.10.25 (14th November 435): Emperor Theodosius and Valentinian to Isidore, praetorian prefect. "We forbid to all wicked pagan mind to perform abhorrent immolation of victims and condemned sacrifices and all other practices that have been forbidden for the authority of past sentences, and we demand that all their sanctuaries, temples and sacred places, if still there are any standing, are destroyed under the siege of magistrates and purified by putting in them the sign of

Christian religion. If in front of the magistrate in charge with adequate proof someone will be ascertained to have infringed upon this law, he'll undergo the death penalty."

May all the gods preserve us from the return of such abuses perpetrated with the complicity of the authorities!

But Pope Leo I. Did it again in 463 and 472, by dictating to extirpate at all cost the "defilement" of paganism.

During the reign of Zeno similar scenes were repeated in Antioch. A real fury of destruction! The Christians then acted as if they wished to annihilate even the memory of the former world, in order to prepare the reign of their master. Those who wished to continue to follow the ancient cults were considered enemies, not only of the Pope but also of the Empire. They were regarded as bad citizens or bad subjects. The action of Saint Martin is the perfect illustration of this.

486. Battle of Soissons. Political end of the last piece of the Western Roman Empire, the Gallo-Roman cities administered by Syagrius between the Loire and Meuse rivers: Reims, Paris, Orleans, Angers. Clovis crushes Syagrius and his last faithful who had taken refuge in Soissons. Birth of France. Clovis made a pact with Bishop Remi of Rheims. FAMOUS EPISODE OF THE SOISSONS VASE.

Beginning of the pro-Catholic religious policy of Clovis who will be baptized a few years later. In July 511 he summons a Council of Gaul in Orleans. This council was crucial in establishing the relationship between the king and the undivided Church. Clovis does not pose as head of the Church as an Arian king would, do, he cooperates with it and does not intervene in the decisions of the bishops (even if he summoned them, asks them questions, and promulgates the canons of the council), taking then the same attitude as Constantine at the Council of Nicaea. From this Great Council of the Gauls will result 31 canons sealing the alliance of the kings of France and the Church...

The appointment of bishops and abbots is the responsibility of the king; their ordination is ratified by three local bishops, and only after all the bishops have been notified by mail (which is one of the provisions of the Council of Riez of 439). A lay person cannot be appointed a bishop, except in exceptional cases. Church property is declared tax-exempt. Clerics are no longer subject to civil justice, but to the ecclesiastical courts.

The Christian Church became quickly dominant, and its power from then on was exercised to the detriment of the religious freedom of yesteryear. This original anti-goy racism turned in anti-pagan racism explains its animosity against the faithful of the former religions and against the worshipers of Mithra or Sabazius. The pagan Gallo-Roman temple in the Halatte Forest near Senlis seems to have been abandoned at that time.

In short as soon as it was armed, it directed the secular arm against the Jews and the pagans. Those who sacrificed to Esus Mars like those who sacrificed to YHVH were pursued with the harshest of severities, and religious anti-Judaism went hand in hand with anti-paganism.

ADDENDUM. NOTES ON SOME OTHER PERSECUTIONS LOCALIZED IN TIME AND SPACE.

THE PERSECUTION OF DOMITIAN: 90.

The writings of Eusebius of Caesarea dating from the 4th century affirm that Jews and Christians suffered severe persecutions towards the end of the reign of Domitian.

But even if the Jews were heavily taxed under Domitian, no contemporary source mentions trials or executions for a religious reason, except for offenses against the Roman religion, what would be called today for racism anti

The historians Cassius Dio and Suetonius report only that Domitian made the citizens "who lived as Jews" sought in order to make them pay the *fiscus iudaicus*.

The *fiscus iudaicus* was established by Vespasian around the end of the first Judeo-Roman War, in 73, when the siege of Masada was under way. It was a measure of retaliation towards the vanquished. This tax was technically modeled on the annual tax of half a shekel ordered by the Torah for the maintenance of the Temple in Jerusalem. Only the one who had given up Judaism was exempted from it. Domitian applied this tax with extreme rigor: he generalizes it to all those who behave "more Judaico" (as Jews), and causes the procurator and his agents to carry out genealogical investigations to flush out "crypto-Jews". The satirist Martial alludes to Jews trying to hide the visible sign of their religion.

This policy encourages a climate of denunciation and blackmail in Rome and throughout Italy, as the accusation of Judaism is easy to make and difficult to disprove.

The ancient historian Cassius Dio reports that among the arrested persons were the consul Flavius Clemens (same name as the fifth or third pope). He was Domitian's own cousin. It is not proved that Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, who were placed among the martyrs of this reign, were Christians. But naturally, Christians were threatened by such a regime; nevertheless, if they suffered from it, it was not especially because of their religion.

It does not appear that any of the *presbyteri* or *episcopi* of the Church has suffered martyrdom. Among the Christians who suffered, neither appears to have been thrown to the beasts in the amphitheater; for almost all of them were members of the relatively high classes of the society. As under Nero, Rome was the principal place of this violence; there were also, however, vexations in the provinces (Suetonius remembers having seen a 90-year-old man naked to check if he was not circumcised). The so-called "Domitian persecution" was therefore probably only the suppression of a political conspiracy, against Jewish activists (Zealots) or a family settlement of scores. The religious motives were secondary, if not non-existent. Christians suffered of it only to the extent that their sect was still hardly distinguishable from Judaism at the time.

THE PERSECUTION OF HADRIAN: 117.

Hadrian (117-138) took no new measure against the Christians; he simply confirmed the edict of Trajan by suppressing slanderous accusations and summary convictions, but while declaring that what was contrary to the laws should be punished, and that Christians duly accused and condemned could be given up to the people who demanded them for the amphitheater (the Circus Games).

Antoninus Pius (118-138) followed the same policy.

THE PERSECUTION OF SEPTIMIUS-SEVERUS: 199.

Septimius Severus favored the Christians, probably to strengthen his positions in the East against the usurper Pescennius Niger. According to the Christian apologist Tertullian, it is even thanks to him that Christianity would have received a beginning of official recognition: the Christian associations would have got, in exchange for the payment of an annual royalty the protection of the imperial magistrates. These same Christians nevertheless claim that it was Septimius Severus who in 202 would have been the first emperor to promulgate an edict of general and universal persecution against the Christians.

This emperor would have - the conditional is a requirement, because this edict, whose text is lost, is very controversial - would have taken measures to prohibit Jewish and Christian propaganda as well as conversions to these religions.

THE MARTYRDOM OF SS PERPETUA AND FELICITY, IN CARTHAGE (203) ACCORDING TO A TEXT ASCRIBED TO TERTULLIAN. And if this account is not by him, the preface nevertheless remains very Montanist.

The passion of Perpetua is described as a struggle against the devil represented by a dragon.

One of Perpetua's first dreams in prison was indeed an eschatological scene modeled on the (Carpocratian) Gnostic Christian theme of the good shepherd as well on the Eucharistic liturgy.

First vision.

"Then my brother said to me, 'My dear sister, you are already in a position of great dignity, and are such that you may ask for a vision, and that it may be made known to you whether this is to result in a passion or an escape.' And I, who knew that I was privileged to converse with the Lord, whose kindnesses I had found to be so great, boldly promised him, and said, 'Tomorrow I will tell you.' And I asked, and this was what was shown me. I saw a golden ladder of marvelous height, reaching up even to heaven, and very narrow, so that persons could only ascend it one by one; and on the sides of the ladder was fixed every kind of iron weapon. There were here swords, lances, hooks, daggers; so that if anyone went up carelessly, or not looking upwards, he would be torn to pieces and his flesh would cleave to the iron weapons. And under the ladder itself was crouching a dragon of wonderful size, who lay in wait for those who ascended, and frightened them from the ascent. And Saturus went up first, who had subsequently delivered himself up freely on our account, not having been present at the time that we were taken prisoners. And he attained the top of the ladder, and turned towards me, and said to me, Perpetua, I am waiting for you; but be careful that the dragon does not bite you.' And I said, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall not hurt me.' And from under the ladder itself, as if in fear of me, he slowly lifted up his head; and as I trod upon the first step, I trod upon his head. And I went up, and I saw an immense extent of garden and in the midst of the garden a white-haired man sitting in the dress of a shepherd, of a large stature, milking sheep; and standing around were many thousand white-robed ones. And he raised his head, and looked upon me, and said to me, 'You are welcome, daughter.' And he called me, and from the cheese as he was milking he gave me as it were a little cake, and I received it with folded hands; and I ate it, and all who stood around said Amen. And at the sound of their voices I was awakened, still tasting a sweetness which I cannot describe. And I immediately related this to my brother, and we understood that it was to be a passion, and we ceased henceforth to have any hope in this world."

"After a few days there prevailed a report that we should be heard. And then my father came to me from the city, worn out with anxiety. He came up to me, that he might cast me down, saying, 'Have pity my daughter, on my gray hairs. Have pity on your father, if I am worthy to be called a father by you. If with these hands, I have brought you up to this flower of your age, if I have preferred you to all your brothers, do not deliver me up to the scorn of men. Have regard to your brothers, have regard to your mother and your aunt, have regard to your son who will not be able to live after you. Lay aside your courage, and do not bring us all to destruction; for none of us will speak in freedom if you should suffer anything.'

These things said my father in his affection, kissing my hands, and throwing himself at my feet; and with tears he called me not Daughter, but Lady. And I grieved over the gray hairs of my father, that he alone of all my family would not rejoice over my passion. And I comforted him, saying, 'On that scaffold whatever God wills shall happen. For know that we are not placed in our own power, but in that of God.' And he departed from me in sorrow....

We were taken away to be heard, and we arrived at the town hall. At once the rumor spread through the neighborhood of the public place, and an immense number of people were gathered together. We mount the platform. The rest were interrogated, and confessed. Then they came to me, and my father immediately appeared with my boy, and withdrew me from the step, and said in a supplicating tone, 'Have pity on your babe.' And Hilarianus the procurator, who had just received the power of life and death in the place of the proconsul Minucius Timinianus, who was deceased, said, 'Spare the gray hairs of your father, spare the infancy of your boy, offer a sacrifice for the well-being of the emperors.' And I replied, 'I will not do so.'

Hilarius said, 'Are you a Christian?' And I replied, 'I am a Christian.'

And as my father stood there to cast me down from the faith, he was ordered by Hilarius to be thrown down, and was beaten with rods. And my father's misfortune grieved me as if I myself had been beaten, I so grieved for his wretched old age. The procurator then delivers judgment on all of us, and condemns us to the wild beasts, and we went down cheerfully to the dungeon.

Then, because my child had been used to receive suck from me, and to stay with me in the prison, I send Pomponius the deacon to my father to ask for the infant, but my father would not give it him. And even as God willed it, the child no longer desired the breast, nor did my breast cause me uneasiness, lest I should be tormented by care for my babe and by the pain of my breasts at once...".

" Respecting Felicitas, when she had already gone eight months with child (for she had been pregnant when she was apprehended), as the day of the exhibition was drawing near, she was in great grief lest on account of her pregnancy she should be delayed — because pregnant women are not allowed to be publicly punished — and lest she should shed her sacred and guiltless blood among some who had been wicked subsequently. Moreover, also, her fellow martyrs were painfully saddened lest they should leave so excellent a friend, and as it were companion, alone in the path of the same hope. Therefore, joining together their united cry, they poured forth their prayer to the Lord three days before the exhibition. Immediately after their prayer her pains came upon her, and when, with the difficulty natural to an eight months' delivery, in the labor of bringing forth she was sorrowing, some one of the servants of the Cataractarii said to her, "You who are in such suffering now, what will you do when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised when you refused to sacrifice?" And she replied, "Now it is I that suffer what I suffer; but then there will be another in me, who will suffer for me, because I am also about to suffer for Him." Thus she brought forth a little girl, which a certain sister brought up as her daughter.

The execution therefore could take place on the 7th of March, 203, in the arena of Carthage. Revocatus and Saturninus were thrown to a bear and a leopard. Saturus was thrown to a boar, then to a bear; in spite of all this, he escaped and was taken out of the arena. As for Perpetua and Felicity, the cruelty of the audience was for a time overcome. They were taken out of the arena by the door of the living (Sana Vivaria). Felicity had fainted and did not realize what was going on. After a moment the crowd changed, and demanded that all the sentenced people should be brought back to the center of the amphitheater. After kissing to seal their martyrdom by the kiss of peace, each of them received the mortal blow. Struck between the coasts, Perpetua began to scream and, seizing the uncertain hand of the novice gladiator, guided it herself to her throat.....

Let us remark, to begin, that this edict would have concerned only the proselytism and not the practice of those who were born Christians. The Acts of the Martyrdom of the Montanist St. Perpetua show that those who were born Christians were not worried during his reign. We have the same situation in lands of Islam today.

How to explain this hypothetical turnaround?

First of all, it is obvious that we should not seek religious reasons for the policy of Septimius Severus towards Christians. If the emperor had favored the Christians at the beginning of his reign, it was only because he believed that they would be useful to him in his struggle against Niger. But once the usurper was defeated, these Christians became again for him what they had never ceased to be: some troublemakers, a dangerous threat to internal peace and the external security of the Empire . It seems, moreover, that at the time when Septimius Severus published this edict, Messianic troubles (Jewish, Judeo-Christian, Christic-Judaic ...) would have broken out in Syria. Meanwhile, in Rome, Pope Zephyrinus was not troubled. The anonymous author of the Augustan History seems to confirm that these were indeed very local measures since he writes: " On his way thither (towards Alexandria) he (Septimius-Severus) conferred numerous rights upon the communities of Palestine. He forbade conversion to Judaism under heavy penalties and enacted a similar law in regard to the Christians" (H.A., Sev., XVII, 1). This would explain why only the great cities of the East, especially the bubbling city of Alexandria in Egypt, would have been touched by this edict.

Whatever it be, religious persecution or not, this repression, which soon calmed down, had a negative effect on the Roman Empire. Indeed, in prohibiting Christian propaganda, Septimius Severus inevitably radicalized the movement. Only the "moderate" preachers obeyed the imperial injunction.

The less law-abiding propagandists, the most reckless, the most excited, the most fanatical, the Montanists, for example, had the freedom to propagate their extremist doctrines.

THE PERSECUTION OF MAXIMINUS : 235.

In the eyes of the Christians like Paul Allard Maximinus Thrax also looks like a persecuting emperor. But it is to do much honor to this rustic Maximinus that to attribute to him the least philosophical or religious preoccupation. If a person was far away from all metaphysical preoccupations, it was indeed this uneducated soldier!

The Christians suffered indeed, like other subjects of the empire, from the cruelties of Maximinus Thrax (235-238) but they were specially persecuted on account of their faith only in Pontus and Cappadocia. The local pagans accused them of having brought upon them an earthquake. This persecution, however, only local, was not very violent besides.

In reality, if some Christians "suffered martyrdom" during the reign of Maximinus, it was certainly not because they practiced a religion whose moral superiority might have overshadowed the debauched Maximinus, but only because they had supported his unfortunate predecessor. After having assassinated his predecessor Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax also murdered all the friends and acquaintances of this emperor. Now, according to the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea, the Christians were numerous in his entourage.

The "persecution of Maximinus" therefore is to be considered only as a political purge following a change of regime and as limited in time as in the facts. It should also be noted that in Rome Pope Pontian and the antipope Hippolytus were "only" condemned to the penal colony - a purely political punishment, while the eminent Christian philosopher Origen, a friend of the former Empress-mother Julia Mamaea and occasional tutor of Alexander Severus, escaped himself to any repression. It was, however, a recognized throughout the Empire Christian authority.

Editor's note. As for the persecutions of the same type (localized in time and space), see the three counter-lays devoted to this subject in the very body of the text of this work.

CONCLUSION.

As we have already had the opportunity to say it, the notion of anti-Christian persecution in the Roman Empire remains to be clarified. During the first two centuries, to speak of religious persecution would be an error. Christians are prosecuted (when they are, what is far from being systematic) for crimes under common law. The letter of Pliny in 111/112 illustrates the concrete motive of the condemnations: the refusal to obey the emperor. In this case, the refusal to obey the order to sacrifice. Nothing of a religious persecution in itself.

During the "persecution" of the third century, in the reign of the emperor Decius, the political factors will still be important. In times of serious military crisis, the refusal of Christians to participate in the general sacrifice to the god-or-demons, "for the safety and the preservation" of the emperor, demanded from all citizens, appears as a refusal to prove his political loyalty. In the reign of Diocletian, the vast movement of suppression can have a more directly religious or more politico-religious, foundation, in parallel with the promotion of the sun worship as a national religion (by Aurelian in 274), with the sanctification of the political power (Jovian theology).

The conversion of Constantine will, of course, upset the conditions for the spread of Christianity. But was it the result of an intimate conviction? Should we not see in it some political-religious considerations? The adaptation of Stoic political thought by Christianity was perfectly suited to a strong imperial power, the emperor being the representative of God on earth, and possessing himself a certain degree of sanctification. On the strictly religious level, Neoplatonism and Sun worship (Sol Invictus) prove the evolution of the religious sensibility of the Roman world towards a greater spiritualization, towards a true form of monotheism (or henotheism).

In order to explain the conversion of the lower social strata, several socio-economic factors are also to be taken into account. The church institutions replaced the associations of little people (*collegia tenuiorum*) and looked after the poor, both Christian and pagan. In the countryside, the work of the missionaries well known by the Lives of Saints was undoubtedly decisive. The "miracles" can be part of a polytheistic religious mentality. People rely on the most effective deity. Lastly, the conversion can be based on the political and social authority of the great landowners. When one of them converts, the bishop encourages him to convert the farmers who depend on his authority. North Africa, a region of land "estates," has also known a large spread of Christianity. The success of Christianity, therefore, is not limited to the evolution of religious sensitivity, but also to socio-economic and political factors (i.e., socio-religious and politico-religious aspects).

APPENDIX.

ROME AND THE PAPACY.

The primacy of the apostle Peter has only one biblical foundation, the bad play of words, of which the meaning is contested, found only in Matthew 16: 18-19 and which seems to be a late addition: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church ". Let us insist: that is not found in the corresponding episode of the other two synoptic gospels nor in John and which has little meaning except in French.

The whole in contradiction with the facts.

-The first being that in Jerusalem and for all the dependent communities, against all odds it was a named James the brother of the Lord who was in a way the first pope of the followers of Jesus.

-The second being that the last sure trace we have of Saint Peter it is in the prisons of Herod that we find it, before a very mysterious escape on which we have no credible details (intervention of an angel according to Acts of Apostles, chapter 12), and by contrast that there is no evidence of any stay of St. Peter in Rome.

-The third fact being that, in the time of Constantine the Great, the true pope was in reality the Emperor Constantine himself.

Let us now turn to the details of this imposture in the imposture.

In the second century, the prestige of the Church of Rome grows in the Christian communities scattered throughout the Roman Empire because its bishop is the bishop of the capital. For the Christians indeed, Rome is the city that saw the death of the apostles Peter and Paul. Peter, the first of the twelve disciples of Jesus, mysteriously escaped from the jails of Herod, and Paul, during the reign of Nero, between 64 and 67. This tradition is attested from antiquity, but the texts which recount the crucifixion of the first and the decapitation of the second are nevertheless too late to be conclusive. What is certain in any case it is the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome was built above the place where the relics of Peter would have been transported, and where there is actually a primitive Christian cemetery.

In the middle of the second century, theologians came from different parts of the Empire: Justin arrived from Nablus, Tatian, born in Assyria, Valentinus, a native of Alexandria ... The debates were lively and the division between the " True religion "of the future Catholics or reformists and the Lernaean Hydra of "heresies." This bubbling of ideas leads in some cases to breaks. Around 135 Marcion, born at Sinope, in the Pontus, opposed, for example, the Christian god, good and savior, to the avenging and jealous god of Moses, the creator of this imperfect, even failed, world; and breaks intellectually speaking with the Old Testament, in other words, with Judeo-Christianity. These divergent views led him to found a federation of churches said "Marcionite" by his adversaries first, then by historians, which rapidly swarmed throughout the Empire.

Another current, the Gnosticism, attempts to explain - through complex myths - the presence of evil in the world. In Rome, the most prominent figure of this movement will be Valentinus, who arrived in the capital around 140. His doctrine emphasizes the knowledge (gnosis in Greek) that provides salvation. But Gnostic Christians too will be soon considered heretics by the spiritual ancestors of the future Catholics or Reformists.

The first bishop of Rome to bear the title of pope in history will be Marcellinus (296-304). His pontificate will be hardly exemplary, for he seems to have been a member of the *thurificatii* (*thurificatii* are a kind of *lapsi*, that is, apostates who have agreed to burn a few grains of incense in honor of the gods or of the emperor) or of the traditors (Latin *traditores*) having given up the scriptures during the persecution of Diocletian. That is at least what Donatist sources say (charge brought by Petilianus the lawyer for the Donatists during the Carthage Conference of 411).

There is no official, firm and definitive list of Popes. The reasons why it is impossible to establish such a list are of three kinds.

The first is the very definition of the word pope. Until 325, the men on this list are officially only bishops of Rome. In order to designate the bishop of Rome, the title of Pope is used only with Callixtus I (217-222), but it applies then besides, to bishops in general. It was not until the eighth century that this title would specifically designate the Bishop of Rome. This exclusivity was formalized by the Pope Gregory VII at the end of the eleventh century. Moreover, the role of supreme head of the Church of the Bishop of Rome was affirmed only gradually. The first "popes" had no more powers than an ordinary bishop. The present-day Catholic lists of popes retain only the popes in the modern sense of the word, that is they mention the bishops of Rome to the present pope. The term pope is therefore applied retroactively to men who did not use this title. And these lists evidently leave aside the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the other Christian churches also using the title of Pope.

The second difficulty is that very little is known about the early bishops of Rome. For some, only their name is known to us. The oldest source in this area is Irenaeus of Lyons in the 2nd century, which gives the names of the holders of the principal bishop sees (Rome, Constantinople, Antioch ...). There are other nevertheless more complete sources, such as the *Liber pontificalis*, an apologetic document whose first version dates back to the 5th century. It gives the names of the popes, as well as that of their father, their native country, and the length of their pontificate. This document has surely been written using older sources and probably contains a large piece of real information, but the data on these early popes are nevertheless very fragmentary and questionable.

Finally, the third difficulty lies in the history of the papacy itself, which has experimented seen many antipopes, depositions, assassinations and some renunciations. Moreover, the modes of the election (or appointment) and enthronement have changed several times over the centuries so that a pope elected on a certain date under certain conditions would be considered as invalidly elected if he had been elected on another date, hence the treatment different granted to Stephen I and to Adrian V, to take only this example.

The first, regularly elected in 752, died three days later before being consecrated bishop of Rome (and will not be retained as a pope); and the second, elected pope in 1276 when he is still only a simple deacon, will never be enthroned (but nevertheless is in the aforementioned lists as a pope).

To establish who is a regularly elected and enthroned pope, and who is not, is therefore sometimes hazardous. The various circulating lists therefore sometimes contradict each other with regard to the "validity" of this or that pope.

That of the *Annuario Pontificio*, published annually under this name by the Vatican since 1912, is considered to be the most authoritative, since coming from the Catholic authorities themselves. However, this list, although it serves as an official list, de facto, is not without ambiguities and does not pretend to be definitive.

The list of the *Annuario Pontificio* indicates both the popes and the antipopes. The latter are clearly indicated as such by a different typography, but footnotes disclose doubts about the regularity of a particular Pope or, on the contrary, about the exclusion of such and such antipope. The authors of this list therefore acknowledge the questionable and non-definitive nature of their own choices. It has happened several times that two (or more) rival popes have reigned at the same time. This list, for the most part, recognizes only one and therefore declares the other antipopeS. But in some cases, however, the authors refuse to decide. Here are two examples.

Pope Leo VIII was elected during the life of his predecessor, who had been deposed by the emperor Otto I in 963, but did not admit his deposition. John II quickly regained power and, on his death, Benedict V is elected to succeed him. After the arrest of Benedict by the Emperor Otto, Leo could reign. The list of the *Annuario Pontificio* therefore admits the three Popes: John XII, Leo VIII and Benedict V., as all three potentially legitimate, and in this order, which is that of their election, not that of their effective reign. The list nevertheless indicates in his footnotes: "If the deposition of John XII was illegal, then Leo VIII is an antipope" and "if Leo VIII is a legitimate pope, then Benedict V. is an antipope."

The difficulties of the period from 1045 to 1048 when Benedict IX, Sylvester III, Gregory VI, Clement II and Damasus II, disputed the tiara (a word of Persian origin besides); have been resolved by the recognition of all these popes as legitimate with three valid and non-consecutive reigns for Benedict IX! These pontificates corresponded in fact to the periods when the different competitors occupied successively the city of Rome. The *Annuario Pontificio* therefore only recognizes the pretenders who reigned de facto over the Church, without settling the question of the regularity of their election. This choice of the authors of the list therefore entails in fact the recognition of the legitimacy of Sylvester III, although the vast majority of historians agree to deny it to him.

The first thirteen bishops of Rome.

The beginning of this list is apocryphal (attributed to St. Irenaeus in the second century, but in fact written by Eusebius of Caesarea, called Eusebius the liar, in the fourth century); no serious historian could ever prove the existence of these characters, even, in the case of Peter, his coming to Rome.

Peter I - Saint Peter -: (30 to 64? Or 67? would be dead a martyr, crucified head down). There are, in fact, two skulls of Saint Peter in Rome, one outside the walls - which is, moreover, a female skull - and another in the Vatican ... we can see in the museum of Saint Peter's Basilica a copy of his wooden throne ... it is amusing because, even supposing that the character really existed, he was only the leader of a community of a few dozen clandestine believers, so what good is a throne? As for the excavations started in 1939 under the present-day Saint Peter's Basilica, in order to find his tomb, the results (validated by the Vatican) leave us perplexed!

In any case, Saint Peter is not the founder of the Church in Rome, in the meaning of "to create something where nothing previously existed in this field." Tacitus [in his] *Life of Claudius*, indicates the existence of a Christian community in Rome before the hypothetical arrival in this city of the saint apostles Peter and Paul. The length of twenty-five years of "Roman papacy" for St. Peter is mythical, not even legendary.

St. Peter, prince of the apostles, was never "Pope of Rome," but an apostle. None of the apostles, even having founded various churches, was anything but an apostle. (1 Cor 12:28, etc.). See the total absence of references to Peter in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. It would have been impossible, if Peter had been in Rome at that time, to act in this way. When Peter was in Galatia, Paul mentioned him. So if Peter is mentioned when Paul writes to a community where Peter stands, for Rome, it could not have been otherwise. In the Acts of the Apostles, it is the same thing, the complete silence. Now, when Paul at the end is in Rome, that is quite impossible to justify, if Peter had been present at that time, or at least "founder" of its community.

When you read the epistle of St. Clement, 3rd "presbyter" of the Romans (title given in Eusebius and other ancient authors to the first bishops of Rome); there is not the least mention of a bishopric of Peter in this city, and three lines for someone to whom you would have "succeeded" is a little short. Especially when Paul himself is entitled to much more. In chapter 5, Peter it is the verse 4, but Paul the verses 5-7. Eusebius is truly reliable only when he cites texts from others, for when he quotes somebody, everybody could verify. But many chronological problems arise when Eusebius draws his conclusions on the basis of the evolutions of the tradition.

Peter: 32-66 (to see above).

Linus: 67? - 76? Martyr? Beheaded? Perhaps mentioned by Saint Paul in his second letter to Timothy. This character whose history knows nothing else, nevertheless inspired Anthony Burgess for his novel "The kingdom of the wicked" (1985).

Anacletus I (or Cletus): 76? - 88? Martyr? The name is a problematic reconstruction.

Clement I: 88? - 97? Martyr? Thrown to the sea? Judaeo-Christian author of a whole literature (really due to his hand or which has been ascribed to him, like the homilies or the recognitions).

Evaristus: 97? - 105? From Antioch).

Alexander I: 105? - 115? Martyr? - beheaded?

Sixtus I (or Xystus): 115? - 125?

Telesphorus: 125? - 136? Martyr?

Hyginus : 136-140. Against Gnosticism.

Pius I: 140? - 155? Martyr? Brother of Hermas? Helped by Justin in his difficult criticism of Gnosticism.

Anicetus: 155? 166? Martyr? Would have decreed that priests should not have long hair (?)

Soter: 166? - 175?

Eleutherus: 175 - 189? More interesting character. Last pope of the list of Irenaeus. Began by being favorable to Montanists before becoming hostile to them. During his pontificate, the Emperor Commodus who reigns from 180 will exercise no persecution against the Christians. According to the Liber Pontificalis an edict of Eleutherus specifies to the Christians that no food is impure : " Et hoc iterum firmavit ut nulla esca a Christianis repudiaretur, maxime fidelibus, quod Deus creavit, quæ tamen rationalis et humana est » in order to fight practices inherited from Jewish dictates on the purity of food (their kosher or not characteristic). According to the same source, Eleutherus would have sent missionaries to convert the Bretons at the request of King Lucius. Abgar IX, ruler of the small kingdom of Osroene capital Edessa (southeast Turkey northeast Syria), ally of the Roman empire, would also have sent him a request for missionaries.

Victor I: 189 – 199. First pope of Latin language. Begins to impose himself as central power, comes to gather other bishops to decide on certain things.

Zephyrinus: 199-217, martyr? Hippolytus of Rome spoke much evil and made fun of him.

Calixtus I (or Callistus): 217 - 222, martyr? Apparently had a very eventful life, according to the same Hippolytus of Rome. Died defenestrated? Thrown into a well?)

Hippolytus: 217 – 235. A Roman scholar, Greek writer, deported to Sardinia. He opposed Popes Zephyrinus and Calixtus, but was reconciled with Pontian. Is honored as the first antipope of history. Author of numerous works still authoritative of which his famous Refutation of all the heresies (Philosophumena).

Urban I: 222 – 230. Decapitated.

Pontian : 230 – 235. Organized a synod in Rome in 231 in order to confirm the condemnation of Origen. Sentenced to hard labor in the mines of Sicily where he died of exhaustion, but resigned from his office just before (first date attested in the history of the papacy).

Anterus: 235 – 236. Reigned 6 weeks. Would have ordered the collection of the acts of the first martyrs.

Fabian: 236 – 250. Important pontificate which lasted 14 years despite the rather unlikely characteristic of his election (by a dove). Tortured to death or died from ill treatments in prison?

Cornelius: 251 - 253. The Roman Catholic spokesman of the time, resisting the persecution of Decius, is an intellectual called Novatian. But the lapsi or Christians who had "failed" during this persecution caused to be elected in his place the priest called Cornelius, a supporter of the reinstatement of the lapsi or "fallen."

Novatian: (251 - 258? Novatian makes himself recognized the bishop of Rome by a certain number of Italian bishops, rigorists like him. He will thus cause a schism that will eventually move closer to a similar movement in North Africa, the Donatism. Exiled or martyred during the persecution of Trebonianus Gallus.

Lucius I: 253 – 254. Martyr (or died of an epidemic). He also in favor of the indulgence towards Christians who had failed during the persecution.

Stephen I: 254-257. Becomes angry with everyone what could have been dramatic for the future of Christianity but fortunately he will die a martyr beheaded in 257.

Sixtus II: 257-258. Avoids the schism but emperor Valerian (253-260) attacks the hierarchy and wealth of the Church (already!) and makes the Pope decapitated with (among others) four deacons ... during an office.

Dionysius (or Dionysios): 260-268. Nothing to report. First Pope not to be a martyr.

Felix I: 269 – 274. The Liber Pontificalis seems to mix him up with another one named Felix. He is no longer considered a martyr by the Catholic Church.

Eutychian: 275-283. Last pope whose epitaph will be written in Greek language.

Caius (or Gaius): 283 - 296. Member of a noble family linked to that of the emperor ... Diocletian. His nephew perhaps (for this emperor did not begin by being hostile to Christianity since his wife Prisca was herself Christian).

Marcellinus: 296-304. The Donatist Petilianus accuses him of having been during the persecution of Diocletian one of the thurificati or even of the traditors (latin traditores), that is to say of the clergymen having delivered the Scriptures to the authorities. (There were.)

Appearance of the title of Pope.

Marcelus I: 308-309. Marcellinus and Marcel I are perhaps the same person ... we are sure of nothing. Martyr? (Or exiled ... or enslaved in the stables of Emperor Maxentius ?)

Eusebius: from April to August 309 or 310, exiled.

Miltiades (or Melchades): 311 - 314. Moves in the palace of the Lateran offered by the Emperor Constantine in 312.

The year 312 can therefore be considered as the foundation date of the Catholic religion as an official institution. At that time, the Emperor Constantine takes power, and entrusts his secretary Eusebius of Caesarea with the task of codifying the structures of the Church, even of fixing the dogma.

Sylvester I: 314 - 335. But the true pope, it is the emperor.

Mark: from January to October 336. Especially known for his struggle against Arian heresy.

Julius I: 337 - 352. Same thing.

Liberius: 352-366. The *Annuario Pontificio* no longer recognizes him as a saint because of his turnaround facing Saint Athanasius of Alexandria.

Felix II: 353 – 365. An antipope designated in the place of the one moment exiled Pope Liberius. On his return, Felix fled to Campania to die there.

Damasus I: 366 – 383. Son of a priest named Antonius. His election was one of the bloodiest in the history of the papacy: the followers of Damasus storm a church and make a hundred dead.

AFTERWORD IN THE WAY OF JOHN TOLAND.

Pseudo-druids with fabulous initiatory derivation (the famous and indescribable or hilarious perennial tradition) having multiplied since some time; it appeared us necessary to put at the disposal of each and everyone, these few notes, hastily written, one evening of November, in order to give our readers the desire to know more about true druidism.

This work claims to be honest but in no way neutral. It was given itself for an aim to defend or clear the cluto (fame) of this admirable ancient religion.

Nothing replaces personal meditation, including about obscure or incomprehensible lays strewn in these books, and which have been inserted intentionally, in order to force you to reflect, to find your own way. These books are not dogmas to be followed blindly and literally. As you know, we must beware as it was the plague, of the letter. The letter kills, only spirit vivifies.

Nothing replaces either personal experience, and it's by following the way that we find the way.

Therefore rely only on your own strength in this Search for the Grail. What matters is the attitude to be adopted in life and not the details of the dogma. Druidism is less important than druidiaction (John-P. MARTIN).

These few leaves scribbled in a hurry are nevertheless in no way THE BOOKS TO READ ON THIS MATTER, they are only a faint gleam of them.

The only druidic library worthy of the name is not in fact composed of only 12 (or 27) books, but of several hundred books.

The few booklets forming this mini-library are not themselves an increase of knowledge on the subject, and are only some handbooks intended for the schoolchildren of druidism.

These simplified summaries intended for the elementary courses of druidism will be replaced by courses of a somewhat higher level, for those who really want to study it in a more relevant way.

This small library is consequently a first attempt to adapt (intended for young adults) the various reflections about the druidic knowledge and truth, to which the last results of the new secularism, positive and open-minded, worldwide, being established, have led.

Unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which swarm, concerning the higher Being, with childish anthropomorphism taken literally (fundamentalism known as integrism in the Catholic world); our druidism too, on the other hand, will use only very little of them, and will stick in this field, to the absolute minimum.

But in order to talk about God or the Devil we shall be quite also obliged to use a basic language, and therefore a more or less important amount of this anthropomorphism. Or then it would be necessary to completely give up discussing it.

This first shelf of our future library consecrated to the subject, aims to show precisely the harmonious authenticity of the neo-druidic will and knowledge. To show at which point its current major theses have deep roots because the reflection about Mythologies, it's our Bible to us. The adaptations of this brief talk required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, social status, etc. will be to do with the concerned druids (veledae and others?)

Note, however. Important! What these few notes, hastily thrown on paper during a too short life, are not (higgledy-piggledy).

A divine revelation. A (still also divine) law. A (non-religious or secular) law. A (scientific) law. A dogma. An order.

What I search most to share is a state of mind, nothing more. As our old master had very well said one day : "OUR CIVILIZATION HAS NO CHOICE: IT WILL BE CELTISM OR IT WILL BE DEATH" (Peter Lance).

What these few notes, hastily thrown on paper during a too short life, are.

Some dream. An adventure. A journey. An escape. A revolt cry against the moral and physical ugliness of this society. An attempt to reach the universal by starting from the individual. A challenge.

An obstacle fecund to overcome . An incentive to think. A guide for action. A map. A plan. A compass. A pole star or morning star up there in the mountain. A fire overnight in a glade?

What the man who had collected the core of this library, Peter DeLaCrau, is not.

- A god.
- A half god.
- A quarter of God.
- A saint.
- A philosopher (recognized, official, and authorized or licensed, as those who talk a lot in television. Except, of course, by taking the word in its original meaning, which is that of amateur searching wisdom and knowledge.

What he is: a man, and nothing of what is human therefore is unknown to him. Peter DeLaCrau has no superhuman or exceptional power. Nothing of what he said wrote or did could have timeless value. At the best he hopes that his extreme clearness about our society and its dominant ideology (see its official philosophers, its journalists, its mass media and the politically correct of its right-thinking people, at least about what is considered to be the main thing); as well his non-conformism, and his outspokenness, combined with a solid contrariness (which also earned to him for that matter a lot of troubles or affronts); can be useful.

The present small library for beginners “contains the dose of humanity required by the current state of civilization” (Henry Lizeray). However it’s only a gathering of materials waiting for the ad hoc architect or mason.

A whole series of booklets increasing our knowledge of these basic elements will be published soon. This different presentation of the druidic knowledge will preserve nevertheless the unity as well as the harmony which can exist between these various statements of the same philosophical and well-considered paganism : spirituality worthy of our day, spirituality for our days.

Case of translations into foreign languages (Spanish, German, Italian, Polish, etc.)

The misspellings, the grammatical mistakes, the inadequacies of style, as well as in the writing of the proper nouns perhaps and, of course, the Gallicisms due to forty years of life in France, may be corrected. Any other improvement of the text may also be brought if necessary (by adding, deleting, or changing, details); Peter DeLaCrau having always regretted not being able to reach perfection in this field.

But on condition that neither alteration nor betrayal, in a way or another, is brought to the thought of the author of this reasoned compilation. Every illustration without a caption can be changed. New illustrations can be brought.

But illustrations having a caption must be only improved (by the substitution of a good photograph to a bad sketch, for example?)

It goes without saying that the coordinator of this rapid and summary reasoned compilation , Peter DeLaCrau, does not maintain to have invented (or discovered) himself, all what is previous; that he does not claim in any way that it is the result of his personal researches (on the ground or in libraries). What s previous is indeed essentially resulting from the excellent works or websites referenced in bibliography and whose direct consultation is strongly recommended.

We will never insist enough on our will not be the men of one book (the Book), but from at least twelve, like Ireland’s Fenians, for obvious reasons of open-mindedness, truth being our only religion.

Once again, let us repeat; the coordinator of the writing down of these few notes hastily thrown on paper, by no means claims to have spent his life in the dust of libraries; or in the field, in the mud of the rescue archaeology excavations; in order to unearth unpublished pieces of evidence about the past of Ireland (or of Wales or of East Indies or of China).

THEREFORE PETER DELACRAU DOES NOT WANT TO BE CONSIDERED, IN ANY WAY, AS THE AUTHOR OF THE FOREGOING TEXTS.

HE TRIES BY NO MEANS TO ASCRIBE HIMSELF THE CREDIT OF THEM. He is only the editor or the compiler of them. They are, for the most part, documents broadcast on the web, with a few exceptions.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HE DEMANDS ALL THEIR FAULTS AND ALL THEIR INSUFFICIENCIES.

Peter DeLaCrau claims only one thing, the mistakes, errors, or various imperfections, of this book. He alone is to be blamed in this case. But he trusts his contemporaries (human nature being what it is) for vigorously pointing out to him.

Note found by the heirs to Peter DeLaCrau and inserted by them into this place.

By respect for Mankind, in order to save time, and not to make it waste time, I will make easier the work of those who make absolutely a point of being on the right side of the fence while fighting (heroically of course) in order to save the world of my claws (my ideas or my inclinations, my tendencies).

To these courageous and implacable detractors, of whom the profundity of reflection worthy of that of a marquis of Vauvenargues equals only the extent of the general knowledge, worthy of Pico della Mirandola I say...

Now take a sheet of paper, a word processing if you prefer, put by order of importance 20 characteristics which seem to you most serious, most odious, most hateful, in the history of Mankind, since the prehistoric men and Nebuchadnezzar, according to you...AND CONSIDER THAT I AM THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF YOU BECAUSE I HAVE THEM ALL!

Scapegoats are always needed! A heretic in the Middle Ages, a witch in Salem in the 17th century, a racist in the 20th century, an alien lizard in the 21st century, I am the man you will like to hate in order to feel a better person (a smart and nice person).

I am, as you will and in the order of importance you want: an atheist, a satanist, a stupid person, with Down's syndrome, brutish, homosexual, deviant, homophobic, communist, Nazi, sexist, a philatelist, a pathological liar, robber, smug, psychopath, a falsely modest monster of hubris, and what do I still know, it is up to you to see according to the current fashion.

Here, I cannot better do (in helping you to save the world).

[Unlike my despisers who are all good persons, the salt of the earth, i.e., young or modern and dynamic, courageous, positive, kind, intelligent, educated, or at least who know; showing much hindsight in their thoroughgoing meditation on the trends of History; and on the moral or ethical level: generous, altruistic, but poor of course (it is their only vice) because giving all to others; moreover deeply respectful of the will of God and of the Constitution ...

As for me I am a stiff old reactionary, sheepish, disconnected from his time, paranoid, schizophrenic, incoherent, capricious, never satisfied, a villain, stupid, having never studied or at least being unaware of everything about the subject in question; accustomed to rash judgments based on prejudices without any reflection; selfish and wealthy; a fiend of the Devil, inherently Nazi-Bolshevist or Stalinist-Hitlerian. Hitlerian Trotskyist they said when I was young. In short a psychopathic murderer as soon as the breakfast... what enables me therefore to think what I want, my critics also besides, and to try to make everybody know it even no-one in particular].

Signed: the coordinator of the works, Peter DeLaCrau known as Hesunertus, a researcher in druidism. A man to whom nothing human was foreign. An unemployed worker, post office worker, divorcee, homeless person, vagrant, taxpayer, citizen, and a cuckolded elector... In short one of the 9 billion human beings having been in transit aboard this spaceship therefore. Born on planet Earth, January 13, 1952.

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BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. Quotations from the ancient authors speaking about Celts or druids.
2. Various preliminary general information about Celts.
3. History of the pact with gods volume 1.
4. Druidism Bible: history of the pact with gods volume 2.
5. History of the peace with gods volume 3.
6. History of the peace with gods volume 4.
7. History of the peace with gods volume 5.
8. From Fenians to Culdees or "The Great Science which enlightens" volume 1.
9. Irish apocryphal texts.
10. From Fenians to Culdees or "The Great Science which enlightens" volume 2.
11. From Fenians to Culdees or "The Great Science which enlightens" volume 3.
12. The hundred paths of paganism. Science and philosophy volume 1 (druidic mythology).
13. The hundred paths of paganism. Science and philosophy volume 2 (druidic mythology).
14. The hundred ways of paganism. Science and philosophy volume 3 (druidic mythology).
15. The Greater Camminus: elements of druidic theology: volume 1.
16. The Greater Camminus: elements of druidic theology: volume 2.
17. The druidic pleroma: angels jinns or demons volume 1.
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19. Mystagogy or sacred theater of ancients Celts.
20. Celtic poems.
21. The genius of the Celtic paganism volume 1.
22. The Roland's complex .
23. At the base of the lantern of the dead.
24. The secrets of the old druid of the Menapien forest.
25. The genius of Celtic paganism volume 2 (liberty reciprocity simplicity).
26. Rhetoric : the treason of intellectuals.
27. Small dictionary of druidic theology volume 1.
28. From the ancient philosophers to the Irish druid.
29. Judaism Christianity and Islam: first part.
30. Judaism Christianity and Islam : second part volume 1.
31. Judaism Christianity and Islam : second part volume 2.
32. Judaism Christianity and Islam : second part volume 3.

33. Third part volume 1: what is Islam? Short historical review of the set QUR.HAD.SIR. and SHAR.FIQ.MAD.
34. Third part volume 2: What is Islam? First approaches to the set QUR.HAD.SIR. and SHAR.FIQ.MAD.
35. Third part volume 3: What is Islam? The true 5 pillars of the set QUR.HAD.SIR. and SHAR.FIQ.MAD.
36. Third part volume 4: What is Islam? Sounding the set QUR.HAD.SIR. and SHAR.FIQ.MAD.
37. Couiro anmenion or small dictionary of druidic theology volume 2.

Peter DeLaCrau. Born on January 13rd, 1952, in St. Louis (Missouri) from a family of woodsmen or Canadian trappers who had left Prairie du Rocher (or Fort de Chartres in Illinois) in 1765. Peter DeLaCrau is thus born the same year as the Howard Hawks film entitled "the Big Sky". Consequently father of French origin, mother of Irish origin: half Irish half French. Married to Mary-Helen ROBERTS on March 12th, 1988, in Paris-Aubervilliers (French department of Seine-Saint-Denis). Hence 3 children. John Wolf born May 11th, 1989. Alex born April 10th, 1990. Millicent born August 31st, 1993. Deceased on September 28th, 2012, in La Rochelle (France).

Peter DELACRAU is not a philosopher by profession, except taking this term in its original meaning of amateur searching wisdom and knowledge. And he is neither a god neither a demigod nor the messenger of any god or demigod (and of course not a messiah).

But he has become in a few years one of the most lucid and of the most critical observers of the French neo-druidic or neo-pagan world.

He was also some time assistant-treasurer of a rather traditionalist French druidic group of which he could get archives and texts or publications.

But his constant criticism both domestic and foreign French policy, and his political positions (on the end of his life he had become an admirer of Howard Zinn Paul Krugman Bernie Sanders and Michael Moore); had earned him moreover some vexations on behalf of the French authorities which did everything, including in his professional or private life, in the last years of his life, to silence him. Peter DeLaCrau has apparently completely missed the return to the home country of his distant ancestors.

It is true unfortunately that France today is no longer the France of Louis XIV or of Lafayette or even of Napoleon (which has really been a great nation in those days).

Peter DeLaCrau having spent most of his life (the last one) in France, of which he became one of the best specialists,

even one of the rare thoroughgoing observers of the contemporary French society quite simply; his three children, John-Wolf, Alex and Millicent (of Cuers: French Riviera) pray his readers to excuse the countless misspellings or grammatical errors that pepper his writings. At the end of his life, Peter DeLaCrau mixed a little both languages (English but also French).

Those were therefore the notes found on the hard disk of the computer of our father, or in his papers. Our father has of course left us a considerable work, nobody will say otherwise, but some of the words frequently coming from his pen, now and then are not always very clear. After many consultations between us, at any rate, above what we have been able to understand of them.

Signed: the three children of Peter DeLaCrau: John-Wolf, Alex and Millicent. Of Cuers.