

JUDAISM CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM.

**THE THREE HUMAN IMPOSTURES *
WHO DECEIVED THE WORLD.**

(Notes on Moses Jesus and Muhammad.)

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**PART TWO : CHRISTIANITY.
Volume III**

"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 reality 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 Maelmilscothach, 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 Milscothach 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.

OLD TESTAMENT 1) AND MYTHOLOGICAL PROCESSES.

Allegory consists essentially in the opposition of a literal meaning and of various possible interpretations, the latter being themselves able to oppose each other.

Let's take an example: Aesop's fables. Everybody today agrees that these fables have a second meaning, hidden under the literal meaning. But when it is necessary to interpret these fables, to extract the second meaning, the task for us is far from being simple. Indeed, on the one hand, the interpretation of these fables depends on the historical and political context of the seventh century before our era; in which we no longer live, and which we can no longer know except through the intermediary of historical works or history lessons. But, on the other hand, the ignorance or the misreading of this context does not prevent us proposing of these fables new interpretations more in connection with our time.

As we have seen, allegory is therefore one of the constants of mythology, and therefore of every religion, including druidism. It seemed interesting to us, druids or high-knowers of today, to see a little what most often the reaction of Christians was regarding this approach of the human mind and religion.

The various Christian attitudes in front of the allegory.

St. Paul. The allegorical expression is not the doing of St. Paul. Although his message is often difficult, it does not happen to him, even to better make it understood, to dress up it with images. But if he rejects this for his own use, Paul strongly affirms that the Old Testament authors have expressed their revelations by allegories, and that their writings, therefore, must be the subject of an allegorical interpretation. If the Old Testament thus appears as an immense allegory under the pen of St. Paul, it is because in reality it is intended [still according to St. Paul] to Christians, not to Jews, who were not able to understand it. Its message assumes therefore a disguised presentation, on which the Jews have stopped, whereas the true Christians have well pierced, at least still according to this author, this bark, in order to collect the spiritual fruit of it. Paul offers to us therefore the example of an allegorical reading of the Bible, in which he discovers, under the disguise of figures, the proclamation of Christ, the description of the true Christian belief, or again a whole set of moral prescriptions for the Christians. We cannot deny in this process a certain Greek influence on the substance and language of the Epistles, whether this influence has been sought or simply undergone, whether it should be extended to the essential one or limited to the incidental one.

Other Christian writers of the first centuries can be divided into four categories according to their attitude towards allegorical interpretation.

The first category includes authors who develop an allegorical interpretation without owing something important to the figurative exegesis of paganism.

Others, on the contrary, appear to be well aware of the processes of the pagan allegory, and make an extensive use of the methods or lessons of it in their own explanation of the Bible.

A third group brings together the writers who, without much using themselves an allegorical interpretation of the Bible, show an often vigorous hostility towards the pagan allegory.

The fourth category includes Christian authors in whom the sometimes exaggerated practice of biblical allegory is combined with an equally important effort to disqualify the same process of exegesis when it is the pagans who apply it to their own texts.

Mere fidelity to the New Testament allegory, in the Epistle of Barnabas or Hippolytus of Rome.

The pseudo-epistle of Barnabas dates back to the first half of the second century. Its main object is to strip from their literal meaning the ritual dictates of the Old Testament, to see in each of them an allegorical foreshadowing of the Messiah. It is an analogous allegorical exegesis, closely inspired by St Paul in his method, if not in its content, that was practiced by Hippolytus, a Roman priest in the beginning of the third century. We can notice how this technique remains faithful, in its methods and in its vocabulary, in the example of Saint Paul, and preserved from the contamination of pagan allegory, that even it does not seem to know. But this specifically New Testament figurative interpretation was hardly to stay, nor pagan allegorism to remain for a long time foreign to Christian preoccupations. The peaceful use of pagan allegory by a Father of the Church, Clement of Alexandria.

Clement of Alexandria, at the end of the second and at the beginning of the third century, applied allegorically to biblical scripture. But in him the Pauline example is no longer his only source. He also uses himself openly the allegory practiced in pagan civilizations. He even insists on the continuity of the pagan allegory and of the Christian allegory. Allegory appears to him as the very law of every religion. The fifth *Stromata* contains a true treatise about allegory, considered as a universal religious phenomenon, and Clement shows himself as the first historian of religions in the modern meaning of the word. For Clement, the allegory extends to any form of expression in reality.

Some Christian writers adopted a more habitual attitude: they fiercely denigrated the pagan allegory while applying this same process to their Scriptures. Tertullian mocks, for example, the allegorical interpretation that Varro had given of Saturn. The Roman encyclopedist considered the latter, both as a historical figure and as the personification of time. Tertullian, in his apology, opposes it: one cannot assign to a human person a nature that is both corporeal and incorporeal. Either Saturn is a deified human, or it is time, but not both. What shows well his narrow-mindedness.

"Nor shall I go through all one by one, many and important as they are— new, old, barbarian, Greek, Roman, foreign, captive, adopted, peculiar, common, male, female, rural, urban, nautical, military—it is tedious enough even to recount their titles; but I will deal with them concisely; and this, not that you may learn, but that you may be reminded, for you certainly act the part of those who have forgotten. Previous to Saturn there is with you no god : from him is the beginning of all, even of more powerful and better known divinity. Consequently, whatever shall be established of the source will also hold good of the succession. Saturn, then, as far as literature teaches, neither Diodorus the Greek, nor Thallus, nor Cassius Severus, nor Cornelius Nepos, nor any other writer on this particular kind of antiquities, has proclaimed to be anything but a man. By him writing tablets were first introduced, and a stamped coinage, and for that reason he presides over the treasury. Yet if Saturn was a man, surely he sprang from a man; and since he came into being by a man, he certainly cannot be from Heaven and Earth. But it easily came about that he, whose parents were unknown, was called the son of those whose children we may all of us also be deemed to be. For who may not call Heaven and Earth father and mother, for the sake of respect and honor, or in deference to that general custom by which persons unknown or unexpectedly appearing are said to have dropped from the sky. Just so it happened to Saturn, unexpectedly appearing everywhere, to be called celestial. For those whose birth is uncertain are commonly termed sons of earth. I do not make a point of the fact that men in those ages were so ignorant as to be moved by the appearance, as though divine, of any strange man; since, cultured as they are at the present day, they consecrate as gods those whom a few days before they have admitted by a public mourning to be dead. We have dealt quite sufficiently, although briefly, with Saturn. We will show that even Jupiter himself was both a man and sprung from a man; and that thereafter the whole swarm of his progeny were both mortal and like their source" (Apology chapter X). Augustine shows himself to be very hard in regard to pagan cults. For him, allegory cannot suppress the contradiction between the moral dictates of paganism and the fact that forbidden crimes are ascribed to gods and glorified by their worship. Augustine, like Tertullian, therefore considers the god-or-demons of paganism, from an euhemeristic perspective: they are only men. Augustine had nevertheless welcomed the Neoplatonic allegory developed by Plotinus in his *Enneads*.

Origen's paradoxical attitude.

Origen portrays himself as an enemy of the pagan allegory. According to him, to be acceptable, it should satisfy a double condition: not only allegory should be itself correct, but myths should also have an acceptably literal meaning. Origen therefore endeavors to prove that the pagan allegory matches no one of these two conditions. Origen's criticism does not discredit allegorical interpretation in itself, but only its application to Greek mythology.

For Origen, in fact, the symbolic interpretation of the Greek myths remains a second-step approach, which, far from being explicitly required by its object, must most often do violence to it; whereas, according to him, allegorical exegesis goes without saying as far as the Bible is concerned, since it is a sacred author, St. Paul, who is the guarantor and initiator of this interpretation of the Old Testament. Moreover, the biblical allegory fulfills the double condition posed by Origen. The symbolic interpretation practiced by Christians is therefore reasonable, but the author of the Biblical narratives has always been also concerned with giving to his work a literal value of good quality, as well as an

allegorical scope. But Origen, for the sake of his controversies, often comes to demand from his adversaries [like Celsus] guarantees on the literal meaning of the myths; that he never gives himself when he is dealing with the Bible, of course. It is therefore like always with Christians the eternal story of the pot calling the kettle black.

The Emperor Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus.

"I had imagined that the prelates of the Christians were under greater obligations to me than to my predecessor. For in his reign many of them were banished, persecuted, and imprisoned, and many of the so-called heretics were executed ... but all of this has been reversed in my reign; the banished are allowed to return, and confiscated goods have been returned to the owners."

The attitude of the Emperor Julian appears therefore very balanced. He demands that the mythical nature be recognized both to the Biblical accounts and the Greek legends, and suggests that allegorical interpretation can be practiced on both. The narratives of Moses and Homer appear to him as the emanation of an identical mythical mentality. Consequently, neither can claim the exclusivity of the allegorical interpretation. The criticism that the Talibanus or Parabolanus of Christianity named Gregory of Nazianzus opposes him, finally ends up in a position quite similar to that of Origen: the famous "double standards."

IN SHORT.

In brief, among all these authors there is one whose positions seem attractive: Clement of Alexandria (the first mention of Orpheus by a Christian is, for example, in the opening hymn of his *Protrepticus*). Clement believes that this phenomenon (the opposition between a literal sense and various possible interpretations) is not only related to myths or Scriptures, but that it is specific to all forms of expression.

Since man communicates, this phenomenon has still existed. Hence the various possible interpretations of the same play, of the same novel, of a painting, the possibility of making puns ... It is therefore more than likely that the myths have undergone a fairly similar treatment. And if we remember that the myths were considered as a word without author, coming through the ages; that they fed the life of the men of antiquity, who certainly had a greater knowledge of them than ours, who could see adaptations of them in the tragedies; we can hardly be surprised by the extent of this allegorical treatment of myths.

But various currents of interpretation will appear, and how these currents are opposed to each other is striking. Few attempts will be made to synthesize elements belonging to two so much different worlds but attitudes consisting in admitting the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures while refusing to apply it to pagan myths (e.g., Tertullian or Augustine) will even appear. See above.

1) The allegory is well present in the synoptic Gospels. But, contrary to what is observed in St. Paul, it does not appear in the form of the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament; It appears almost exclusively in the title of the allegorical expression, which translates into images an abstract teaching, through this fact hidden from the unworthy and reserved to an elite, and which is expressed in parables. These parables are indeed authentic allegories in the most classic meaning of the word. They bring together all the necessary and sufficient elements for the definition of allegorical expression, in any civilization that we find it. As to the origin of these allegories in the Gospels, it seems necessary to think of borrowing from Palestinian Judaism; or better, to the manifestation of a process natural to the human mind, when the truth to be expressed is arduous, and the hearers rude.

THE WORKING OUT CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY.

Confronted with a multitude of contradictions, the first Christians read and reread the Jewish Scriptures to understand and explain; And find in them titles, names and prophecies that can be applied to their disappeared Master: not only "Messiah" (in Greek "Christ"), but also "Son of God," "Son of Man," "Son of David," "Lord," and so on. ; not only many psalms, but also many passages borrowed from the Prophets, beginning with Isaiah, and so on. Old Midrashim (commentaries of the Jewish Bible) are brought back into circulation and new ones are worked out in order to spread the results of this research to the entire Jewish community. The speeches of Peter in Acts 2 to 4 are a first example of that, although their content was perhaps reworked by the author of the book "to Theophilus." These speculations or convictions constitute the beginning of a long process of rewriting history that will last for several decades or even centuries.

The following synthesis will ensue

- 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 kerygma a slogan of the type " good news (gospel in Greek language) the Savior has arrived!"

We can nevertheless distinguish three major trends in the beginning..

-For the first, Jesus is only a prophet of Israel, the last, but only a man. It is roughly the tendency of the first Christians who were all of Jewish origin, and it is perhaps even that of the first pope, in Jerusalem, James the brother of Jesus. This is the trend found today in Islam (low and poor Christology).

-For the second one, Jesus was an ordinary man, born from Mary and Joseph, but because of his piety, meritorious actions, and justice, God adopted him as a Messiah at his baptism in the Jordan. These are the Ebionites (ebion = poor); for them, Jesus is the greatest of the prophets, but he is not "the Son of God." He was born from Joseph and Mary, and was "adopted" by God when he baptized by John in the Jordan. As fierce monotheists they cannot accept the idea of Trinity. This idea was later considered as a heresy by Christians of pagan origin (adoptianism).

-For the third one, Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary through the workings of the Holy Spirit, it is an exceptional, almost divine, messiah, but nevertheless not of a divine nature in the strict sense of the term (richer and higher Christology).

The Nazarenes depicted by Epiphanius and Jerome would be the first Christians who remained faithful to the heirs to Jesus and James of Jerusalem (they would never, however, accept the writings of the Hellenists and of Paul).

The final draft of the romanticized history of Jesus's life is the result of a compromise between the two main conceptions of his role. The one defended by James and Simon-Peter (a tradition still supported by the Elcesaites in the second century), who saw in Jesus only a man.

That which is developed by the Essene-Hellenistic current, founded on the testimony of a certain Saul / Paul claiming to have had the revelation of the supernatural being whom he calls Christ, and equates with this Jesus on whom rumor has taken on.

Between the two currents a quarrel of derivation will arise, each one aligning oneself with the Master through apostles. The multitude of oral traditions then in circulation about Jesus, all richer in detail than others about his life, genuine or supposed, did not make things easier. But the use of a largely artificial biography made it possible to make the date, place of birth, father, and mother of Jesus, coincide with the prophecies of the Old Testament, and therefore to get thus the perfect messiah.

According to the Scriptures, the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem in the House of David. Micah 5: 1 "And you (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, shall be born of you who shall reign over Israel." So it was, and Matthew 1: 6 follows this profile literally, if necessary by inventing or joining a local legend (in Bethlehem, non-Jews still celebrated the birth of the god-or-demon of cereals, Tammuz-Adonis, in a cave, in the 3rd century, according to St. Jerome (epistle 58 to St. Paulinus of Nola). It is on this cave that the Empress Helena will build the basilica of the Nativity in the 4th century.

This savior was to be born of a virgin mother (Ezra 7:14). It was done. Matthew (1:23).

Jesus Christ's birth date was chosen by the authors of the Gospels to match the prophecy: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs (Shiloh, the envoy?) shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his "(Genesis 49:10).

According to the scriptures, the Messiah should also appear in Galilee (Ezra 8:23), announce the good news to the poor, free the oppressed, heal the sick, and restore sight to the blind; to proclaim the forgiveness of God or of the demiurge (Ezra 61), to teach in parables (Psalms 78: 2), to ascend to Jerusalem as heir to the Davidic kingdom (Zechariah 9: 9).

This was done, see Matthew 4:14, Luke 14, 18, Matthew 13:35, Matthew 21: 4.

Below is the slightly visionary (prophetic) text of Zechariah 9: 9-10, which was more or less artificially applied to the true biography of Jesus, if necessary by distorting the facts.

" Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth."

According to the Scriptures, lastly the Messiah was to be hated (Psalm 35: 19, 69: 5), betrayed (Psalm 41:10) put to death as a malefactor (Ezra 53:22). People had to share his clothes and draw lots for his tunic (Psalm 22:19). He was to be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). In the burial his body was not to undergo rotting (Psalm 16: 8). God or the demiurge was finally to resurrect him (Deuteronomy 18:15).

It was done. The first Christians will invent or remove or modify what is necessary for that. Hence the work of the Midrash type (Midrash =commentary) made on the reality of the life of Jesus, in order to make it match at the most the profile of the messiah, according to the Scriptures. See John 15:25; 19:18, Mark 15: 28, Matthew 27: 36, John 18: 19, Acts 2: 27, Acts 3: 22.

This basic intrinsic contradiction (the forced or at any cost with bringing together with previous data of the Jewish Scriptures, of portentous or prophetic value) gave to the whole the turn of a fantastic film. The crucified laid in the tomb leaves it three days after, resurrection of the body of Christ, promise of a resurrection of the bodies for the faithful, etc.

As friend Henry Lizeray very well observed in his time: "The fate of being conceived from a virgin is prescribed, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as the messiah. This removes all real value from the narrative which can no longer be considered as establishing a fact, but fantasized for the purpose in hand " ("The Secret Doctrine").

1) The name of the whole formed by the Gospel of Luke, followed by the Acts of the Apostles, which apparently were originally only one work, dedicated to a man named Theophilus justly.

REMINDERS OF SOME FACTS WITH REGARD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MESSAGE.

Early Christians (even basic) were more divided or more nuanced about Jesus Christ than those of today.

-Some saw the new Joshua as an angel (see Epistle to the Hebrews) who had only the appearance of a man, taken by him in order to descend on Earth: the Docetists.

-Others agreed in no way Docetic Gnostic idea of the Christ angel, and believed in a Jesus true man in the way as a prophet or a messiah, but did not give much importance to the details of his death. The insistence on the passion of Christ will appear only lately.

-Others again then brought together the descent to Earth and the rise in heaven of that Christ spirit or angel, with the life and passion of a Jesus who had really lived, while developing certain traits of his biography strongly. The real passion of the historical Jesus was, for example, gradually brought closer to the passion of the teacher of Righteousness, an Essenian, which had taken place a few years before, or to the end that many zealots lived, crucified by the Romans.

-But in his present relation there are also bits of influence of the ceremonial of ritual putting to death of god-or-devils like Osiris or Attis.

-Many of the earliest writings of Christianity ignore the name of Jesus and are content to speak of the Messiah, the Lord, or Christ (Greek word meaning messiah).

The basic arguments and reasoning of the New Testament are the result of a dissenting Judaism in which various sects, or communities, including the Essene-Baptism, clashed.

The idea of a Christ angel, of a messiah spirit or angel, appeared before the Christian era and will dominate the whole thought of the first Christianity (see Epistle to the Hebrews); until the appearance in the second century of a current hostile to Gnosticism (cf. Montanist Tertullian and the Proto-Catholic Irenaeus). The official history of Christianity has evidently most often kept silent about the large number of these spiritualist movements which, in the first century, announce or expect a savior, sent by a superior god, whatever his name.

The letters were the first of the Christian literatures. One of the examples of preaching having been previous the four gospels is that of the itinerant preacher called Saul, of Tarsus, and then, Paul. His letters are mentioned for the first time by the Christian Gnostic Marcion, about 140. This "heretic" son of the Judeo-Christian bishop of Sinope on the Euxine Sea (95-160) probably rewritten or reworked them, amalgamating them under titles of his invention.

Tatian, also a partisan, and like Marcion, of a single version of the 4 Gospels (in Greek the Diatessaron) had to do the same. Many of these texts are therefore very questionable (additions, interpolations ...). The first of them, to quote only it, dating from the year 50, is a teaching about the resurrection of the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17); introduced by the words, "This is what we tell you according to the Lord's word"; a word of which trace is not found elsewhere.

THE MAN JESUS AND HIS FAMILY.

Relationships are tense, even bad. We have testimonies in the synoptic Gospels (especially in Mark, the two others alleviate the oppositions). We see indeed twice in Mark their opposition to his action, when he chases the evil spirits and attracts the crowds, during his passage in the synagogue of Nazareth. Mark's original text was probably written in the late fifties in the region of Caesarea, perhaps by Philipp or a close relative. The present text is a reissue for a pagan public with additions at the end of the text.

As Mark comes from an environment that knows the early Church in Jerusalem, but does not like it, because it is too prone to compromises in order to be tolerated by the authorities; these passages (showing separation between Jesus and his family) are perhaps in fact disguised warnings against James and his community. But there are also other testimonies.

- Luke 11: 27-28: "A woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

-In John, in three circumstances, the reader can see the opposition between the family and Jesus.

During the Wedding at Cana "Woman, how does your concern affect me?" On his return from Cana and on his way to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (7:35): "Even his brothers did not believe in him." The group "family" does not recognize Jesus in his mission.

In Mark 10:18, Jesus invites us to respect the commandments "You shall not murder, you shall not steal, honor your father and mother" but we also find: in Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."

THE DISCIPLES JUSTLY.

The synoptic gospels assert that the disciples fled after the arrest of Jesus: Matthew 26:56: " All the disciples deserted him and fled."

Women arrive only after the death of Jesus and stand at a distance (difference with John where they are at the foot of the cross). These - close or remote – women are not the same from one text to another, according to Mark, there is not Mary mother of Jesus.

In fact, each one has organized in his own way the rumors circulating about Jesus, for none of the evangelists has personally witnessed the reported facts. They had heard about Jesus, and they composed very long and very theatrical defenses intended for their community (for example the Christians in Antioch, etc.) with the materials inherited from preaching that were previous to them.

The end result of all this was a work of fiction, a defense speech from a crooked lawyer, a media-political construction (therefore materially and intellectually dishonest), or at best a romanticized story of Jesus, that the future orthodox Christians will then present as entirely historical. In order to counter the growing influence of the Marcionite Church, the moderate wing of the Pauline movement (the Christian trend at the origin of our present Churches) decided to add to Marcion's gospel 3 other narratives resembling it, but having each one its audience. In this sense, we can therefore consider Marcion (95-160), the first true exegete of the Jewish Bible, as the (involuntary) founder of the current at the origin of the Christianity we know. After having played a considerable role, Marcion's movement will gradually be marginalized for two reasons.

- Its keeping a certain Gnosticism (reduced dualism, equation of the creator of this world, missed, with a bad god).

- Its too rigorous asceticism.

The future official State Christianity therefore will end in keeping only four gospels, written roughly in the period from the year 65 to the year 100.

The intrinsic contradictions of this pseudo-biography nevertheless gave the whole a rather fantastic turn (the crucified in the tomb leaves three days later, promise of a resurrection of the bodies for the faithful, etc.).

Topography and chronology of the four Gospels constitute a real muddle. For the first three gospels, those which are known as synoptic, everything occurs in the same chronological and geographical context: the ministry of Jesus extends over a year, begins in Galilee and ends in Judea by the Passion. John, on the contrary, extends this ministry over two or three years and places it at once in Judea or in Galilee. Some of the places in question were, moreover, mistakes of translation or comprehension. Nazareth and Arimathea were not localities or places, at least at the time. Greek-speaking authors of the 2nd century no longer understood the meaning of the word "nazoraïos" believed that this meant "from Nazareth," and thus made a village called Nazareth the place of origin of their Messiah. But such a village did not yet exist! Nazoraïos was rather a word of the family of the Hebrew term Nazir and meaning "consecrated," in other words, a Nazarene.

Thinkers such as Noel Journet, or Giordano Bruno, have paid with their lives for having remarked these CONTRADICTIONARY, ABSURD, ILLOGICAL, OR AT LEAST VERY AMAZING, elements.

These narratives are more defense lawyer's pleading (in favor of the divinity of Jesus) than narratives of witnesses (having sworn to tell the truth the whole truth but the truth).

The final editors of the four Gospels were not eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus but of second-generation Christians, and their testimony is therefore only a second-hand witness. How could John, as an eyewitness, have placed the famous episode of the sellers driven out of the temple (chapter 2) at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, and the eyewitness Matthew put it at the end (chapter 21)? To explain such an oddity, Christians maintain that this violent and with a whip purification of the Temple took place twice, and that each of the two evangelists chose to report only one of these two circumstances. This is very unlikely! This is a reasoning of Jehovah's Witnesses. As in the case of the Philistine giant Goliath, killed by David, or by a man of King David called Elhanan, according to the passages of the Bible which is referred (2 Samuel 21:19).

Other examples of reasoning "in the manner of Jehovah's Witnesses" among Christians.

Because Matthew speaks of a sermon on the Mount and Luke of a similar sermon on the Level (Matthew 5,1, Luke 6,17), there must have been a plain on the side of the mount. Because in Matthew

the "Our Father" prayer is taught during this sermon, and that in Luke it is later on a road to Jerusalem (Matthew 6: 9-13 Luke 11: 2-4); the disciples must have forgotten it, forcing Jesus to repeat it to them. Mark 10:46, places the healing of the blind after Jesus left Jericho, while Luke 18:35; 19: 1, places it before his entry into this city.

Explanation of our modern Jehovah's Witnesses: It was because Jesus was leaving the Jericho site of the Old Testament to enter the New Testament Jericho. At whom are they laughing?

The explanation is much simpler if we admit that neither John nor Matthew were eyewitnesses, and that each one therefore received a narrative of purification in the Temple from an intermediate source. Only one of them knew (or none) when the scene had exactly taken place.

Same thing for the other examples of absurdity noticed in the four Gospels.

In the account of Matthew, Joseph and Mary live in Bethlehem and own a house there (2:11). They remain there until the child is nearly two years old (2:16), and the only thing that prevents them from returning there after the flight to Egypt is their fear of the son of Herod. So they go to a city called Nazareth, which clearly implies that they did not go there before (2: 22-23).

In Luke, Mary and Joseph live in Nazareth and go to Bethlehem only because of the census (1: 26 and 2: 4). After the birth of the child, and having briefly stopped in Jerusalem on their way, they quickly return to Nazareth and remain there (2: 39). In Luke there is no allusion to a stay of the family in Bethlehem for nearly two years after the birth of the child; he mentions in no way the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem then in Bethlehem, with all the splendor that this should have entailed, neither the massacre of the children in Bethlehem nor the flight to Egypt. In fact, in his narrative of a peaceful return from Bethlehem to Nazareth through Jerusalem, Luke has no place for such terrible events or for such a detour by Egypt. In the Gospel of Matthew, there is no reference to a census and the atmosphere is totally different from the one depicted by Luke. Matthew tells of an announcement made to Joseph while Luke reports an announcement made to Mary. Matthew speaks of mages who came after the birth of Jesus to praise him, while Luke evokes shepherds who have come to worship the newborn..... It is hard to believe that the two evangelists are accurate in their account of striking events. What is probable is that the birth of Jesus will have been linked post factum as it is said in Latin language (after the Resurrection) with vague recollections of phenomena that have occurred a little before or after the Nativity ...

Matthew and Luke relate both facts which should have left traces in the chronicles of the time. The first speaks of an unusual astronomical phenomenon: a star that rose to the east would seem to have led the Magi to Jerusalem, and then would have reappeared to come and stop above the place where Jesus was born in Bethlehem (2:9). According to Matthew chapter 2, when the Magi arrive to Herod the Great and that the latter, together with the high priests and the teachers of the law, learns of the birth of the King of the Jews, the whole city of Jerusalem is overwhelmed by the event. But when Jesus appears for his public ministry, no one seems to know anything about him or expect anything from him (Matthew 13: 54-56). Especially the son of Herod, Herod Antipas, who knows nothing about him (Luke 9: 7-9). According to Luke, the mother of John the Baptist, Elizabeth, was related to that of Jesus, Mary: the two children were therefore parents. But during the public ministry there is not the slightest indication that John the Baptist is of the family of Jesus; and in John 1:33 the Baptist explicitly says, "I do not know him."

There is not only the general problem of fidelity to history, but also the accuracy of the description of the customs and behavior of Mary when she brings the child to Jerusalem. In 2: 22 ff. the Jewish laws about the presentation of the first-born and the purification of the mother are described in a confused way, and it seems to be wrongly assumed that Mary was not the only person concerned by the purification. This does not give the impression of precise family memories.

The account of Childhood in Matthew is a "catechism" of the essential message of the Scriptures of Israel, that is to say, of what we would call the Old Testament ... Thus, by a kind of superimposition, the two evangelists tell us about scenes and characters from the Old Testament who are as many preparations for the coming of Jesus.

In the tales of Childhood found in Matthew, the prophetic passages are as many efforts to connect the testimonies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, etc. with the announcement of the birth of Jesus. In Matthew, the story of Joseph, with his dreams and the journey to Egypt, evokes that of his Old Testament homonym; just as the appearance of the wicked king Herod, a murderer of children, reminds of the memory of the Pharaoh who tried to remove Moses. In short, what Matthew is telling is not the

childhood of Jesus it is the history of Israel, for it is an essential introduction to the Gospel itself, beginning with the Baptism of Jesus by John.

Such accounts show in their authors a great misunderstanding of the Palestine and of the epoch assigned to the life of Jesus; the Sanhedrin did not have the right of justice, the use of pardoning a criminal at Passover did not exist among the Jews, and the Roman legionnaires (supposed to attend the torture) will only make their appearance in 66 (the legio XII fulminata commanded by Cestius Gallus, defeated at Beth Horon). At the time of Jesus's death, they were still simply indigenous auxiliaries, that is, auxiliaries recruited from the country (though non-Jewish), perhaps from the plain of Caesarea or Sebaste in Samaria, and commanded by officers. Perhaps a cavalry squadron (the Ala I gemina Sebastenorum, representing about a regiment) and five cohorts of infantry, recruited locally (but not from among the Jews, exempted from military service), under the command of officers of eastern origin. These troops were largely stationed in Caesarea. Usually in Jerusalem, in the imposing Antonia fortress adjoining the Temple, there was only a cohort supported by a small detachment of cavalry commanded by a tribune to maintain order. It is possible that a few additional units were deployed in the city when the governor stayed there, based in Herod's palace and its immediate vicinity, but always in small number.

The body of Jesus resurrected can pass through a closed door, move from one place to another with an incredible rapidity, and appear suddenly.

Luke 24: 42-43 attributes physical properties to the body of the resurrected. Jesus needed to eat. St. Paul (1 Corinthians 15: 42-50), on the other hand, maintains that the resurrected body is to be spiritual and not physical.

In Mark (10: 38), the new Joshua challenges the sons of Zebedee, his disciples, to touch the cup that he is going to drink; but he nevertheless asks God, in Gethsemane (Mark 14 : 36-39) to remove this cup from his lips.

In Mark and Matthew, Simon of Cyrene is requisitioned to carry the cross of Jesus **INSTEAD OF HIM** (Simon of Cyrene carries it alone); in Luke he carries the cross "behind" Jesus - that is, Jesus and Simon of Cyrene carry the cross together ... but how is it possible then to understand in the narrative the immediate disappearance of the one who seemed to be the witness par excellence of the torture and death of Jesus? If any of you wants to be my follower, you must take up your cross, and follow me. ...This word has no meaning in this case!

From the beginning, some Christians (the Gnostics and the Docetists) will therefore see in Simon of Cyrene, not or not only someone who has borne the cross of Jesus, but rightly someone who has been crucified ... instead of him. As John Toland saw it very well in the New Testament about the methods and style of the new testament (Christianity not mysterious, Section II, chapter III, paragraph 22), the Gospels are not raw testimonies delivered in disorder by illiterate people transported by enthusiasm, but works following a precise plan, and arranged with talent, in order to get the support of the reader. What all the serious Christian exegetes admit today besides.

The truth is that, being unable to rely on a personal memory of the events to depict Jesus; each evangelist had to adapt the inherited material in order to meet the spiritual needs of the community to which he intended his work. The Gospels were therefore arranged in a thematic order and not necessarily chronologically. Evangelists are not some witnesses but authors, shaping, developing, pruning materials received about Jesus, and theologians directing these materials towards a particular end, not objective historians. The Gospels are not minutes of the ministry of Jesus. Decades of development and adaptation of Christological traditions about Jesus have passed through there.

But the question that arises in this case is the following one: if there have been developments and adaptations, how do we know if the gospels reflect the true message of Jesus?

Just one example: in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul reminds of the content of his gospel of death, burial, and resurrection, of Jesus, stating after each word: "According to the Scriptures"; then he enumerates all those who have benefited from an apparition of Christ by appealing to the memory of the witnesses. Again, he declares: "What I received I passed on to you" (1 Corinthians 15: 3-8). The letter can be dated from the year 56. It is, through its form, an already traditional text. But witnesses still alive are mentioned there whom the gospels don't know and vice versa (Paul doesn't know several accounts of apparitions that the Gospels know). Let us note in passing, what is very very curious, it is that St. Paul in this text of 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8, still counts Judas among the 12; (he was replaced indeed only after these apparitions, see the random draw of Matthias in Acts of the Apostles 1-26). Is it possible to imagine, between Jerusalem and Paul, such a break in the handover of traditions so determining for

Christian belief? Is Paul so unknown by the documents used by the evangelists? Are certain narratives of apparition merely literary constructions?

The last and fundamental part of the Gospel according to Mark about the apparitions of the risen Jesus (16: 9-20) is not included in the Codex Vaticanus. It comes from an addition to the original text, but the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle to Barnabas, although not included today in the official list of the texts making the New Testament, appear in the aforementioned Codex Sinaiticus. So who is to be believed?

Whatever it be, let us repeat, the gospels which are formed in the second century, whether they be canonical, that is, official, or apocryphal; are neither reportages, nor historical texts, nor biographies, they are only catecheses, or romanticized stories.

AUTOPSY OF THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY MYSTERY.

"Even my own Bethlehem, as it now is, that most venerable spot in the whole world of which the psalmist sings: the truth shall spring out of the earth, was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is of Adonis; and in the very cave where the infant Christ had uttered His earliest cry lamentation was made for the paramour of Venus (Ezekiel 8: 14)". Letter from St. Jerome to St. Paulinus of Nola.

Two words now on the situation in Palestine at the beginning of the first century of our era. What was expected by Israel was not a god a son of God or an embodied god but the Messiah, that is to say, an extraordinary man who, with the help of God, would give back to Israel his earthly glory of yesteryear (well according to the Bible) in other words a super king David. The good news (gospel) expected was therefore, "There it is, the messiah appeared, he was seen at ... such place! He is on his way, and the ... flee before him! He arrives and the whole nation rises behind him to follow him! ". Now a few generations later a man named Jesus was worshiped by thousands or millions of people. So what happened so that we come to this situation ?

Let us first point out that The Nazarene Jesus does not appear in the first Christian writings: Pastor of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, Gospel of Peter, many apocryphal texts, Gnostic texts (Gospel of Thomas); and he is totally unknown of all the Jewish tendencies of the time: Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes and even, let us search further : Sethians, Cainites, Naassenes ... Nothing! The chroniclers, editors, or historiographers of the time, never mention this name, he is mentioned in any register, in any newspaper speaking of the various events, and yet every agitator, prophet, magician, provocateur, was signaled and watched because everybody expected the messiah! Strange ... How a man whose fame extended so far; who would have roused the crowds, paced the country (a restricted country), preached in the synagogues, stunned the greatest Jewish sages, performed many miracles before crowds of thousand people, cast out devils, castigated the high priests of the Temple; how this man acclaimed by the people in Jerusalem as David on his donkey, and ending on the cross booed as a malefactor; could he have escaped the perspicacious attention of the Romans? And how could Judaism have ignored him since everybody expected the messiah in that time? However there is no trace of the new Joshua in the enormous quantity of documents left by the Essenes, the last of which date from the year 68, discovered five kilometers from the supposed place of the baptism of Christ!

Philo of Alexandria (-20 + 45), who, however, mentions twice the Essenians does not say one word of Jesus.

"The Essenes live in a number of towns in Judea, and also in many villages and in large groups. They do not enlist by race, but by volunteers who have zeal for righteousness and an ardent love of men. For this reason there are no young children among the Essenes. Not even adolescents or young men. Instead they are men of old or ripe years who have learned how to control their bodily passions. They possess nothing of their own..... »

"They do not offer animal sacrifices, judging it more fitting to render their minds truly holy. They flee the cities and live in villages where".

About the year 100, Justus of Tiberias wrote "The History of the Hebrews." All the copies of this compromising book have been destroyed. But Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople (810 - 895) who read it about 860 will write nevertheless: " Justus suffering from the common fault of the Jews, to which race he belonged, he does not even mention the coming of Christ, the events of his life, or the miracles performed by him."

One possible explanation: if the man Jesus really existed, then his life and work were to have a microscopic influence.

These Christian texts which do not quote Jesus from Nazareth or Bethlehem will be later therefore carefully rejected by the Fathers of the Church.

COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY.

"The thing itself which is now called the Christian religion, really was known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race, until the time when Christ came in the flesh, from whence the true religion, which had previously existed, began to be called Christian" (St. Augustine. Retractions. Book 1. Chapter 13).

Saint Augustine reasons here as a good Muslim, the religion defended by his prophet was neither invented nor created, developed or elaborated, it is not the result of a history, it has no age, has always existed, immutably; and his prophet only remembered it in its entirety, as it was given to men by God personally.

The Manichaeen bishop Faustus of Mileve nevertheless reproached St. Augustine, himself a former Manichean, exactly the opposite.

"As regards the worship of the Almighty God, you might call us a schism of the Jews, for all Jews are bold enough to profess this worship, were it not for the difference in the form of our worship, though it may be questioned whether the Jews really worship the Almighty. But the doctrine I have mentioned is common to the Pagans in their worship of the sun, and to the Jews in their worship of the Almighty. Even in relation to you, we are not properly a schism, though we acknowledge Christ and worship Him; for our worship and doctrine are different from yours. In a schism, little or no change is made from the original; as, for instance, you, in your schism from the Gentiles, have brought the doctrine of a single principle, for you believe that all things are of God. The sacrifices you change into love feasts, the idols into martyrs, to whom you pray as they do to their idols. You appease the shades of the departed with wine and food. You keep the same holidays as the Gentiles; for example, the calends and the solstices. In your way of living, you have made no change. Plainly you are a mere schism; for the only difference from the original is that you meet separately. In this you have followed the Jews, who separated from the Gentiles, but differed only in not having images. For they used temples, and sacrifices, and altars and a priesthood, and the whole round of ceremonies the same as those of the Gentiles, only more superstitious. Like the Pagans, they believe in a single principle; so that both you and the Jews are schisms of the Gentiles. For you have the same faith, and nearly the same worship, and you call yourselves sects only because you meet separately. The fact is, there are only two sects, the Gentiles and ourselves. We and the Gentiles are as contrary in our belief as truth and falsehood, day and night, poverty and wealth, health and sickness. You, again, are not a sect in relation either to truth or to error. You are merely a schism and a schism not of truth, but of error" (St. Augustine, Against Faustus. Book 20. Chapter 4).

THE DYING AND RISING GODS.

Among historians of religion and ethnologists, there are two different conceptions of the dying and rising gods.

The first is Frazer's. As we have had already the opportunity to say, none more than he insisted, in the Golden Bough, on the deities of vegetation who, like them, die in winter to come back to life in spring, Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Demeter and Persephone, Dionysus, whose death and rebirth become the symbols, within the mysteries or initiatory cults, of a doctrine of salvation and immortality. Frazer linked the passion of Christ to all these cults, because often the dying god can serve as a scapegoat on which the impurities of the community are projected before killing it, which would be the starting point of the idea of the god who, by dying, takes upon himself the sins of the world.

However, Frazer's argument is based above all on the data of a certain cultural area, that of the Mediterranean, while also drawing on European folklore (the death of Carnival, the election of the King and Queen of May), and it encompasses, within the same system, two different kinds of mythology: that of the murdered, dismembered god, like Osiris or Dionysus - that of the descent into hell, like the grain of wheat that must be put into the ground to germinate (Demeter, Persephone). What would make the unity of the system, in both cases, would be the imitation of vegetation (the tree that turns green again, the seed that is buried).

But there is also the case of the sun which dies every evening to resurrect the next day at dawn. The connection with the case of Christ is so obvious THAT IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE. Especially when it was a question of commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ (Christmas) or of representing him.

Young and hairless, nimble and clothed in light and gold, standing on a solar chariot. This iconography shows Christ as the celestial emperor and as the light brought to the world. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that representations of Christ in Sol Invictus in Paleochristian art are much rarer than those depicting him as a good shepherd or good pastor.

If the main characteristic of Jesus Christ is to be a dying and rising god, then there are many other examples in History...

The problem of authors such as E.J. Clark and B. Alexander Agnew, Joseph P. Macchio, even S. Acharya (DM Murdock) on the other hand, is that their intuitions are not supported by testimonies such as that of St. Jerome on the cave of the nativity in Bethlehem (former place of worship for Tammuz-Adonis). Macchio mentions, for example, the Celtic semi-god Hesus, described as Hesus Mars in certain documents, as Hesus-Cuchulainn in others, as the Western myth to which the worship of Christ would have been added.

Even admitting resemblance between the miracles of their birth and death (between the birth and death of the Hesus Cuchulainn and that of Jesus Christ), the fact remains that, in the present state of our knowledge, it is much less obvious than the choice of Sunday in place of Saturday as the sacred day in the week and as the choice of the winter solstice as the anniversary day of the birth of Jesus Christ.

And that all we can put forward with caution is that, given the absence of true testimonies about the Jesus of history, the character "Jesus Christ" seems essentially a compilation of elements from various legends, heroes, god-or-demons and men-god-or-demons. The legend in the strict sense of the term (what is to be read about him) of Jesus Christ, has incorporated elements from the stories of other god-or-demons, for example those of the saviors of the world and "sons of a god"; of whom many were also tortured and executed. The figure of Jesus Christ matches a mythological theme clearly, that of the Sumerian, Greek, Persian, humanized deities.

Many humanized, then tortured and executed, god-or-demons, are indeed traditionally celebrated on December 25th, day of the unconquered sun.

And in this respect, before we lose ourselves in detail, let us hand over as always, to define what we mean by a Christlike figure, to our friend Will Durant (our Oriental heritage).

Human sacrifice, of which we have here but one of many varieties, seems to have been honored at some time or another by almost every people. On the island of Carolina in the Gulf of Mexico, a great hollow metal statue of an old Mexican deity has been found, within which still lay the remains of human beings apparently burned to death as an offering to the god. Everyone knows of the Moloch to whom the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and occasionally other Semites, offered human victims.

Here and there, as among the Pawnees and the Indians of Guayaquil, vegetation rites took on a less attractive form. A man or, in later and milder days, an animal was sacrificed to the earth at sowing time, so that it might be fertilized by his blood. When the harvest came, it was interpreted as the resurrection of the dead man; the victim was given, before and after his death, the honors of a god; and from this origin arose, in a thousand forms, the almost universal myth of a god dying for his people, and then returning triumphantly to life. Poetry embroidered magic, and transformed it into theology (Will Durant, the story of civilization, chapter IV, page 66).

POSSIBLE LOCAL SYNCRETISMS CONSEQUENCES OR NOT OF A VOLUNTARY INCULTURATION.

Acculturation inculturation and religious syncretisms, some definitions to begin with.

Acculturation is the set of phenomena that result from continuous and direct contact between groups of individuals of different cultures and that leads to changes in the initial cultural patterns of one or both groups.

It is therefore not only a matter of describing the loss of an original culture but also, and perhaps above all, the appropriation of a new culture. The phenomenon concerns the immigrant facing a new culture and not the influences undergone by a culture confronted with immigration.

Inculturation is a Christian word used to describe how to adapt the proclamation of the Gospel into a given culture. This notion is close, but quite different, to acculturation in sociology. Indeed, acculturation concerns the contact and relationship between two cultures, while inculturation concerns the meeting of the Gospel with different cultures.

It can be traced back to St. Paul's speech to the Greeks in the middle of the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17: 22-33), which can be considered the first attempt at inculturation. The success was mixed, judging by the reaction of the listeners: most of them sneered: "We want to hear you again on this subject" (v33). Some became his followers (v. 34).

Among the first practitioners of inculturation in the history of missions are Saints Cyril and Methodius for the Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. After the Council of Trent, the movement became more systematic.

In other Christianities, inculturation appears in another way than in rites and liturgy. The translation of the Bible into the vernacular language was one of the first tasks to be undertaken by Protestant missionaries who opened the field to linguistic studies. The side effects of these translations were generally the production of dictionaries between the vernacular and the European languages.

Syncretism is the result of an endogenous process of adaptation generally imposed by an exogenous culture. It implies a certain reinterpretation of myths and beliefs, the borrowing of rites or practices and the association of symbolic and identity markings.

It was the policy of the Romans to incorporate the local gods of the countries they conquered into the Roman pantheon. This choice thus avoided at least any religious opposition in polytheistic countries. A similar situation developed, but unintentionally, when missionaries introduced the Catholic religion in South America. They converted most of the population, but, like the Samaritans of antiquity, the population has not forgotten its ancient rites. Thus, in Brazil, Christians still practice voodoo rites and celebrate festivals in honor of ancient deities, such as the goddess Lemanja. The same phenomenon can be observed in other countries of South America.

The living together of Buddhism and Shinto in Japan since the eighth century is an excellent example of syncretism, still observable today, and called Shinbutsu Shugo. In fact, most Japanese people celebrate weddings and births following Shinto rites and funerals following Buddhist rites. Additionally, in most Japanese Buddhist temples there is a small Shinto shrine and a small Buddhist altar in many Shinto sanctuaries.

Another example of syncretism is the Indonesian situation, where people, while adhering to mass religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam), continue to agree with beliefs and to follow traditional religious rituals.

Among the syncretic religions, Sikhism, appeared in Punjab at the end of the 15th century, keeps from Hinduism the belief in the reincarnation of the soul/mind but is a monotheism influenced by Islam.

Yazidism is a syncretic religion at the crossroads of Zoroastrianism from ancient Persia and Sufi-type Islam; its followers now live in Iraqi Kurdistan and in the Caucasus region.

" So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer" (Paul. 2 Corinthians 5:16).

Let us once again point out here therefore that it is not a question here of dealing with the historical Jesus, who can have existed, but of whom, finally, we do not know much except a handful of truisms.

- 1) he was born sometime somewhere in Palestine at the beginning of our era.
- 2) He died (presumably crucified).
- 3) He was a Jew of the lower middle class.
- 4) For a few years he had a political-religious activity (the two being related in this country at the time).
- 5) It has made a strong impression on a number of people.

In the absence of incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, it is indeed possible to believe that Jesus Christ was a myth "made man", that is, a man invented and built little by little retrospectively by the collective imagination of the 'time.

Evangelical narratives can in no case be regarded as historical relations accurately describing a Jewish carpenter's son, who would thus have had a real existence in the East two thousand years ago. The first Christian leaders put into circulation an incomplete, largely false or erroneous life of Jesus, the final boost given by St. Jerome in his Vulgate (the Latin version of the New Testament, circa 385).

We shall therefore rather speak here below of the Christ-like figure, which very quickly surpassed that of the simple messiah liberating his people with the help of God, to become the heart of the conditioned reflexes of what is commonly called Christianity.

In some countries indeed, locally, Christian preaching has been able to meet the myths concerning the following deities and therefore to contribute to its establishment on the spot, and eventually to its rise beyond.

The transition from Judaic Christianity to Hellenic Christianity, from the historical fact of the man named Jesus to the mystical fact of Christ, will be accomplished chiefly through Orphism, the Christology of Paul having been greatly influenced by it. Whether it is the Servant of God, the Teacher of Righteousness (the Messiah of the Essenes), or the Nazarene-Ebionite version of him called Joshua (Jesus); the messenger of God is always equated with an angel of light voluntarily descending into the darkness of the earth and its sufferings, to resurface in the sun glory at the right hand of the Father. In Isaiah, the Servant of the Lord offers the same transcendent image: he is martyred and then, having dedicated his sacrifice to men, he rises in the celestial light where he now sits on the right hand of God.

The place is missing here to go into detail about each god-or-demon who contributed to the formation of the character of Jesus Christ in the popular awareness; it is enough to say that there is a plethora of documents to prove that this subject is not a question of "faith" or "belief." Confusion is everywhere, for over the centuries Christian authors have tried to amalgamate or merge practically all the myths, fairy tales, legends, doctrines and even fragments of wisdom they could find. All these authors have thus counterfeited, interpolated, mutilated, changed or rewritten the texts for centuries.

In the East, in order to make better understood and admit, for the purposes of preaching, in order to make easier the conversion of minds, in short by acculturation / inculturation, the following Christlike figures therefore will be used.

-Orpheus.

Christ's descent into hell takes over the myth of Orpheus and of the Phoenix, perhaps joined to that of the descent of the spirit into matter, if one goes to the end of this Gnostic logic.

Orpheus, who appeared thirteen centuries before Christ, was a great religious reformist. According to the Latin historian Horace, he was the interpreter of the god-or-demons. He was the son of a king of Thrace, but according to legends he would be the son of Apollo, the sun god or demon, and of the muse Calliope. Besides, he was himself a musician and a poet. Orpheus is known to us above all by the legend of his descent into hell. Orphism was a kind of secret religion of an initiatory nature, within the whole of the Greek religion and its pantheon. Without any ancient author mentioning it, when he was very young he left the country for Egypt, where he was welcomed by the priests of Memphis. After twenty years spent in the schools of this country, Orpheus returned to Thrace and undertook major changes in the religious organization of his people. Prelude to Christianity, Orphism constitutes both a

religion and a philosophy: the soul, a prisoner of the body, bears the burden of an original crime; it will be liberated only after many incarnations, purifying itself by fasting, asceticism and spiritual initiation.

-Prometheus.

Some people have asserted that the Greek god-or-demon Prometheus came from Egypt but his drama actually took place in the mountains of the Caucasus. Prometheus shares many commonalities with Christ. Prometheus descended from heaven as a god-or-demon to be embodied as a man in order to save mankind. He was put to death, suffered and rose from the dead. Five centuries before the Christian era, the famous Greek poet Aeschylus wrote his Prometheus Bound."

Contrary to the myth of Prometheus proposed by Hesiod in his Theogony, Prometheus does not appear as a culprit but as a hero to whom all Aeschylus' sympathy goes. The myth of Prometheus is admitted as a metaphor for the gift of knowledge to men. This is one of the recurring myths in the proto-Indo-European world, but it is also found in other peoples.

- Horus.

The same can be said of the myth of the resurrection of Horus, which is previous the Christian version of this theme of several thousand years (2500 BC).

This myth, put in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, symbolizes the victory of light over the darkness, or the return of the sun releasing from the terrors of the night. Horus performed miracles, and resurrected a man from the dead. Of course it is not a true story. This story is more likely an allegory that evokes the sun's journey through the constellation of Sirius, bringing light and life to him.

-Osiris.

The legend of Osiris is multifaceted. This deceased god-or-demon is the sovereign judge who presides over the court of the Last Judgment (scene of the weighing of the soul / mind). Thot acts as a mediator. In many ways, the Egyptian religion of the early period had repercussions on the religion of the surrounding peoples. It also inspired indirectly perhaps the Christian religion, in view of the importance of the Alexandrian Judeo-Christianity (see Philo, Athanasius, and the Trinity...) We find in it similar ideas indeed, for example that of the weighing of souls.

-Serapis.

This composite god-or-demon (Zeus-Osiris-Apis), who promises salvation and who relieves the afflicted, was to unite Greeks and Egyptians in the same worship. We may see a blatant resemblance with the face of Christ by looking at the statue of Serapis resurfaced in Alexandria recently. His bearded aspect with long hair was indeed adopted to represent Jesus.

It is easy to understand the fanatical hatred and jealousy of the early Christians with regard to the worship dedicated to this god. The second library in Alexandria had been partially restored in the premises of the temple of Serapis. Implementing the edict of Emperor Theodosius, Theophilus and his nephew, the future Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, St. Cyril, demanded the closure of the temple; and they urged the crowd of the Christian Talibans (the Parabolani), in 391, to burn its four million books, to make disappear forever the roots of impiety....(according to them.)

In the West, also for being better understood and admitted, for the purposes of preaching in order to make easier the conversion of minds, in short by acculturation / inculturation but to a lesser level, the following mythical figures will also be used:

- Zalmolxis (Thrace).

- Odin (Scandinavia). A myth analogous to that of the Hesus and therefore probably borrowed by the Germans from the Celts at a very early date.

- Hesus / Mars or Cuchulainn (Western Europe).

Icing on the cake we find indeed , in the West, a god-or-demon having much in common with the new Nazarene Joshua of the Gospels; and even some resemblance in the name, what had to have greatly facilitated things for the missionaries sent into Celtic land, despite their contempt for anything that was not Latin-speaking. (Irenaeus. Against Heresies I. Preface. The unfortunate bishop was obliged to learn the Celtic language). Hesus / Mars or Cuchulainn has in common with Jesus Christ the fact of having also had a miraculous birth, of having had an adoptive father (Sualtam) and of having died to save his owns, but also of being ascended to heaven (risen from the dead, on his chariot); according to the texts concerning his Irish parallel named Setanta or Hound of Culann. He was also a great

healer who could cure even his worst enemy (Morrigan/Morgan Le Fey). He seems combined with a kind of self-crucifixion by hanging from an oak, head down, after mistletoe picking; Which was transferred to Llew Llaw Gyffes in the fourth branch of the Welsh Mabinogi, Math son of Mathonwy.

In the authentic biography of the man Jesus (of which we know almost nothing, sure, in fact) have been incorporated many elements of stories relating to other deities; concerning saviors of the world, suffering or executed for their acts, all prior to the elaboration of the Christian myth.

One of the first fathers of the Church, the Montanist Tertullian (160-220), a former pagan but bishop of Carthage, will even admit (ironically) this truth about the origins of the myth of Christ, and of all other humanized deities of the same family.

" Others, again, certainly with more information and greater verisimilitude, believe that the sun is our god. We shall be counted Persians perhaps, though we do not worship the orb of day painted on a piece of linen cloth, having himself everywhere in his own disk. [10] The idea no doubt has originated from our being known to turn to the east in prayer. But you, many of you, also under pretense sometimes of worshipping the heavenly bodies, move your lips in the direction of the sunrise" (The apology. XVI).

The very fact that Christians worship their god or demiurge on Sundays [Sun-day, Son-tag in German, etc.] betrays its true origins. Their "savior" as CHRISTLIKE FIGURE BEING ABLE TO BE SYMBOLIZED is indeed the Sun, the light of the world that every eye can see. The sun has been universally seen throughout history as the savior of mankind for an obvious reason: without the sun, the life on the planet would not last a day.

What Tertullian writes then shows that he did not understand the symbol of the onoccephalus among the Sethian Christian Gnostics, but it is also possible to apply to Jesus precisely and almost word for word what Tertullian in the chapter XI still of his Apology, wrote about pagan god-or-demons in line with the pot calling the kettle black (always this inexpressible Christian schizophrenia or double personality):

" And since, as you dare not deny that these deities of yours once were men, you have taken it on you to assert that they were made gods after their decease, let us consider what necessity there was for this. In the first place, you must concede the existence of one higher God-a certain wholesale dealer in divinity, who has made gods of men. For they could neither have assumed a divinity which was not theirs, nor could any but one himself possessing it have conferred it on them. If there was no one to make gods, it is vain to dream of gods being made when thus you have no god maker. Most certainly, if they could have deified themselves, with a higher state at their command, they never would have been men.

If, then, there be one who is able to make gods, I turn back to an examination of any reason there may be for making gods at all; and I find no other reason than this, that the great god has need of their ministrations and aids in performing the offices of Deity.

But first it is an unworthy idea that He should need the help of a man, and in fact a dead man, when, if He was to be in want of this assistance from the dead, He might more fittingly have created some one a god at the beginning. Nor do I see any place for his action. For this entire world-mass-whether self-existent and uncreated, as Pythagoras maintains, or brought into being by a creator's hands, as Plato hold-was manifestly, once for all in its original construction, disposed, and furnished, and ordered, and supplied with a government of perfect wisdom. That cannot be imperfect which has made all perfect.

There was nothing waiting on for Saturn and his race to do. Men will make fools of themselves if they refuse to believe that from the very first rain poured from the sky, and stars gleamed, and light shone, and thunders roared, and Jove himself dreaded the lightning you put in his hands; that in like manner before Bacchus, and Ceres, and Minerva, nay before the first man, whoever that was, every kind of fruit burst forth plentifully from the bosom of the earth, for nothing provided for the support and sustenance of man could be introduced after his entrance on the stage of being. Accordingly, these necessities of life are said to have been discovered, not created. But the thing you discover existed before; and that which had a pre-existence must be regarded as belonging not to him who discovered it, but to him who made it, for, of course, it had a being before it could be found. But if, on account of his being the discoverer of the vine, Bacchus is raised to godship, Lucullus, who first introduced the cherry from Pontus into Italy, has not been fairly dealt with; for as the discoverer of a new fruit, he has not, as though he were its creator, been awarded divine honors. [Wherefore, if the universe existed

from the beginning, thoroughly furnished with its system working under certain laws for the performance of its functions, there is, in this respect, an entire absence of all reason for electing humanity to divinity; for the positions and powers which you have assigned to your deities have been from the beginning precisely what they would have been, although you had never deified them."

Commentary by Peter DeLaCrau.

Today, however, science informs us that the Earth, a few billion years ago, was appearing or functioning very differently from what we know today (climate, continents, oceans, etc.). What Tertullian does not know is the notion of evolution over the centuries, thousands of years, millions or billions of years. The world has not always been as we see it.

With all due respect to Tertullian, his reasoning can also be applied to the Jesus of Christians. That Jesus was God-or-Demon made a man, is a matter of belief.

The assertion that Jesus Christ is only a mythical figure like the god-or-demon above can be established; not only on the basis of the work of the dissenting Christians and of the "pagans" who knew the truth of Christianity and were then dishonestly refuted and even murdered for their opposition to the "Fathers of the Church" but also by the writings of the Orthodox Christians themselves.

Besides it will be necessary to wait until the Middle Ages for this biography to be completed, with an abundance of details often contradictory, which give a lot of difficulty to the Christian exegetes, for example the final details about the Three Magi.

The story of Jesus Christ did not appear overnight. The good news or gospel in Greek was simply an information of the kind: "That's it, the messiah has arrived, we saw it at (such place) and God is with him ... ours

Initially, the proto-Christians before Jesus waited only for the coming of a Messiah as we have seen. The foundations of Christian mythology must therefore be sought in the polemics, speculations, and more or less forced comparisons with the Old testament (the Midrashim), which agitate the various Essenian-Baptist communities or churches of the time. We can also find much of the myth of "Jesus Christ" in the Book of Enoch, several centuries earlier than the supposed appearance of the new Nazarene Joshua. The memory of the persecution and death of the Essenian teacher of Righteousness gives the Proto-Christians the idea of doing the same for their own Messiah. But people also expect the Son of Man, of whom Daniel speaks, that is, the son of Adam, even Adam himself (a new Adam).

There is indeed in Palestine at that time a whole current of thought for which the Savior was not to be the Son of Man; but Adam himself voluntarily returned on earth in order to save the souls of his descendants and to lead them to the light. This idea was to be recovered by the Hellenistic current: the Hellenists in fact consider Jesus for a second Adam, who came by his exemplary expiation, to found again Mankind. Will not St. Paul call his new Adam the Christ?

Pauline literature doesn't mention of Pilate; nor of the Romans, neither Caiaphas, nor the Sanhedrin, nor Herod, nor Judas, nor the "holy women," nor of any of the characters of the Gospel narrative of the passion; and on this subject there is never the least allusion; in the final analysis, it mentions absolutely no one of the "events" of the Passion, either directly or by allusion. Paul never quotes the so-called sermons, preaching, parables and prayers of Jesus, and does not mention more his supernatural birth than his so-called wonders or miracles.

The oldest Christian documents, the epistles ascribed to Paul, do not refer to a historical Jesus, but to a spiritual figure known of all Gnostic sects. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul describes the Messiah, rather as an immaterial being. In the early days of Christianity (until the second century of our era), Christ will be a god-or-demon of Heaven, not a man named Jesus. Paul never speaks of the birth, life, miracles, parables, death (by crucifixion) and resurrection of the Nazarene Jesus. Paul never heard of the Nazarene Jesus. Paul speaks of a timeless and supernatural Christ, not of the Nazarene Jesus, author of miracles before thousands of people and crucified by Pilate.

On arriving at Corinth, Paul, first of the missionaries to practice a systematic inculturation, simply had to replace a sun god-or-demon, Apollo, by a light god-or-demon, Christ. In Acts 19:27, the author admits the existence and popularity of the great goddess-or-demoness, or fairy if you prefer, Artemis,

worshipped at Ephesus. Then it was Aphrodite who gave way to the mother of the new god-or-demon, become "queen of heaven." This is particularly visible in Cyprus ... (the list is far from being exhaustive).....

From Will Durant comparative mythology has revealed a number of significant facts, including these.

- The idea of a possible rebirth of the being is common to all the mystery cults in the Roman Empire: Mithra, Isis, Attis, Apollo [not forgetting Hornunnos and even Hesus/Mars].

- The act of eating the god-or-demon during a celebration already practiced in the Mithraic worship (the meal of devogdonion commensality between men and god-or-demons) corresponds to the theme of the Eucharist.

- The story of Mithra, the "Sun God-or-demon" of Persia, is previous the Christian myth of at least 600 years.

- Mithra was born in a cave from a virgin on December 25th.

The main rival of Christianity of all tendencies (Greek, Jewish, Judeo-Christian, Gnosticism, etc.) was indeed the worship of Mithra, the Sun God-or-Demon of Persia, spread throughout the army, and therefore in the corridors of power (the emperor, etc.).

Haut du formulaire

Some authors even acknowledged (to criticize or denigrate them) disturbing resemblance between the two religions.

Justin in the second century contrasts the communion of the Mithraic initiation with the Eucharist " that the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn (First Apology 66) .

And the Montanist Tertullian, as far as he is concerned, has even broadened the field of these troubling resemblance, while, of course, also attributing them to the action of the devil.

"The question will arise, by whom is to be interpreted the sense of the passages which make for heresies? By the devil, of course, to whom pertain those wiles which pervert the truth, and who, by the mystic rites of his idols, vies even with the essential portions of the sacraments of God. He, too, baptizes some— that is, his own believers and faithful followers; he promises the putting away of sins by a laver (of his own); and if my memory still serves me, Mithra there (in the kingdom of Satan) sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread, and introduces an image of a resurrection , and before a sword wreathes a crown. What also must we say to (Satan's) limiting his chief priest to a single marriage? He, too, has his virgins; he, too, has his proficient in continence. Suppose now we revolve in our minds the superstitions of Numa Pompilius, and consider his priestly offices and badges and privileges, his sacrificial services, too, and the instruments and vessels of the sacrifices themselves, and the curious rites of his expiations and vows: is it not clear to us that the devil imitated the well-known moroseness of the Jewish law? Since, therefore he has shown such emulation in his great aim of expressing, in the concerns of his idolatry, those very things of which consists the administration of Christ's sacraments, it follows, of course, that the same being, possessing still the same genius, both set his heart upon, and succeeded in, adapting to his profane and rival creed the very documents of divine things and of the Christian saints — his interpretation from their interpretations, his words from their words, his parables from their parables. For this reason, then, no one ought to doubt, either that "spiritual wickednesses," from which also heresies come, have been introduced by the devil, or that there is any real difference between heresies and idolatry, seeing that they appertain both to the same author and the same work that idolatry does. They either pretend that there is another god in opposition to the Creator, or, even if they acknowledge that the Creator is the one only God, they treat of Him as a different being from what He is in truth. The consequence is, that every lie which they speak of God is in a certain sense a sort of idolatry "(the prescription against heretics XL)

It is necessary to say that Mithraism one moment even prevailed almost over Christianity. What is certain is that his liturgy and his philosophy have considerably influenced the incipient Christianity (an example among thousands, the choice of December 25 to celebrate Christ's nativity).

In 1993, Pope John Paul II admitted besides that Christmas was a festival of pagan origin.

He declared: "On that day in pagan antiquity, the birthday of the 'Invincible Sun' was celebrated to coincide with the winter solstice. . . . It seemed logical and natural to Christians to replace that feast with the celebration of the only and true Sun, Jesus Christ."

Sol Invictus but also Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Demeter and Persephone, Dionysus, and so many others...

Christians generally object to that two things.

First objection: "Yes, but for us it is not the same thing, Jesus really did exist.

He was a real man and not a god with the appearance of a man as in the cases mentioned above.

To this we answer

a) Do you know the story of the pot calling the kettle black?

b) Euhemerism. An argument that your apologists or polemicists do not hesitate to use against our "gods".

Second objection: yes, but in our case it's not like yours, it doesn't happen every year, it happened once and there won't be another one!

THE OBJECTION IS ACCEPTED, BUT IN THIS CASE IT HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH.

As you do not distinguish the supreme being from the creating god prince of this world, this implies that for you the omnipotent omniscient all goodness etc. supreme beingcreated this world (for what reason moreover, did he need it?) EX NIHILO, then that he will put an end to it one day by saving only happy few.

Such a conception of the world and history arouses a mountain of questions.

For the record, our design of the world and of history generates fewer questions, since it is of the type "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed".

The only aporia of our reasoning concerns the first original emergence of the being out of nothingness.

After that it is the life (see the deist reasoning of the great watchmaker of the universe).

THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATIONS AND VARIANTS.

Four different languages are necessary when we are speaking of Christianity: Hebrew for the Old Testament, Aramaic (the language Jesus used for his parables or preaching, and speaking to his disciples, the Greek for the New Testament, then the Latin (as well as some others).

The best thing here is perhaps to introduce this chapter with what Jerome of Stridon, the patron saint of translators, says about the texts circulating in the Christian communities of his time. Here below the text in full or almost of his letter to the Bishop of Rome about this subject.

“To the blessed Pope Damasus, from Jerome.....You urge me to make a new work from the old, and that I might sit as a kind of judge over the versions of Scripture dispersed throughout the whole world, and that I might resolve which among such vary, and which of these they may be which truly agree with the Greek. Pious work, yet perilous presumption, to change the old and aging language of the world, to carry it back to infancy, for to judge others is to invite judging by all of them. Is there indeed any learned or unlearned man, who when he picks up the volume in his hand, and takes a single taste of it, and sees what he will have read to differ, might not instantly raise his voice, calling me a forger, proclaiming me now to be a sacrilegious man, that I might dare to add, to change, or to correct anything in the old books?

Against such infamy I am consoled by two causes: that it is you, who are the highest priest, who so orders, and truth is not to be what might vary, as even now I am vindicated by the witness of slanderers. If indeed faith is administered by the Latin version, they might respond by which, for they are nearly as many as the books! If, however, truth is to be a seeking among many, why do we not now return to the Greek originals to correct those mistakes which either through faulty translators were set forth, or through confident but unskilled were wrongly revised, or through sleeping scribes either were added or were changed?

Certainly, I do not discuss the Old Testament, which came from the Seventy Elders in the Greek language, changing in three steps until it arrived with us. Nor do I seek what Aquila, or what Symmachus may think, or why Theodotion may walk the middle of the road between old and new. This may be the true translation which the Apostles have approved.

I now speak of the New Testament, which is undoubtedly Greek, except the Apostle Matthew, who had first set forth the Gospel of Christ in Hebrew letters in Judea. This (Testament) certainly differs in our language, and is led in the way of different streams; it is necessary to seek the single fountainhead.

I pass over those books which are called by the name of Lucian and Hesychius, for which a few men wrongly claim authority, who anyway were not allowed to revise either in the Old Instrument after the Seventy Translators, or to pour out revisions in the New; with the Scriptures previously translated into the languages of many nations, the additions may now be shown to be false.

Therefore, this present little preface promises only the four Gospels, the order of which is Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, revised in comparison with only old Greek books. They do not disagree with many familiar Latin readings, as we have kept our pen in control, but only those in which the sense will have been seen to have changed (from the Greek) are corrected; the rest remain as they have been.

We have also copied the lists which Eusebius the bishop of Caesarea, following Ammonius of Alexandria, set out in ten numbers, as they are had in the Greek, so that if any may then wish through diligence to make known what in the Gospels may be either the same, or similar, or singular, he may learn their differences. This is great, since indeed error has sunk into our books; while concerning the same thing, one Evangelist has said more, into another they have added because they thought it inferior; or while another has differently expressed the same sense, whichever one of the four he had read first, he will revise the other to the version he values most.

Whence it happened how in our time that all have been mixed; in Mark are many things of Luke, and even of Matthew; turned backwards in Matthew are many things of John and of Mark, yet in the remaining others, they are found to be correct. When, therefore, you will have read the lists which are attached below, the confusion of errors is removed, and you will know all the similar passages, and the singular ones, wherever you may turn to.....”.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Son of God ... what was the meaning of this title for the hearers / readers of Paul who had worshipped god-or-devils, goddesses, or fairies, if you prefer this word, and their divine children? To what extent did the audiences of each author of the New Testament understand the term ... or the sacred writings of the Jews of the pre-Jesus period, to which the evangelists frequently referred? Were the targeted audiences able to understand subtle allusions? In front of a passage quoted in one line, were they sufficiently informed of the context of the Old Testament for that, beyond this single line, a more important part of the message came to their mind?

Like Judaism, Christianity is a religion based on texts handed down or inspired by God or the Demiurge; but the inconsistencies of such writings, their improbabilities, the erroneous deductions from Hebrew or Greek, due to translation mistakes, can only fuel doubts and polemics.

As John Toland has rightly pointed out, these problems of translation are fundamental, and it is necessary to understand what this might mean in the original language and context (Christianity not mysterious, section II, chapter III, paragraph 23).

When Christianity spreads, the common language in the Mediterranean world is Greek. Christians therefore use the Jewish Bible according to the Septuagint, and the New Testament written in Greek, its original language.

But in the Septuagint there are also voluntarily and sometimes discreetly on the behalf of the Alexandrian doctors, deviations intended to reduce somewhat shocking expressions, or to be compatible with Greek culture; or to show theological preoccupations of the time, which were not those of the early book.

Let's take an example. Exodus 15: 3. The phrase in Hebrew can be transliterated thus: Yahweh ish milhama, Yahweh shmo.

Yahweh shmo raises no problem and means "Yahweh (Yahweh and not Lord) is his name (shmo). But Yahweh ish milhama, literally and word for word Yahweh- is- war? What is problematic is the word "milhama" which is related to the notion of war because the Semitic languages are generally less analytical or less precise than the Indo-European languages.

Thus we can note that YHWH "a man-of-war" or "a warrior" (Exodus 15: 3) was also translated "the Lord bringing wars" in the Septuagint and that "YHWH of hosts" will be translated "the Almighty Lord (kyrios Pantokrator) ".

In other words, let us be clear, they are dishonest, misleading, translations, not giving an exact view of reality.

Under the second heading, we note that sterility, which is presented as a curse in Proverbs, is replaced by the passion for women, for sterility is not as dramatic in Greek milieu as in Jewish milieu. Another amusing detail: the east wind bringing grasshoppers is replaced by the south wind, because in Egypt this wind comes from the south.

The third heading is more consistent. It strengthens the messianic expectation, which was much more precise in Greek times than a few centuries earlier. While Genesis writes in 49:10, "the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, our seventy Alexandrian doctors translate: "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a prince from his loins." Similarly, Numbers (24:17) writes: "A scepter will rise out of Israel " which becomes in the Septuagint "a man shall spring out of Israel."

On the other hand, late Judaism gradually incorporating in its thought the idea of a resurrection of the dead, we can also see its effects in the translation into Greek. The book of Isaiah (26:19) writes, for example, "Your dead will live," but the Septuagint translates "The dead shall rise" which is not quite the same thing.

Another example is the word "virgin" in the various texts that should characterize the mother of the messiah to come.

The translators of the Bible have conveyed the Hebrew word *almah* by that of *parthenos* in the Septuagint in Greek, then *virgo* in Latin. But at first, in the passage of Isaiah 7:14, it is not a virgin, but

a young woman (almah). Almah means any woman who is young enough to give birth, even if she is already a mother.

It is easy to understand that the Fathers of the Church preferred this Bible translated into Greek language (the Septuagint as our Belgian or Swiss friends would say), to the point of gradually forgetting the original version in Hebrew. It was necessary to wait for St Jerome at the end of the 4th century to rediscover that the Hebrew text is very different from the Greek text, and he will inspire from to establish his Latin translation of the Bible called the Vulgate.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

If Jesus was a Galilean Jew of the first third of the 1st century who spoke Aramaic; in the middle of the century, his Gospel was preached in the Diaspora to the Jews and the "non-Jews" (Gentiles = pagans) in urban areas, in Greek; a language he did not normally speak (perhaps not at all). This change of language implied a translation in the broadest sense of the term, that is, a rewording in a vocabulary and models that would make the message intelligible and living for new audiences.

This enterprise (which left visible traces in the gospels) sometimes affected minor details, for example, a type of roof, but in other cases it was no longer a matter of details.

A major interest of the Septuagint is that it establishes a correspondence between the often Greek-inspired, concepts, used by the New Testament and the more Semitic-inspired concepts used by the Jewish Bible. This correspondence makes it possible to better understand the meaning of words.

Let us take the example of the soul, psyche. This is typically a Greek notion.

What did the early Christians mean when they spoke of soul in the New Testament?

In the Septuagint, this word is the translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which means rather the breathing, and by extension the breath of life, the living person, the life. So that to love God or the Demiurge with all his soul is to love God or the demiurge with his whole person, with his whole life. The phrase of Matthew 10:28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" should be translated as "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill life." Another example is the faith, *pistis* in Greek language, but *aman* in Hebrew, which means rather "confidence." So that the faith which saves it is rather the trust that saves.

The very first materials used to write the Gospels, including that of Marcion, were in Aramaic, possibly supplemented by some quotes in Hebrew. It was only later that they were translated into Greek.

The reader of the New Testament coming across – at every moment! - words of this kind (borrowings made from Greek language) must therefore read them not with their Greek meaning but with that they had for their original users.

In order to understand the exact meaning of a passage in the New Testament or in the set of books that compose it, especially of the Gospels, it is better to have also a Hebrew grammar and dictionary .

A Hebrew text besides always has two meanings, a normal exoteric sense and an esoteric sense based on the Kabbalah.

Among the Jews, the *notarikon* is the method by which the initial, medial or final letters of several words are grouped together, in order to form one or more others.

The *temurah*, on the basis of a permutation table, allows one Hebrew letter to be replaced by another, in order to reveal a second meaning.

Gematria involves the numbers assigned to letters of the (Hebrew) alphabet.

Each letter being in Hebrew both an alphabetic sign and a numeral (or number), that makes it possible to calculate the total of the letters / numbers of that word or group of words.

The New Testament, long before it became, alas, Gospel truth, was at first only Jewish literature: covenant, messiah, parables, Midrashim, and other literary or mystical processes of this kind. The puns that these texts contained were lost when their Semitic original passed, with all hands, in Indo-European.

Example.

Matthew 1:21 concerning Mary: she will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save (*sozein*) his people from their sins. What is the link between the Greek word *sozein*, which means to save as well as Jesus, since the coordinating conjunction "because" combines them in the text?

In Greek no, but in Hebrew there is one! *Yehoshua* (Jesus) means exactly "God saves" in Hebrew.

The puns contained in these texts were therefore lost when their Semitic original passed, with all hands in Greek language.

Old Testament and early cores of the New Testament were intended neither for the West in general nor especially for the Pope nor his followers (Catholicity) nor opponents (the Reformists on all sides). Neither for Rome, nor Moscow, nor Wittenberg, nor Geneva, nor in Canterbury! Translated into Indo-European languages these Midrashim have become as many misinterpretations.

Everything in the Gospels, syntax, style, turn of phrases, concepts, mentality, the use of certain verbs, fall within the putting in cheap (because literal) Greek of texts thought in another language.

In the 4th century, Origen was the only Father of the Church to feel the problem, when he dared to distinguish in the Gospels themselves certain narratives that did not happen as it is written.

"The differences among the manuscripts have become great, either through negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or, in the process of checking, they make additions or deletions as they please." (Origen, Commentary on Matthew. 15,14).

The question of the language arose: a full of images language of Semitic style -for example, in the narrative of Jesus' three temptations- insists, first of all, on the meaning of the event without much concern for the details of history.

In any case, in Hebrew, the verbs are not conjugated according to the Indo-European time line ranging from the past, to the present, then to the future, but according to the distinction between an unaccomplished/unfinished or an accomplished/finished verbal state. The inferences which can be drawn from the past or future of the Greek texts are therefore very doubtful, the tense/time of Hebrews being not the tense of the Indo-Europeans.

Let's repeat it once more (repetere = ars docendi) the founding texts of Christianity were written in a horrible pidgin.

The syntax of the Gospels (and of the New Testament as a whole) is non-Greek as for its specific turns or idioms.

Any exegete knows that, with rare exceptions, the Greek language of the New Testament is a twisted language, whose syntax (and vocabulary?) has none of the beauties of the contemporary Hellenistic monuments ... Who can claim that the Apocalypse known as John's revelation is readable? Neither Philo, the Jew of Alexandria, nor Flavius Josephus, some contemporaries or almost - would have dared to present to their readers so badly tied up narratives.

The clauses are short, ridiculously short compared to those found in the Greek texts of every epoch; The complex phrases are extremely rare (they usually result from glosses or additions: like the beginning of the Gospel of Luke), the kai – "and" in Greek language – abound in it. In Luke, only the prologue (added in the text to change the perspective of the gospel according to Marcion) looks "pureblood Greek." Certain cores in the text of the Four Gospels were therefore probably thought and then written in Aramaic, even in Hebrew, before being (very badly) translated into Greek language. A word-for-word translation, literally cast from the Semitic into the Indo-European mould, which has left aside most of the original puns, and therefore their exact meaning.

There is also the well-known problem of any language teacher known as "false friends."

The Hebrew of that time used (by borrowing) Greek words whose meaning had completely changed by being acclimatized in this new culture. Many notions and actions, among the most significant of those which pepper the founding texts of Christianity, are nevertheless introduced by words of this kind.

Examples.

The death of John the Baptist.

Salome asks that the head of the Baptist be brought to her on a pinax.

In Greek "Greek" the word means "table, board" but in the mouths of the Jews of that time, who had borrowed it from the Greeks, the word also existed in the form pnqs or pynqs; with, however, a become different meaning, that of register or tablet. What does not mean at all the same thing! Salome simply wanted to see the execution order of the Baptist duly signed. She wanted "his head" in the symbolic meaning of the word(that is, perhaps his death but not his still bloody head on a silver dish). False friends of this kind there are to be more than one in the New Testament because translators, when several Greek words were virtually possible to designate or qualify such a character, action, or notion, have probably chosen the one that already appeared as a late borrowing in their own language: the Aramaic language. In so doing, while preserving the syntax of their original, they have lost, on the level of the vocabulary, of the choice of the words in their translations, the flavor and meaning of the early assonances, undertones, anagrams and puns ; for it was no longer then a question of a translation, but of a simple transliteration, full of misinterpretations.

The schematism of these texts exists only in (Indo-European) translations, in the eyes of the reader having no idea of the resources in innuendo in Aramaic or Hebrew.

Is it serious to analyze the meaning of the words "paraclete" and "scandal" on the only basis of the Greek etymology, forgetting that these two words; besides similarly used in the Septuagint are only approximate equivalents for the ancient translators of the Hebrew words MNHM and KLS (the MNH root may imply the notion of consolation, the KLS root may imply death).

The Seventy themselves, some centuries before our era, by translating (in Greek) the Hebrew Bible, while preserving a large number of Semitisms; have never brought their concern for the literal one up to the aberration shown by the New Testament as a whole. A student who would learn ancient Greek in the Song of Songs, or in the Greek Leviticus, would reach a fair enough knowledge of the language. But to this same student, we may hardly advise taking the New Testament for reference: it would be an educational suicide. Let us repeat once again, the Greek of the Four Gospels is often a very bad translation, literal and word for word, of a text thought in another language.

There is also a relatively large number of hapax legomenon, i.e., words or expressions appearing only once in a language. This does not make understanding of it very easy. Example the word korban. In Mark 7: 11-12 it is written, "If a man shall say to his father or his mother, it is corban (that is, sacred offering, in Aramaic) a gift by whatsoever you might be profited by me; he shall be free. And you suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother?

What exactly could this mean for the audience that Mark targeted? ? ?

So that means is called into question the understanding of whole sections of the canonical corpus ... founded on the basis of the only Greek semantics!

Even the word Nazorene, which is extremely important (see John 19:19), for it shows the Baptist derivation of the Christian current (Jesus was a disciple of John the Baptist before his splitting from his movement); was translated little by little, by Nazarene and understood as "native of Nazareth," what meant nothing more.

In Latin Africa, where Latin was spoken, the Latin version of the Greek language was done rather quickly. We can fix around 150 the beginning of this translation, later called Vetus Latina, "Old Latin" ... or again Itala.

The manuscript and the patristic quotations of the Old Latin reveal a great variety in the textual tradition. Despite its not very uniform nature, the Old Latin was made on copies of the Greek Bible (Septuagint and New Testament), which were previous the great uncial codices of the fourth century. It can in many cases provide a textual variant that is closer to the original.

In the time of Tertullian (155-220), it is known that there exists in Africa a Latin Psalter translated from the Septuagint. Too faithful to the Greek text, its rudeness makes it feel the need to rearrange it. But it was only in the third century that the existence of a complete Latin Bible was assured when St Cyprian (200/210 - 258), Bishop of Carthage, quotes Scripture abundantly in his writings.

The Church at first did not have an official text for the New Testament, and the greatest disagreement prevailed between the existing manuscripts. That is why the bishop of Rome, Damasus, whom the emperor Valentinian had just promoted as the judge of the other bishops (369), commissioned Jerome to make a final Latin "translation" of the New Testament. This version, completed in 384, is known as Vulgate; it is it that which is used in the daily practice and official liturgy of the Church, even when it is in turn translated into a modern language.

The passage from Greek to Latin also brought its share of mistakes or misinterpretation.

The Greek word logos applied to the new Joshua is also, for example, very ambiguous. He can make Christ either the word of God or of the Demiurge or a divine model of the (future) man). Word or model, it is not at all the same!

For the Greeks, the Logos was the creating spirit, or the universal Intelligence, giving shape to each of the objects of the world formed from the primordial matter.

Logos in Greek had three precise meanings: mathematical calculation, rational reason, and speech or language.

But Christians preferred to translate the Greek word logos by the Latin word verbum (verb) which meant only word, and therefore expressed only one of the three meanings of the Greek word logos ...

Another example, Tertullian has spread the Latin term sacramentum - meaning oath - to express the Greek word mysterion, etc., etc.

The partisans of the numerous already existing Latin versions when Jerome set to work, violently criticized him; they accused him of despising tradition, of rejecting what was admitted by everybody, of daring to correct even the words of Christ. Rufinus would even call him a heretic and a forger.

As we have had already the opportunity to say it, but isn't it repetition the strongest of the rhetoric devices, the adjective Nazarene in the sense "man from the village of Nazareth" is the result of a mistake of translation of the late compilers. "From Nazareth" would have been translated into Greek by Nazarethenos, Nazarethanos, even Nazarethaios and not by Nazarenos, Nazoraios or even Nazarenos, as is found in the Gospels (= Nazarene). Nazarenos, Nazoraios, Nazarenos, are rather terms to be brought closer the Hebrew word Nazir, which designates "the holy man" like John the Baptist, like James perhaps. The word appears 22 times in the New Testament with its double orthography nazoraios / nazarenos. The most well-known passage is John 19:19, concerning the titulus INRI: Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews (the inscription on the cross).

No author of the 1st century, including Jews, mentions the village of Nazareth. Its name (we say well its name) did not appear in the texts until the end of the second century. The Biblical Nazareth will be therefore "founded" in reality only in the thirteenth century, by equating this locality of New Testament texts, to the well-real Arab village of Nacira ... The Crusaders will build there the church of St- Gabriel, the baths, and the well where the angel Gabriel would have appeared to Mary to announce that she was going to give birth to Jesus.

This situation was therefore significantly different from that of Bethlehem, where there was indeed a sacred cave but supposed to have sheltered the birth of the great Eastern god Tammuz before that of Jesus, still according to a letter from St. Jerome to St. Paulinus of Nola.

"Even my own Bethlehem, as it now is, that most venerable spot in the whole world of which the psalmist sings: the truth shall spring out of the earth, was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is of Adonis; and in the very cave where the infant Christ had uttered His earliest cry lamentation was made for the paramour of Venus (Ezekiel 8: 14)".

Other "mistakes" of translation had immense theological repercussions, for example the choice of the word soma "body," to signify the Eucharistic element in the synoptic gospels and in 1 Corinthians 11:24. Distinct from the more literal translation sarx, "Flesh" in John 6: 51 and Ignatius, Letter to the Romans, 7:37.

"This choice indeed may have facilitated the figurative use of "body" in the theology of the body of Christ, of which Christians are members :1 Corinthians 12: 12-27. (Raymond E. Brown.)

As the misunderstandings about the exact meaning of the word "flesh" in the New Testament date from the early Fathers of the Church (see, for example, Tertullian and his treatise entitled "De carne Christi" in Latin language), they will have serious consequences.

The so-called canonical writings of the New Testament constitute a muddled text, which contradicts itself, the present estimate being at least of 150,000 possible readings, this fact being known and admitted. That is a lot for the "infallible Word of God."

Hence the inconsistencies of all these sacred texts, the improbabilities, the statements erroneously deduced from the Hebrew (misunderstood by the communities which have made their final drafting) or from Greek.

As John Toland has rightly pointed out, it is unnecessary to insist on the varied readings of these words and to determine critically what has been added or what is original.

As St Jerome admits himself (see above) , the large source of mistakes in our manuscripts is that they have completed the accounts of the evangelists by one another; It also comes from the fact that, taking as a type or model, a narrative of an evangelist, they wanted to bring back to him the parallel stories. It follows from this that everything is blurred. Mark is enriched with what belongs to Matthew and Luke; Matthew encroached on the ground of John and Mark and so on.

The corollary is that of the generalized homonymy, which leads to the multiplication of the words with two meanings or of the shifts in meaning, generating misinterpretations.

Some critics have wondered whether the (Greek) texts by Marcion had not influenced the Greek texts of the New Testament.

There is no doubt, for example, that the Marcionite Bible has influenced the present text of Saint Paul ... we find in the text of Marcion a good part of the variants of the Western text ... This influence of Marcion is also found in the Gospel, and that in the same group of textual witnesses, that is to say the Western ones ... No manuscript is closer to the Marcionite text than the manuscript of the Old Latin,

which proves a certain influence of Marcion . Of course! The Apostolicon and the Evangelion published by Marcion were previous to the New Testament, which was to become official.

Alongside the old Latin versions of the New Testament - and most probably before them - there also existed a Latin translation of the Marcionite Scriptures. Harnack even proved that Tertullian had had before him a Latin version of Marcion's work when he undertook to fight his doctrine.

It is therefore absurd to have a religion based on writings so doubtful as for their historical authenticity. Millions of men, however, draw from them definitive conclusions about the morality or the lot of soul / mind of the dead after death.

PREHISTORY OF THE CHOSEN TEXT.

The historical content of the New Testament, of the apocryphal texts and of the other "intertestamental" texts is non-existing.

Example. Acts 10 mentions the presence at Caesarea of the "italic cohort" (in the episode of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius dated + 35 + 40). It is therefore an anachronism from the author of the Acts of the Apostles, namely Luke. He had heard of a cohort called "Italic" in Caesarea in his day, and so he assumed that this was the name of the unit of the Roman army of which the centurion of his account was a member.

It should be remembered once again that legions in the strictest sense of the term did not appear in Judea until the first Judeo-Roman war (66-73) and that before that time they were stationed much further north, facing the Parthian Empire.

In Judea at that time, there was only one cavalry squadron and 5 cohorts at Caesarea, i.e., a maximum of 3,000 men, whereas a legion had about 6,000 men. Recruited in the region around Caesarea and in Samaria (Sebaste) from the non-Jewish population (Jews were exempted from military service). All commanded by Roman officers but originating from the Middle East. These locally recruited auxiliary troops were to support a small garrison in Jerusalem (Antonia Fortress and Herod's Palace) reinforced during the feasts perhaps.

Historical content is therefore null and void, as it is the case of the books of Ruth or Jonah. These fables, like those of Aesop, do not record any real event.

Again, let us repeat, the Gospels are not lively reports, and are no longer even the simple writing down of an oral rumor.

They are texts derived from comments written in Aramaic or partially in Hebrew, repeatedly revised according to the Schools, because of the polemics of the time; before being translated, by intellectuals like Marcion, hostile to the Judeo-Christians, who were, however, the inspirers of them; In a language, the Greek tongue, which doesn't know the play of words and the symbolic subtleties usual in the Hebrew or Aramaic language.

These composite narratives will be gradually unified within the current of thought which will produce the official Christianity that we know today. For these texts were definitively stabilized only very late. It is, therefore, the polemics of the third or fourth century that will determine the drafting of a dogma presented to the faithful as a revelation (coming Christ himself, his words, his actions) or the work of the Holy Spirit in the consciences. And the ideologists who have forged this official doctrine will use themselves as a justification those who in the past have been closest to their own positions (by practicing, if necessary, judicious cuts in their works. See the case of Irenaeus of Lyons and his millenarianism or Montanist sympathies).

The counterfeiting of the texts of reference during the first two centuries of existence of Christianity was so unrestrained and commonly spread that a new expression was invented to describe it, that of "pious fraud."

Haut du formulaire

One of the most magnificent examples of this "pious" fraud is Eusebius of Caesarea, "the most dishonest of the panegyrist," according to the Swiss Jacob Burckhardt, author of "Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen." According to him, it can be read in the Vita Constantini that this emperor would have become a Christian, which is false. Constantine has just stopped the persecutions against various communities of which the Christians by the edict of Milan His mother, St. Helena, was a Christian, but this was far from being the case with Constantine. A list of the twelve first popes (that he attributes to St Irenaeus) as well as myriads of martyrs are also due to this odd Eusebius. Going into detail, he considers that in Egypt "ten thousand men, not counting women and children, perished in this phase of persecution. The Thebais would have experimented mass executions: " Sometimes more than ten, at other times above twenty were put to death. Again not less than thirty, then about sixty, and yet again a hundred men with young children and women, were slain in one day....We, also being on the spot ourselves, have observed large crowds in one day; some suffering decapitation, others torture by fire; so that the murderous sword was blunted, and becoming weak, was broken, and the very executioners grew weary and relieved each other" (Church History. Book VIII. Chapter IX). More than pogroms, a sword Shoah in a way...

The method of Eusebius is very peculiar. His account is constantly interspersed with excerpts from works by his predecessors and copies of official documents. His History is therefore largely made up of borrowings, but which are always avowed and which have the merit of having transmitted to us many texts disappeared elsewhere. But it should also be noted that the author sometimes lacks lucidity and critical judgment: a certain number of documents cited are clearly forged, for example the Abgar-Jesus correspondence or the epistle of Antoninus to the Council of Asia prohibiting Prosecution of Christians (IV, 13). There is also some naivety in narratives of miracles which are only duplicates of what is read in the New Testament. Conversely, Eusebius is very preoccupied with the authenticity of the sacred texts; he returns more than once on the canon of the Scriptures. Eusebius does not fail to wonder about the causes of events, but as a man of faith he considers that God is the main actor in history. It is he, for example, who provokes the suicide of Pilate and who even chastises the faithful when, enjoying with the "little peace" of the years 260 and following ones, they indulge in softness but fear themselves within the Communities: it is God who is behind the "great" persecution of Diocletian (303-305-311). Another actor is identified, Satan. The men, in fact, play only a secondary role.

The official Gospels are therefore late texts, in no way contemporaneous with Jesus, whose early versions date from the second century, although, of course, some of the materials they use are older. They were subjected, until the fourth century, to a large number of changes (for example, some additions) to the liking of arguments and controversies.

There have been constant revisions of the texts, and these ceaseless rewritings, combined with equally ceaseless censorship, constitute as many falsifications of factual truth, THE ONLY WHICH IS OBJECTIVELY MEASURABLE OR QUANTIFIABLE. The truth of a higher order, independent of facts, places, and chronologies, often put forward by the sycophants of Christianity in order to justify these impostures, remain of the order of the undemonstrable one.

"What is Truth?" Asks Pilate in and according to the four Gospels?

Truth, which is to be not mixed up with sincerity, it is what is used to designate a thing objectively in keeping with the facts, or at least to a certain scientific principle, kind $2 + 2 = 4$. What characterizes this kind of truths, factual or scientific truths, is their objective nature. When they are more subjective things, such as feelings, we are talking about sincerity, but this is, of course, much harder to check. When the culprit of an accident acknowledges the facts, but declares: "I did not do it consciously on purpose," he alone knows. There are besides successive sincerities.

It is generally accepted that the words "true" and "truth" may also be used for other than objective, faithful, complete, and exhaustive relations of facts (and sayings). An image or work of fiction can, for example, contain a part of truth, or may, in its own way, express a truth (in the broad sense of the word). Nonetheless, these non-factual and non-scientific truths are extremely subjective, and are by no means equated with objective truths. They are not in keeping with reality in the strict sense of the word and the authors of these works of fiction intended to promote such subjective truths have the moral duty to admit it from the beginning. They have a responsibility to leave no ambiguity about the facts or the details of the material reality to which they refer in order to release of it their truth.

To imply that a thing is objectively in keeping with the factual even if truncated, reality, whereas it is only an image, or that it was written only in order to make the connection with something else (Midrash); is to abuse the notions of true or truth, and it is to mislead, by means of an attitude resembling that of the falsehood.

The four official Gospels, and even five, if we take that by Marcion into account, were written from Midrashim or other collections of materials dating from the second century; collections of material on Jesus very close to those Christianity then called apocryphal (they had all the characteristics of them, and if they were found, the official exegetes would certainly call them apocryphal).

It is impossible to grasp the reality of the historical Jesus described in these texts.

Let us repeat it, these gospels are clerical counterfeits several years later than the alleged date of the events supposed to have given rise to them. The figure of the historical Jesus is therefore a "fraud coming from tradition," worked out in the second century with many dogmas.

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As we have already had many opportunities to say it, the earliest known Christian documents are not the Gospels, but the letters by S. Paul.

Convinced that the end of the world and the last judgment being to follow it were close, the early Christians were really worrying only very late (with Marcion) about the working out of a corpus of coherent texts.

The letters of Paul ignore most of the apostles quoted in the Gospels, who in turn don't know the disciples that Paul mentions, and even Paul himself; for what is strange it is that none of our 4 official gospels of today speak of Paul. They were, however, written well after the epistles, what nobody contests today.

Current Christians know only four gospels, but these texts have a history. Let us not forget that we are in a time without printing, where everything is based on the copyists, and where, moreover, communications are slow. The dissemination of a writing could therefore take a long time.

The draft of a gospel is one thing; its circulation is another one and the common circulation of several gospels, a third one. These four texts were therefore probably all preceded by another one, single: the Evangelion by Marcion.

St. Paul, the earliest of Christian writers, spoke only of one gospel; this single gospel had been revealed to him and he preached it. Perhaps was it originally only a rumor (a man died and rose again, in Palestine, he performed miracles, some people say he was more than the expected messiah, a son of God even a god himself ...) ; in any case came a moment when this rumor was written down. This first gospel was perhaps the basis of the teaching of disciples like Valentinus, Basilides, Cerdo, or Marcion, who would have possessed the manuscript of it before the year 140.

But what does Paul mean by the word "gospel"? What was the content of this message for him? That's it, the Messiah is arrived, people saw him in Capernaum, myself I saw him on the road to Damascus or the Good News of the salvation for all the men ? A mystery revealed? The teaching of Christ? Was this gospel written down in the Pauline communities of the Near East, especially in Sinope on the Black Sea? It is not impossible. Paul's letters speak to us of a cosmic and supernatural Christ, but never speak of the man Jesus, of his miracles, of his death, and of his resurrection. When Paul speaks of the miracles of Christ, why does he never quote the feeding of the crowds or the changing water into wine to support his words? When Paul speaks of the crucifixion of Christ, why does he never give details: the place, the date, Pilate, the Sanhedrin? When Paul says that the end of time is near, why does he not quote the same predictions of Jesus (Mark 13: 30, Matthew 24:42 ...) The few times Paul speaks of Pilate (1 Timothy 6:13) are universally recognized by scholars as part of the passages added in the second century. The writings of "Paul" are therefore not always from him. Paul, like the Gospels, moreover, never expresses the desire to see, for example, the place where Jesus was born, his so-called hometown Nazareth, the places where he preached, the room where he had his last meal, his grave, the Calvary ... Incredible! It took three years (after his conversion) so that Paul visits shortly Jerusalem, and only to see Peter, obviously the other districts do not interest him ... very odd ...!

And the clothes, the relics of Jesus, the objects of his daily life that he had touched? His cross? Without interest for Paul ... It will be necessary to wait for the 4th century and the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, Helena, so that pieces of the "true cross" (enough to build the framework of a church) appear and the Middle Ages to have other relics ...

..... WARNING TO THE READER: What is generally understood by Evangelion or Gospel of Marcion and from which it will be discussed at length from now on, it is (very approximately) THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE LESS THE PART ONE.

Tertullian accuses Marcion twice (De Praesc. haer 30; Adv. Marc, J, 19) of having separated the New Testament from the Old one. It would be interesting if it were true; but no one has ever known a book containing both the Old and New Testaments at the time of Marcion; the latter did not have to separate things which had never been gathered.

What is probable is that the distinction made by Marcion between the writings to really follow and meditate and the other come the Jewish movement, has compelled the other Christian movements to distinguish also an Old and a New Testament. Tertullian himself, often very inconstant in his successive assertions confesses it; he writes in the chapter 36 of the De Praesc. that it is the Roman Church, which united the Law and the Prophets to the evangelists and apostles! This admission is of extreme importance.

Moreover, what text did Tertullian have before him to say that? He certainly did not have the early text of the Gospel of Paul or that of the Evangelion by Marcion; these texts had had to be already thoroughly changed at the time. Had he even at his disposal the gospel of Luke in his original text?

Epiphanius and Tertullian often worked from memory, even when they compared Marcion with Luke; this method is highly objectionable. Thus they reproached Marcion for having suppressed certain passages from the Gospel of Luke that it did not actually contain, but which were in Matthew. The latter appears to have been their favorite author. In any case, we may hardly imagine that Marcion chose deliberately for his preaching a gospel (Luke), which, if we consider its present text (the first section in our current versions deals with the birth of Jesus and his "hidden" life) began in such a shocking way for him - it would have been necessary for him to eliminate the first 132 verses and a considerable part of the rest. It was easier for him to make a new one but he was never accused of it.

Semler was the first (in 1783) to refuse to consider that the Evangelion by Marcion was a mutilated text of Luke, which did not prevent the imposing party of the Orthodox specialists from blindly following Tertullian on this point.

Other specialists (Harnack, Couchoud) have attempted, starting from what Marcion's opponents say, to reconstruct his Evangelion. Nevertheless, they seem for that to have had only a version already changed or having already evolved, of its text. It is therefore better to remain very careful about this subject. When we read, for example, Irenaeus, we can only realize the importance of the documents or ideas of which we are deprived.

Let us point it once again the evangelical narrative is a composite set, made randomly.

The original rumor (the messiah finally appeared in Palestine, he performed miracles, brought back to life some dead, was himself resurrected ...) did not cease to evolve during the first three centuries of our era. Its cores date from the end of the first century, but certain points, not without significance, were finalized only in the 4th century.

The different fictional stories of the Nazarene new Joshua were composed using materials of a different origin.

The first basic elements, the Midrashim, evidently come from Jewish circles, traditionally messianic or nonconformist. The idea of a Son of Man, in other words, of a new Adam, comes, for example, from the Sethians, but there was also the Essenian influence, and others. These are what are called Midrashim, in other words, the elements of a sort of police sketch of what the Messiah of the Jews should be or should do, according to their holy Scriptures; and therefore that they will enforce as far as Jesus the Nazarene is concerned by artificially applying them on his true biography; instead of the genuine, but interesting nobody, or already forgotten for the same reason, elements.

"The fate of being conceived from a virgin is prescribed, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as the messiah. This removes all real value from the narrative which can no longer be considered as establishing a fact, but fantasized for the purpose in hand " ("Henry Lizeray. The Secret Doctrine").

One of the main problems of the earliest Christians, those of Jewish origin, was that Jesus had in no way the typical profile of the expected messiah. He was a Galilean, dead as a wretch, abandoned by all, or almost all, and so on. They therefore had to invent a great deal of detail, or to rack the texts, by abusing allegorical interpretation, to make them jibe with reality, and thus to show that he was indeed the Messiah expected by the Jews. Example the different genealogies of Jesus, destined to make people believe that he was a descendant of King David. But Porphyry noticed that what the Hebrew prophets had announced could be applied to at least a dozen other cases than that of Jesus.

One of the overall champions of allegory able to symbolize anything is undoubtedly in this field St Justin. This Father of the Church, for example, states in his Dialogue with the Jew Trypho that the name of Joshua was a mystery announcing the name of Jesus; and that Moses with his arms stretched out wide during the battle with the Amalekites at Refidim is like the archetype or sign of the Cross, upon which Christ will triumph over death, just as the Israelites did over their enemies.

"When the people waged war with Amalek, and the son of Nave by name Jesus (Joshua), led the fight, Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both hands, and Hur with Aaron supported them during the whole day, so that they might not hang down when he got wearied. For if he gave up any part of

this sign, which was an imitation of the cross, the people were beaten, as is recorded in the writings of Moses; and if he remained in this form, Amalek was proportionally defeated, and he who prevailed by the cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus (Joshua) was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross. For who of you knows not that the prayer of one who accompanies it with lamentations and tears, with the body prostrate, or with bended knees, propitiates God most of all? But in such a manner neither he nor any other one, while sitting on a stone, prayed. Nor even the stone symbolized Christ, as I have shown (chapter 90).

It can be understood that such delirium did not convince the unfortunate Trypho that the true chosen people (Verus Israel in Latin, israelitikon to alethinon genos in Greek) were henceforth the Christians (chapter 135).

"We need not add what Origen says of the writings of the prophets, of the Vision of Ezekiel, or the Apocalypse in particular: for he is universally confessed to have brought this mystic or allegorical method of interpreting Scripture to its perfection, and to have furnished matter to all that trod the same path after him" (Summary of the thesis of Toland on the subject).

According to Papias (bishop of Hierapolis in small Phrygia around 125), there would have been Midrashim about Jesus, that the Gospel of Matthew would have echoed, in a way adapted to the ideological demands of the later Christian generations (from the 2nd to the 4th century) . "Therefore Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and everyone interpreted them as he was able."

This gospel, at least, has therefore been inspired by earlier Midrashim, that is to say, comments, or comparisons, more or less free or forced, with texts from the Torah concerning the messiah to come. By Hebrew Papias certainly means "Aramaic." The first Christians, who were of Aramaic language, inserted whole details or paragraphs in the oral literature about him; tending to prove that their hero corresponded well to the police sketch of the Messiah, which could be drawn from a careful examination of the Torah.

"The fate of being conceived from a virgin is prescribed, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as the messiah. This removes all real value from the narrative which can no longer be considered as establishing a fact, but fantasized for the purpose in hand ." We have said.

Everything concerning the birth of Jesus Relate to this kind of material. His birth and childhood are mentioned by Mark, and although "Matthew" and "Luke" affirm that he is born of a virgin, they trace his lineage back to the house of David via Joseph; so that he corresponds to the prophecy and in order to give more weight therefore to his candidacy to the status of Messiah from the Davidic family. Although he was a Galilean, they make him being born in Judea, Bethlehem, still for the same reason. Such verbal cartwheels supply what is called Midrashim. With the exception of the case mentioned by Papias, Jewish orthodoxy and official Christianity evidently did not care to preserve the first evangelical materials, written in Aramaic (or in Hebrew?)

Nevertheless, we can find the trace reflection or echo of them in the four official Gospels, as well as in a certain number of other documents, such as the Gospel of the Ebionites. The texts of the New Testament derive from a dissident Judaism, in which various sects, or communities, clash with Gnosticism, or with Esseno-Baptism. Esseno-Baptist communities or churches, which are the basis of original Christianity, gave great importance to the comments of the Biblical texts.

Writings were spread in which the questions raised by the hope of the end of time and by the return of the Messiah or of another Savior were dealt with. Each tendency expressed especially its opinion on the name to be taken by the redeemer. Would he be a new Adam, a new Seth, a new Joshua, a new Isaiah?

The evangelical narrative is therefore by no means historical. It is a plea or a demonstration, based on previous texts. These evangelical narratives, initially, were not made for the non-Jews, not intended for the Greeks, the Galatians, or the Romans, not intended for the Church; they were only intended for Jewish readers, or readers of Jewish origin, sufficiently lettered to have notions of Hebrew 1), and therefore they appealed to all possible and imaginable methods in Hebrew or Aramaic languages.

Some Essenian Midrashim therefore will enter the formation of the Hebrew basis of the Gospels, and, in passing into the Greek language, under the influence of Marcion, will produce masses of incomprehensible or incoherent phrases that generations of exegetes will be then obliged to study.

1) The good news (gospel) was something like this: "That's it, the messiah has arrived, he was seen in such place ... he is underway, he comes towards us, our enemies flee before him, our people follow them by thousands, etc. "

DOCUMENTS.

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD.

The written account of the life of Jesus Christ, preserved in its original Greek by Marcion, son of Philologus, bishop of Sinope. Anno Domini 130.

The text is based on "The Gospel of the Lord" by James Hamlyn Hill (1891), itself based on the 1823 reconstruction by August Hahn. Version also revised by Daniel Mahar to reflect the reconstruction done by Theodor Zahn ("Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons," vol. II, 1888), who doubts some of the material taken on by Hahn and Hill in their versions.

The text presented here is hyperlinked to the two major (and hostile) patristic sources utilized in its reconstruction: Ephiphanius, Panarion, Section 42, "Against the Marcionites" and Tertullian, Against Marcion (Adversus Marcionem) Book IV.

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD.

The written account of the life of Jesus Christ, preserved in its original Greek by Marcion, son of Philologus, bishop of Sinope. Anno Domini 130.

LUKE 3.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea.....

LUKE 4.

31 Jesus descended [out of heaven] into Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching [in the synagogue] on the Sabbath days; and they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was in authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man, who had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying,

34 Let us alone; what have we to do with you, you Jesus ? Are you come to destroy us? I know you who you are; the Holy One of God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, hold your peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 They were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, what a word is this! for with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 His fame went out into every place of the country round about.

[38-39 unattested].

LUKE 4.

16 He came to Nazara, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and

21 And he began to speak to them, and all wondered at the words which proceeded out of his mouth.

23 And he said unto them, you will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself:

whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your country.

Zahn omits.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when a great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were also in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way. At the Setting of the Sun

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with diverse diseases brought them unto him; he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, You are the Son of God.

[-41c] And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: but the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

LUKE 5.

1 And it came to pass, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draft.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Teacher, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at your word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships with fish so that they began to sink.....

LUKE 24.

6 He is risen: remember how he spoke unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying,

7 The Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 And returned from the tomb, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 Now they Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 But their statements seemed in their sight as nonsense, and they disbelieved them.

12 Nevertheless Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb; stooping down, he saw the linen bandages laid by themselves, and departed, wondering to himself at that which was come to pass.

13 And, behold, two of them went that very day to a village called Emmaus, sixty stadia distant from Jerusalem .

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed and questioned together , Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, what words are these that you exchange with each other, as you walk, and are sad of countenance?

18 One of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Do you alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, the things concerning the Nazarene Jesus who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to a sentence of death, and crucified him.

21 We hoped that it had been he, who is going to redeem Israel: yea, and beside all this, today is the third day since these things occurred.

22 Certain women also of our company nevertheless astonished us, who had been early at the tomb;

23 They found not his body, but they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

24 Some of them which were with us went to the tomb, and found it so, even as the women had said: but him they did not find.

25 Then he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that he spoke to you.

26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

[27]

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: he made as though he would go further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is towards the evening, and the day has declined. And he went in to abide with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he reclined with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him and he became invisible to them.

32 They said one to another, was not our heart burning within us,

[32c] while he talked with us in the way?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying,

34 The Lord is risen indeed, he had appeared to Simon.

35 And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he became known to them in the breaking of the bread.

36 And as they spoke these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.

37 But they were terrified or affrighted, because supposed that they had beheld a phantom.

38 Then he said unto them, Why are you troubled? And wherefore do reasoning arise in your hearts?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that I am myself: for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have.

[40]

41 And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have you here anything eatable?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb.

43 And he took it, and ate before them.

44 Then he said unto them,

[45] These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you,

46 It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.

MARCION'S GOSPEL.

The Evangelion by Marcion was therefore to begin thus.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea (Jesus) Christ the son of God descended out of Heaven into Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching, etc., etc. (Luke 4: 3.)

Luke's long passage from 3: 2 to 4: 30 (68 verses) was probably added in the middle of the first sentence of Marcion's evangelion. The original verse "he descended out of heaven" was perhaps changed in "he then he went down to Capernaum a city in Galilee" (Luke 4: 31).

Marcion's Evangelion indeed made Christ descend directly from heaven onto earth (according to Tertullian, C. M 4: 7). This Christ being a pure supernatural creature, he could therefore only appear in the form of an ethereal spirit. Being only a heavenly character, Marcion did not attribute him a human birth, and he agreed on this point with Mark 1: 9; who shows an already adult Jesus, but without birth, therefore without a past. A son of God that appears to men in the human form.

Therefore, we cannot be surprised that his Christ descended from the uncreated heaven, higher to that of the Creator of this failed world; that he assumed a human appearance, and that he was not born of a virgin, but as a thirty-year-old man. Hippolytus (Refutation of all heresies VII, 19) writes that according to Marcion the Logos, in the fifteen year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, "descended from above unbegotten."

The content of the evangelion, confirmed by these various witnesses, was therefore different from our present Luke and Matthew, who, after various text manipulations done by Christians who remained very Judaizers; added stories and details, presenting Jesus as a child come into the world in a normal way; and imagined to provide him with a genealogy. Unfortunately, the novel that they wrote independently of one another, on the ancestry and birth of Jesus, takes two different forms, the contradictions of which showing their true nature.

IN THE FIFTEEN YEAR OF THE REIGN OF TIBERIUS.

Why did Marcion put a date at the beginning of his gospel? We do not understand how a mythical event such as the descent on earth of a god-or-demon, generally a timeless event in all the mythologies, could be dated, that is, become historical. Only one explanation seems possible; this mythological fact could be transposed into an episode of history only when it was linked to the existence of a man who supposedly witnessed it. The descent of Christ would not have been rejected in timelessness (once upon a time) the date would be that of the moment when a "holy man" would have thought to attend it, to receive a divine message, to be a favored witness of it, and to become a missionary of him. We should have therefore the date, not of a mythological episode "in illo tempore," but that of the vision of an ascetic, the beginning of his apostolate. In other words, the historical Jesus, perhaps! The hypothesis is worth what it is worth.

The Judeo-Christians who reworked the evangelion of Marcion, of which we have just spoken, then introduced the names of Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias, Annas and Caiaphas, John the son of Zacharias, details unknown by Mark and Matthew. In order to change a mythical event into a fact of Jewish history, this connection or correspondence between myth and lived history being felt to be necessary.

The insertion of these "historical" characters into Luke alone, moreover, was to prepare their entrance for later, at the moment when the Passion was added to the original text. In any case, if Marcion, as it is possible, has given details of the descent of Christ and his apparition here below, his explanations have disappeared and have been replaced by a narrative concerning John the Baptist that Marcion did not know. What is certain is that the god-or-demon descended from heaven was not Yahweh, the God or Demiurge of the Jews. Tertullian himself agrees (C. M, 1, 15); speaking to Marcion, he exclaims: "How happens it that your god has been revealed since the twelfth year of Tiberius Caesar....."

AT CAPERNAUM.

Luke continues in 4:31 his sentence begun and interrupted in 3, 1. He writes "(Jesus) DESCENDED into Capernaum, a city of Galilee." He kept the verb descend used by Marcion to indicate a descent

from heaven, but he specifies "city of Galilee" in order to locate the event on earth. And Jesus does not DESCEND into Capernaum, coming from Heaven, as in the text of the evangelion by Marcion, he enters it, normally and humanly, on foot, accompanied by James and John. Matthew has no corresponding passage.

What is therefore this city of Capernaum, which appears for the first time only in the New Testament? This name is symbolic, it indicates, as Heracleon (a Gnostic) later indicates, "the farthest out part of the world," the last heaven; the one that corresponds to our earth, and which was created by the author of this evil world or at least missed.

In French Capernaum is besides still a synonym of odds and ends, disorder.

In the writings of the Judeo-Christians who modified the original version of the evangelion, it becomes a true town that they locate in Galilee; But would not this Galilee itself be symbolic, and would it not represent in reality the pagan regions? This precision (Galilee) is unknown by Mark and is found in Marcion only in this place of his text.

When Luke quotes it in 4:23, as Mark and Matthew Marcion doesn't know it. Marcion and Mark do not know the Capernaum of the verses of Luke 7:1b and 10:15. Marcion and Luke do not contain the Capernaum of verses 2:1 of Mark, and 17: 24 of Matthew.

It is as if Capernaum had been added here and there (very early, besides, since the Gnostic Heracleon studied its meaning) or, on the contrary, as if it had been suppressed from certain passages. However, the first hypothesis is most likely. This city would have been imagined symbolically, halfway between the myth and a metaphorical geography, to suggest the place where the descent of Christ was done, in a manner analogous to that which had dated the event.

If we return to the text attributed to Marcion, we read that Jesus teaches in the synagogue, what is confirmed by Mark. On the other hand, Luke does not know that the scene takes place in a synagogue; he only declares that it happens on the Sabbath. Matthew is unaware of the matter. Since the word "synagogue" could not be removed from the original text of Mark by Luke and Matthew, it would have been added therefore to Mark and Marcion.

We know from Tertullian that his Jesus Christ was not that of Marcion, and that the latter neither Tertullian had mixed up the two. One was a man, a Jew named Jesus, who was to be, or ought to have been, the messiah of Israel. The other was the good god, or his emanation, and his kingdom was not of this world.

We also know that the first gospel preached to the Christians was that of Paul, the apostle of the heretics, and that this gospel was collected and published by Marcion. Irenaeus confessed how the four canonical gospels came to replace the "heretical" gospel by seriously changing it, what did not prevent him from accusing Marcion without reason of having corrected and mutilated one of these four gospels (that of Luke). However they are these four secondary gospels - made by different Christian circles to replace that of Paul and Marcion, and to fight the Gnostics - which ultimately constituted the primordial basis of the declarations of the Fathers of the Church; and are therefore still the favored field of modern exegetes.

The collation in a single book of the Jewish Bible, the new Gospels, and the expunged Pauline Epistles, constituted the New Testament; an expression which could appear only after the publication in Rome of the Pauline corpus opposing the Jewish Bible, that is, the Old Testament. Previously, the expression would have made no sense.

This expression "Books of the Old Testament" is used for the first time by Melito of Sardis circa 180 (Eusebius, H., E., book IV, chapter 26, 12 and 14). On the other hand, Tertullian admitted that it was the Roman Church which had gathered the Law and the Prophets with the gospels and the apostles, an irrefutable proof of the Judaization of these by those. This is the very evidence, since none of our canonical gospels is previous, whatever may be said, to the last third of the second century; while the Pauline Epistles date from the first century, and Marcion published them between 135 and 140, a generation before the canonical Gospels.

The initiative of these Christians was to destroy the opposition between the Jewish Bible and the New Testament proclaimed by Marcion. This unnatural union of two irreconcilable works was made possible only by the destruction of a part of the Marcionite writings, and the falsification of what was preserved of them.

Despite these facts, Irenaeus accused Marcion of having borrowed the gospel of Luke, and corrected this text at his convenience. Unfortunately, Irenaeus is only a single, tendentious and late witness, and it is on the basis of his single testimony that Tertullian, Epiphanius and many others maintained

against Marcion a controversy which still lasts, and which, like any argument, was never objective. It was not in the case at hand a question of discovering the truth (since they believed to have it), it was necessary to defend at any cost and by whatever means the cause which was considered to be the right one.

But they did not have genuine texts from Marcion. At the end of the second century, the Evangelion - as Marcion had published it - no longer existed as an independent work; it had been changed into "gospel of Luke" after having undergone serious amputations and received numerous additions.

When Marcion's detractors reproach him with certain inconsistencies, they in fact point out incompatibilities of ideas or language between Marcion's doctrine and the beliefs that his proofreaders have wrongfully attributed to him, by inserting them in the Pauline and Marcionite texts.

The materials added to the primitive Evangelion of Marcion, to make it the Gospel according to Luke and the three others, have various origins.

It is possible, we say "possible," that the man who focused on his name all these Messianist or Christlike myths (Jesus) really existed.

What is obvious then in this case is that many of the elements of his "official" biography were invented later.

95% of these elements of his alleged life have been added.

a) In order to historicizing as much as possible the myths or the timeless remarks that one wanted to attach to his person.

b) In order to prove to the Jewish audience that he matched well the police sketch of the messiah announced by the prophecies of the Torah (process known as Midrash).

c) In order to seduce and convert other broader circles, of the time (the pagans of Greek culture for example).

d) In order to justify certain practices, decisions or positions.

Because many elements of Jesus's biography are also both ancient and late, that is, matching closely much older, but mentioned much later only as also characterizing Jesus, texts. What is the very definition of Midrash.

We find, for example, already in the book of Micah (5: 1-2) that the messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, a city of David.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch: " Stop your ears when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, truly crucified...He was also truly raised from the dead" (Epistle to the Trallians, chapter 9).

It was like listening to the sura of the Quran advising believers not to discuss with infidels.

Holy Quran chapter VI verse 68. " When you see men engaged in vain discourse about our signs, turn away from them unless they turn to a different theme. If Satan ever makes you forget, then after recollection, do not sit you in the company of those who do wrong."

Throughout conversions, the authors give substance to the narrative, and begin by constructing what will become the greatest lie of all time. And later details like the traitor Judas, the Virgin Mary ... (Jesus would be born of a virgin like, before him, Horus and so on) will be added. The evangelists thus gradually build the story of a "man" Christ by adding, as they go along, narratives mixing historical context and fictional characters. Christ is more and more presented as a man who has truly lived. He has had consequently a mother, a childhood, a father, an education, an eventful existence and a dramatic death.

MAIN SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY (THE MIRACLES).

WARNING TO THE READER. THE REFERENCE TEXT OF OUR ANALYSIS WILL BE THE TEXT OF THE GOSPEL (EVANGELION) BY THE NAMED MARCION; AS IT HAS BEEN RECONSTRUCTED BY AUGUST HAHN AND THEODOR ZAHN WHILE MAKING AN INVENTORY OF ALL THE VERSES ASCRIBED TO THIS BISHOP BY HIS DETRACTORS. LET OUR READER BE NOT SURPRISED, IT IS A DELIBERATE CHOICE, AN ACCEPTED BIAS.

Some miracles of the four gospels are only Midrashim or logia illustrated by an anecdote, an image often worth more than a long speech. Just like the famous episode of the piece of money found by Peter in the mouth of a fish, on the injunction of our hero, to pay the tithe due to the Temple. "Go and take the first fish you catch and you will find a four-drachma coin (Matthew 17:27). Now, stories of fish having in their mouths a piece or a ring of gold, are found everywhere on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

But it goes without saying that, as in the case of the logia, we are incapable of distinguishing between the miracles truly attributed from the beginning to Christ; and those which were attributed to him only later, as in the case of Apollonius of Tyana.

THE WEDDING AT CANA.

It is obvious that this text is initially a symbolic Gnostic text, a fable, and not the account of a fact actually happened.

The famous episode of the marriage at Cana (John 2:1-12), which is not historical, is only a historicized in the context of this pseudo-biography. Let us note in passing that the new Joshua is presented there as a person without any respect for his mother, and that this is not an example that we should advise imitating.

Those who still believe today in the objective and material reality of the facts put forward the following explanation.

The wine of the time, like that which is drunk during the wedding at Cana, is rich in must and dregs, which are deposited in the bottom of the amphorae. By adding water and mixing, it becomes a rough, low-flavored but overall satisfactory, beverage, a small claret wine. And when it's been three days that people drink, they don't make the difference.

Nevertheless, it is more likely a timeless narrative, of the genre fable, parable, apologue or moralistic story, changed afterwards, after manipulations of the text, in genuine fact of the biography of the new Joshua.

THE WOMEN DEVOTED TO JESUS (Luke 8: 2-3).

This passage, isolated, is common to Marcion and Luke, but has no parallel in the other gospels. A proofreader added to Luke 1: "The Twelve."

We learn that rich women were attached to Christ; three names are quoted, but it is said there were "many others." One of these women was called Mary Magdalene. Verse 8: 2 informs us that those women who followed Jesus "had been cured of evil spirits and diseases." In other words, they were thus exercised and then converted. But this Mary-Magdalene resembles Helena, partner of Simon "the sorcerer." See what we have written about this great Gnostic philosopher in Samaria.

Mary Magdalene had been released from seven demons, we are told. Would it not be the "sins" with which she would have been covered when she was crossing the heavens of the evil god creator of this world (coming from the heaven of the good god) in order to go down to earth? See the Gnostic ideology on this subject. The allusion to the wife of a steward of Herod perhaps aims only to clarify a little more the so-called historical framework in which the Judeo-Christian proofreaders want to bring back the Gnostic myth. Or it is a remnant of the genuine life of the historical Jesus.

[It is not to us, barbarian druids of the West, to decide this kind of quarrel between Christian exegetes. We have only one goal, to provide our human brethren with what to be FREE....people or thinkers! And therefore to provide a brief overview of a religion that affects billions of women of men or children].

The women who followed Jesus, assisted the apostles with their possessions, and were tasked with certain missions. The role of women in our gospels is especially noticeable during the death and resurrection of Jesus and Lazarus. They administered perhaps the baptism for the resurrection of the dead, of which St. Paul speaks (1 Co 15: 26-29). Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (16: 1), recommends Phoebe, a deaconess of the Church in Cenchreae (a practice that the Catholic, or Orthodox, Church, has given up). Pliny speaks of the deaconesses of the churches in Bithynia in his famous letter to Trajan, and women were also full members of the Marcionite communities (bishops being in them often accompanied by women) or Montanist.

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSANDS (John 6: 1-13).

Jesus withdraws by boat on the other side of the Lake of Tiberias. In this almost desert place, the crowd sits on the grass. For the crowd has followed him, no one knows how, especially as in this period of the Passover it is the road to Jerusalem that it should take. Regardless of whether they are 4,000 or 5,000 men, not counting women and children, across the country, that's a considerable figure.

There is a colorful assembly of grieving families dragging a sick, a handicapped person or a mentally retarded person, hoping for a cure or an exorcism; of strong and devoted volunteers carrying feverish and paralyzed people, mere idlers, agents of political or religious power, devout followers, and so on. How will they feed? How did the apostle Andrew spot in this crowd a boy who had five loaves and two fishes? Jesus takes the loaves and, "having given thanks" distributes them in the crowd. When all were satisfied, they filled twelve large baskets with the left over. Where do these baskets come from? Who took them? The next day, John says, the crowd continued to seek Jesus and goes into boats to join him. This crowd must be much smaller than the day before, for it is difficult to imagine that there are enough boats in Tiberias to transport four or five thousand men, plus women and children. There was to be a real event at the base of the story, but it has been so changed, that it is impossible for us today to say what really happened.

Gerd Theissen records the existence of Johanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household steward, whom Luke (8: 1-3) quotes among the women who assist Jesus and his disciples "with their means." It was she who would have brought provisions, and this sudden and unexpected appearance of so much food would have been considered a miracle by those poor people, who had never seen so much food in one go.

Possible!

Let us note, however, that the Gospels of Mark and Matthew give two accounts of the episode when Jesus feeds the thousands; a long story (Mark 6: 36-46, Matthew 14: 15-23), which takes as its starting point of the miracle five loaves; and a short story (Mk 8: 1-10, Matthew 15: 32-39), which mentions seven loaves. Another difference is that the first narrative speaks of twelve baskets of leftovers, while the second counts only seven.

It is evident that these two accounts are duplicated; one is the tracing of the other, and is only intended to change the number of loaves which, like that of the baskets, is symbolic. The narrative of Mark 6, illustrates perhaps the presentation of the gospel to the Jews, thanks to the twelve apostles, that of Mark 8 representing the handover of the salvation to the non-Jews, thanks to the seven Hellenic deacons.

One question inevitably arises: what is the story that chronologically is previous to the other? In other words, is the first writer the one who reserved for the Jews this prototype of the Christian Supper or, on the contrary, the one that destined it for the Pagans?

The repetition of the miracle is inconceivable. If it had already happened once, the disciples would have remembered it, and would not have asked the question "where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed so many people?"

The arranger of the miracle of Mark 8: 4 (Matthew 15:33) seems not to know the similar miracle of Mark 6 and Matthew 14. At first sight, the figure of 12 baskets (Mk 6, Mt 14) opposite to that of the seven baskets (Mark 8, Matthew 15) appears suspicious. It matches that of the 12 apostles who, as we have seen, are intruders in the narrative. On the other hand, the use of different words in Greek to designate the baskets at the end of the episode (Mark 6, Matthew 14), invites us to admit the existence of two successive authors; because we do not see the reason that could have led the first author to change vocabulary from one chapter to another. Note also that the number 7 (that of the loaves and baskets) is that of deacons serving Christian meals according to Acts 6: 3 and that it is perfectly justified here.

We will also point out that the feeding of the thousands represented on the ancient monuments is always the second with its seven baskets, while the first, that of the twelve, is unknown in the Christian

art of the first times. In the catacombs of Rome, the representation of the Eucharistic banquet figures invariably seven men sitting before bread and fish.

The precedence in Mark and Matthew of the second account (the seven loaves) is therefore very probable, the narrative of Mark 6 and Matthew 14 being then considered as an addition. It remains for us to inquire how this episode appears in the Gospel of Luke and in the Evangelion of Marcion.

The situation here is very clear. Luke doesn't know the miracle of Mk 8: 4 and Mt 15:32 which, in our hypothesis, is chronologically the first. He knows only the second one, that is, the narrative of Mc 6 and Mt 14, which is only a duplicate.

We then come to suppose that the text of Luke was increased with this second account, when the latter took place in Mark and Matthew, who were already provided with the first version of the episode. If we compare Matthew's verses 16 :9 and 10, or Mark's 8:19, with Luke's text; we find that these two evangelists remind in these passages of the two miracles of the feeding thousands, while Luke says nothing of them; what tends to confirm that he did not know them.

Unlike the institution of the Supper with bread and wine, the rural meal with bread and fish (another prototype of the Eucharist) concerns a crowd, not just a few disciples. There is no allusion to the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a very different rite.

What were the elements of the Eucharist symbolized by the miracle of the bread and fish? If we have read the texts, we should answer "bread and fish". But can we not seriously doubt the presence of the fish at the origin of this communion?

They are actually placed in the text in such a clumsy way that they seem to have been added.

Examples.

- In Matthew 15: 34 and 36, whereas they do not appear in the parallel verses of Mark 8: 5 and 6; a proofreader had to insert a verse 7 in order to mention them.

In Matthew 14:19 and Mark 6:41, where the fishes, first mentioned, are not distributed to the crowd; only the bread is broken, but here again a scribe thought it necessary to change ultimately Mark's verse 41, to mention the fishes absent from the original text.

In Mark 6:38, where the question, "How many loaves do you have?" "Ignores the fish, what will not prevent them from being present in the answer.

- Matthew, Luke, and John, write that there were seven or twelve baskets of bread leftovers. No reference to fish. A copyist remedied this "forgetfulness" by overwriting Mark's verse 6, 43 with the fishes, without realizing that verse 44 spoke of "those who ate the loaves" and remained silent on the aforementioned fish.

If we see very well Jesus breaking the bread, it is difficult to imagine him breaking the fish; it could be argued that the fish were already prepared, without bones or even fried, and that the miracle involved a basically cooked food, but it would go very imprudently beyond our texts.

Consequently, we believe that the insertion of fish in the miracle of the feeding the thousands is almost certain and even that it has been progressive. From fish the writers passed on to few small fish, and then their number was specified: two. The evangelists do not tell us how many fish the miracle produced, nor how many were left in the baskets.

It may be supposed that the insertion of the narrative of the miracle of the seven loaves may have been a response to the new evangelical account of the Last Supper, appeared in some manuscripts. The communal banquet, served by the seven deacons, was thus opposed to the intimate meal reserved for the twelve Jewish apostles; the bread of heaven to the earthly bread linked to the cup of wine, a simple blessing to the words of consecration, a communion without a sacrifice to the memorial of a crucifixion.

On the other hand, it is known that, according to the Jewish Bible, Elisha multiplied twenty loaves of barley, and so satisfied a hundred people. Was it not tempting, and timely, to show the Jews that Christ had done much better since he had fed five thousand people with five loaves only? The anti-Marcionite Judeo-Christian reaction would have consisted in composing a second account of the miracle.

Editor's note about the sudden healings of psychosomatic diseases.

Let us first note that Rabbi Yehoshua Bar Yosef was unable to perform any of these miracles in his home village; what clearly shows the psychosomatic nature of these recoveries (the people of his country knew too much about him, in their cases faith and confidence were therefore lacking).

Let us Note also that the Gospel of John does not record any case of possession by a demon.

In Mark 9: 14-27, it is simply a fit epilepsy, of course.

Is it possible that the man-god-man Jesus would be so unaware of the aforementioned disease?

Or is this ignorance to be attributed to the "witnesses" who brought the scene?

Can we really believe in these fantastic stories kind haunted house?

Luke 11:24: a demon wanders through the desert to seek rest.

Mark 5: 12: Demons leave a possessed man to take refuge in a herd of pigs.

The account of these sudden psychosomatic recoveries turns into a fantastic film style Apollonius of Tyana.

These legendary tales and the rumor (an extraordinary man has just raised the dead, he healed even the most serious diseases, performed miracles and so on ...); could probably exist before 70 (see the allusion of John 5-2 to the pool of Bethesda, since it was destroyed by the Romans on that date). The use of a single Greek word "semeia" to designate these miracles is the clue of that. It is therefore a collection, no longer of the sayings or words of Jesus, but of the more or less miraculous acts and gestures of this new Joshua. A collection used in his own way by each of the evangelists, who develop and multiply the acts of power.

If these miracles are true, Christianity must still be understandable, but if they are false, they cannot be used as pieces of evidence, of course, as John Toland pointed it out.

Now the authors of the four Gospels have multiplied miracles of this kind, the healing of a blind man and of a possessed man in Mark becomes, for example, that of two blind men and of two possessed men in Matthew; who in any case asserts plainly in connection with the miracles of Jesus (8:16): "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took on our infirmities, and carried our diseases."...(taken from Isaiah 53) in order to manage that the maximum number of prophecies can be related to this new Joshua (midrash, but one had never dared to deify anyone before, in the official or para-official Jewish religion, even the tempting serpent in the Garden of Eden, despite all the positive things he had done for the Man: to offer him the fruit of knowledge). The process is well known, it was used as we were able to see by Philostratus in the third century when he wrote his book on Apollonius of Tyana.

THE HEALING OF THE PARALYZED MAN (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-13n Luke 5: 17-26).

The New Testament is not history; It is an "enlightening" narrative designed to construct a belief and which constantly wants to demonstrate that Christ came "to fulfill the Scriptures."

The central problem of the Midrashim of the New Testament is the conversion of the non-Jews "at the end of time," in other words, "in messianic times" (of which the coming of the Messiah is but one element among others); how the Goyim, the non-Jews, the pagans, will accept the Torah, the Law? How will they be welcomed by the people of Israel, bearer of the Law? And what will become the latter if it loses the exclusivity of the Law?

One of the complications, which, like today, fed the discussions between more or less "assimilated" Jews and more or less "Judaizing" Pagans, concerned the possibility of a "light" law, for example made of the only Seven Commandments given to Noah or Ten Commandments given to Moses ; as opposed to the "heavy" law of the 613 mitzvot instituted by the Torah, including circumcision, kosher food, conjugal purity and strict respect for the Shabbat. The most significant episode in this respect is that of the healing of the paralyzed man reported by Mark 2: 4. Unable to approach him, because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof of the house where he was; then they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying before Jesus.

This is, of course, one of the most beautiful and poetic allegories ever used to illustrate the power of the faith of the down-to-earth persons but this metaphor of the paralyzed man was also one of the most well-known Midrashim literature (singular Midrash). This is because the practice of the Law is also called Halakha, which means in the strictest sense of the word "walk." The pagan who does not know the Law is logically a disabled person who cannot walk.

HEALING OF A BLIND MAN Luke 18: 35-43).

We may doubt that this miracle, more symbolic than real, took place in Jericho; it would have happened – according to Luke and Mark, on arriving at Jericho – according to Matthew, on leaving the city. According to 9:52, Jesus seems to be traveling through Samaria, but in 18.35 and 19.1 he passes through Jericho, what is incompatible with a direct route through Samaria.

An addition in Mark 10:46 even gives the name of the blind beggar; all that is missing is the date to make us believe the historicity of the episode. As for Matthew (20, 30), he does not hesitate to double the stake; one blind person being not enough to his concern for enlightening, it is two blind people who recover their sight.

According to Luke 18: 38-39, Mark 10: 47-48, and Matthew 20: 30-31, the blind man believes that Jesus is the Davidic messiah. This expression is never found in the 4th Gospel.

HEALING OF MAN WITH LEPROSY (Luke 5:12-14).

Marcion and the synoptic gospels agree on these three verses, but certain details are worthy to be highlighted. The man with leprosy having seen Jesus, knelt down (Mk 1:40), worshipped him (Mt 8: 2), fell with his face to the ground (Luke and Marcion), and called him "Lord," what shows that he regarded him as a god. After he was healed, Jesus commanded him not to tell anyone (14a); but a Judeo-Christian, ecclesiastical perhaps, copyist, could not help contradict him by adding, " but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing." This clumsy correction appears in the three synoptic gospels.

Tertullian, reminding on this subject of the biblical passage of 2 Kings (5: 9-14) analyzes very well the Marcionite thought that this miracle contains. If Elisha, the prophet of the god who created this world, purified Naaman the Syrian, it was by making him bathe seven times in the Jordan; but the Christ of Marcion does not need either the Jordan River or any water, or to make the diving repeated seven times. He utters a word once and the cure takes place immediately. (The words "He reached out his hand and touched the man " is perhaps a Judeo-Christian addition intended to prove that Jesus had a body of flesh and not merely an appearance of man; or a rest of sympathetic magic thought, of through contact magic).

JESUS HEALS A POSSESSED MAN (Luke 4: 33-35).

Marcion recounts the healing of the possessed in three verses while Luke needs five verses (33-37) and Mark six (1: 23-28). Matthew does not know this account.

On reading these three passages, it is obvious that Mark and Luke have mixed verses. It would even seem that the healing of the possessed man is an addition to the primitive narrative, which spoke only of the teaching of Jesus. In Mark, verse 27 would be the natural continuation of verse 22, and in Luke verse 36 that of the verse 32.

It stipulates: "They were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law [...] so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! Verse 27 closely resembling a duplicate of verse 22.

In reality, listeners are stupefied, even frightened, not by the exorcism practiced by Jesus, but by his teaching which rejects the Law and the Prophets. The speeches or declarations of Jesus were suppressed in the three synoptic gospels and in Marcion and then replaced by this rather clumsy narrative.

How is it possible to admit that Matthew would not have reproduced this edifying narrative if he had found it in Mark? How not to be astonished at the presence of an impure spirit in a synagogue?

To mention an impure spirit or a demon in a synagogue amounts perhaps to emphasize a perversion of the Jewish religious law, and therefore the absolute necessity of abolishing it. This anecdote would be therefore only a fable intended to illustrate the immediate application of this principle.

Tertullian agrees wholeheartedly with that unintentionally when he writes: "And yet how could He [Jesus] have been admitted into the synagogue— one so abruptly appearing, so unknown; one, of whom no one had as yet been apprised of His tribe, His nation, His family, and lastly, His enrollment in the census of Augustus— that most faithful witness of the Lord's nativity, kept in the archives of Rome? They certainly would have remembered, if they did not know Him to be circumcised, that He must not be admitted into their holiest places. And even if He had the general right of entering the synagogue like other Jews, yet the function of giving instruction was allowed only to a man who was extremely well known, and examined and tried, and for some time invested with the privilege after experience duly attested elsewhere" (C. M. 4/7).

So if we understand Tertullian well, by contrast, the Christ of the good god of Marcion could not appear on the census lists of Quirinus; If he knew the verses 2:1-5 of Luke, he applies them to the Jesus son of David and servant of Yahweh; he does not believe in the circumcision of Christ, the heavenly creature. And he is right besides, since the circumcision of the Jewish Jesus is the result of a passage from Luke (2: 21-22) whose interpolation remains unknown by the other synoptic gospels. We may still agree with Tertullian about the presence of Jesus in the synagogues. Christ went to the "Temple" not in the "synagogues." This word was added to certain verses, for example in Mark 1:21; 5: 38; Luke 4: 20, 28, 38; 7: 5; 13:10; John 12: 42, 18:20 and Matthew only mentions it in the plural when speaking of the synagogues of the Jews. Luke mentions "the synagogue" in verse 38, but Marcion doesn't know it. We still meet the word in 6: 6 and 13: 10, but verses 8: 41 or 49 and 13:10 which contain it in Luke do not show it in the Evangelion.

DRIVING OUT DEMONS BY BEELZEBUL (Luke 11, 14-22).

This whole pericope is composite. Verses 17 and 18 are out of the subject. Mark, Matthew, and Marcion do not know verse 16. Mark ignores verses 18b to 20, and 22. Jesus's answer in verses 19-20 contains an interpolation with repetition of the phrase, "I drive out demons." Christ acknowledges that he uses Beelzebul to drive out the demons of the Jews. Now who is this Beelzebul? We must undoubtedly see in him the Cosmocrator (or Ruler of this World) of certain Gnostics, the head of the chaos that is this world; he is mixed up with Yahweh Sabaoth in the magical papyri. The Pistis Sophia mentions him. According to Hippolytus, Valentinus taught that Beelzebul was "the ruler of demons" and that he was helped by Sophia (Book 6 chapter 29). We could think, therefore, that the Christ of Gnostics, descended from Heaven to Capernaum, that is to say (as Heracleon pointed out) in the shallows of the Cosmos (in other words the matter or the chaos of our world); begins by casting out the demons (of the Jewish demiurge of the Old Testament) who have settled there. And he makes their own leader Beelzebul responsible for this driving out.

THE EXORCISMS (Luke 10, 1-20).

This mission of the 70 (or 72 according to some manuscripts) is unknown by the other Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. It is not of a material order as in 9: 52, but of a spiritual order. It will be noticed that in 9: 1-2, Jesus had summoned only the "Twelve" to send them to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and to heal. In 9: 52, they are messengers that he sends ahead of him to prepare food and lodging. In 10: 1, he sent 70 disciples ahead of him in order to serve as spiritual precursors for him. The inventor of these 70 disciples had perhaps in mind the memory of the 70 members of Jacob's family who came to Egypt (Gen. 46:27, Exodus 1: 5), or the 70 elders of Israel who prostrate before God (Exodus 24: 1-9), but the number 7 indicates the mission among the Gentiles or Pagans. By replacing 70 by 72, the proofreader wanted to emphasize the figure 12, symbol of the Jewish tribes. These 70 are sent two by two (10: 1) like the apostles of Mark (6: 7), but they all come together (10: 17) back to Jesus, what shows a writer's inconsistency. Another inadvertence is that these messengers, carrying on an important mission, return almost immediately without we are informed about the results of their activity, and they meet Jesus at the very place where they left him at the moment of their departure.

An original account of the mission among the Pagans and originally found in this place of the text therefore could be radically suppressed.

It is the "Lord" who designates the envoys. This title is not found in Mark and Matthew as the designation of Jesus. On the other hand, it is found in Luke 7: 13, 19; 10: 1; 11: 3-9; 12: 42; 13: 15; 17: 5-6; 18: 6; 19: 8, in the accounts prior to the resurrection. Marcion uses it only in 7: 13, 10, 1; 13: 15. The two synoptic gospels replace the "Lord" with "Jesus."

Matthew knows them, but in another context, and he doesn't know verses 7, 8, 9, 11 b, 17-20. Except for these last verses, the omissions or clarifications of Luke do not have an important meaning. If the expression "ahead of him," found in 9: 52 and 10: 1, marks the beginning and the end of an interpolation, as we have suggested, there are no more disciples, but simple envoys; and it is no longer a question of Jerusalem, nor of James and John.

We must now examine Luke's passage 17-18.

In Luke, the disciples rejoice in dominating the demons in the name of Jesus; it was more than they hoped for, because they were tasked (in 10: 9) only with healing the sick and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The exorcism of the demons was entrusted only to the Twelve (9: 1), but the proofreader thought it was not enough. The 70 seem to appreciate much more this gift for exorcism than their success in the proclamation of the Kingdom.

Now the exorcisms took place in the name of a god, not of a living man. It is therefore to the god Jesus that the disciples speak, and he replies to them: "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." In Mark 16: 15-18, it is the risen Jesus, and therefore the heavenly being, who gives eleven apostles the power to cast out devils and heal. Another allusion to exorcisms was made by Luke (9: 49-50). Tertullian (C.M. 4, 24) admits that it is absurd to suppose that Marcion's Christ could give the authority to trample on scorpions and snakes (Luke 10:19).

THE RESURRECTIONS PERFORMED BY THE NEW JOSHUA.

" At once he woke up the maiden from her seeming death.....Now whether he detected some spark of life in her, which those who were nursing her had not noticed or whether her life was really extinct, and he restored it by the warmth of his touch, is a mysterious problem which neither I myself nor those who were present could decide."

These very prudent words of Philostratus concerning Apollonius of Tyana (IV, 45) are required in the case of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17) and the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5: 21-42). It is obvious that the young people in fact had been victims of a temporary syncope, catalepsy, or even cataplexy.

A cataleptic sleep can last for days, months, even years. It is therefore more a resuscitation than a resurrection in this case.

The case of Lazarus (John 11) is a little more complex since, according to this myth, the corpse was beginning to smell bad.

The solution is doubtless to be sought on the side of the accusations echoed by the text of the Gospel itself, immediately afterwards (the conspiracy against Jesus). The episode would have been invented in order to convince readers / listeners of this kind of text, about the reality of Jesus's messianity, and to announce, prepare, explain or justify the future developments.

OTHER MATERIALS HAVING BEEN USED FOR THE WORKING OUT OF THE GOSPELS.

PAGAN MYTHOLOGY.

But very early were also inserted in this initial rumor, elements of non-Jewish elements, and rather from the Hellenistic circles kind Septuagint, Philo of Alexandria ... or others.

The New Testament has in fact drawn from the history and culture of the time, and the late, final drafting, of most of its text explains the numerous errors or historical contradictions that pepper its narratives. In the early days of evangelization, as the letter of Saint Jerome to St. Paulinus of Nola shows in connection with the cave of Bethlehem; Christians found themselves in competition with other religions, where the god-or-demon was already born of a virgin, where one celebrated "Christmas," where a star signaled the birth of an illustrious character....Consequently they had, in order, to support their action, to change the gospels, and to make borrowings, from the left and from the right, to convert the masses. It is also what they do today, by constantly adapting their discourse to the cultures they want to inseminate (inculturation).

Hence the working out, as we have seen, of very composite writings.

See for example the false massacre of innocent infants by Herod, that Matthew mentions (2:16-17).

Yet Palestine of that time was not a prehistoric desert, man could read and write, and such a crime would have left traces. There would be echoes of a vigorous polemic on this subject.

Perpetual Virginity ... Virgin Mary. Her story has evolved a lot over the centuries and according to the authors ... It appears once in Luke, Matthew does not mention it, neither Mark and Paul have ever heard of it ... The history of the Virgin Mary will be fixed in 431 (St. Celestine I) and the end point set in 1950 with the dogma of the assumption.

Making a "historical" reality for the mythical Christ, based on the stories and legends in fashion at the time, will prove to be a powerful tool for the seizure of power, that the Church will not cease to perfect during the centuries. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception dates only from 1854.

The incredible story of wise men and shepherds come to worship the divine child in his cave at Bethlehem pertains to this kind of material. What does mean indeed the allusion to the mages from the shores of the Persian Gulf, southern Iraq, the very ancient land of the mythical Abraham, to pay homage to the little Jesus?

The Magi (become the wise men) are considered, throughout the literature of the time, as the introducers of the cult of Mithra, from India to Persia, around the 8th century of our era. They are priests of Mithra, both astrologers, magicians, alchemists. They constitute the typical figures of their civilization; worshipers of the god-or-demon Sun, at the same time god-or-demon of fecundity and courage. They undertake therefore a journey of at least a month and a half, about 1200 km long, through sometimes desert regions, in the slow rhythm of their caravan; not to exchange with Herod some unrealistic remarks about the "king of the Jews," but to worship their God or Demiurge in his new manifestation. Their route is traced by the course in the sky of a star visible in broad daylight. The Divine Child is thus unambiguously designated as the new Mithra, especially since these Magi become Mages are the only ones who come to prostrate themselves before Him and to give him some offerings; alone, with the shepherds. The choice of the shepherds indicates a specific intention, that of confirming the significance of the visit of the Mages/Magi. The shepherds, indeed, in the mythology of Mithra, are the companions of the god-or-demon. The two gospels, known as of Matthew and Luke, are therefore complementary on this point, and proclaim unambiguously, for whom is not conditioned by conventional presuppositions; that the divine child born in Bethlehem is the new Mithra, the new Sun, the Sol Invictus of the Emperor Constantine.

Origen reports (Against Celsus, 2, 27) that, according to Celsus justly, Christians have drawn from a first account the gospel in its four forms. What amounts to say that they have changed this first message. "Certain of the Christian believers 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."

The Clementine Homilies unwittingly furnish us with valuable information on this subject (XVII): "It was necessary that a false gospel (that of Paul) should first come from an impostor; And it was not until after the destruction of the holy place [the Temple of Jerusalem] that the true gospel (that of Peter) had to be sent secretly on all sides to redress the heresies to come.

We learn thus, what we already knew, but the confirmation is important to know, that the first gospel in date is that of Paul; And that it was only corrected after the year 70 or even the year 135 (the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem). The word "secretly" suggests that the alterations of the primitive text remained unknown for a long time (this may explain why they are generally older than is believed); And that their object was to implicitly refute, as before, heresies which had not yet been declared as such.

After the dissemination of the Evangelion in Rome around 140, four other gospels, coming from the East, where they had been developed towards the end of the first century, were also broadcast in the capital of the Empire; Despite the serious contradictions they presented, on the one hand between them, on the other hand within each of their text.

Why did several gospels exist when, primitively, there existed only one which was sufficient for the Christians of Paul?

Because there were many different sensibilities in the original Christianity, and that each one understood the gospel in its own way.

In order to federate a certain number of these currents around him, the future official Christianity was therefore obliged to compose with the principal Christian tendencies of the time; And the means chosen for this purpose was to keep each of their particular gospels, whilst harmonizing them as far as possible.

The operation did not take place before the second half of the second century, since, according to the observation of a contemporary theologian, before 150, the four gospels, as written, seem to be ignored by authors prior to Saint Justin. It was thus that the orthodox "corpus" was set up tending to reject the other scriptures as heretics, even if they were earlier. By means of revision of these four variants of the primitive Gospel.

We are very well informed on this subject by Irenaeus. He declares that the great heresies are four in number, the Ebionite heresy, the heresy of Marcion, the heresy of Cerinthus, and the heresy of the Valentinians. To these pretended errors, he contrasts "first the gospel of Matthew, then the gospel of Luke, then the gospel of Mark, and finally the gospel of John."

Irenaeus tells us in substance: "The doctrine of the gospels is so firm that the heretics themselves bear witness to it, and every heresy puts its doctrine under their patronage. The Ebionites, who use only the Gospel of Matthew, are convinced by Matthew of their error on the Lord. Marcion, who mutilates the gospel of Luke, is convicted of the crime of blasphemy against the single god by the texts he preserves. Those who separate Jesus from Christ and give preference to the Gospel of Mark can be straightened out by this gospel if they read it with the love of the truth that is needed. Those who follow Valentine make use of the gospel of John, and this very gospel reveals their error. Therefore, since those who contradict us indirectly testify to us by using these gospels, the demonstration that we establish against them is solid and true."

These statements are revealing. Never have any heretics been converted to a doctrine different from theirs by the habitual gospel which they derived from their masters, which they read and frequently commented upon.

For this to happen in practice, it was necessary to gradually substitute their gospels for them, little by little modified texts, while gradually withdrawing their authentic books from the circulation.

This conversion, more or less successful according to the regions, had to take some time, almost a century. Irenaeus, addressing the heretics, declared: "We are fighting you through the four gospels." Just as he declared to Marcion (long dead): "It is with the letters of Paul that we fight you."

Translated into modern language, these revelations, naive though triumphant, make it possible to suppose that - in order to contradict the heretics by their own writings - they were consequently modified.

It is incontestable in any case, and it is paraphrase Irenaeus to say it; That the Gospel of Matthew was custom-made for the Ebionites, that the gospel of Luke was made for the Marcionites, that the gospel of Mark was worked out for the Cerinthians; And that the gospel of John was destined to seduce the Valentinians.

We also learn from Irenaeus still (Cont. Heres., III 1, § 2 and 2, § 2) that the gospel was preached before being written down. And that the apostles undertake their preaching only after having been invested with this mission and power by the Holy Spirit; That is to say, after the resurrection of Christ, and not by Jesus himself in his lifetime.

That the apostles don't speak of the hidden mystery to which St. Paul makes many allusions (especially in Romans 16:25, 1 Co 2: 7, Eph 3: 3-10, Col. 1: 26,2: 2 -3), and about which our Gospels are not informed. Finally, they were accused of mixing accounts of the Jewish Bible in the teaching of Christ.

"The apostles did not commence to preach the Gospel, or to place anything on the record, until they were endowed with the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit"....

"They maintain that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Savior; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, sometimes spoke from the Demiurge, sometimes from the Pleroma, but that they, indubitably have knowledge of the hidden mystery, etc.etc."

All this is very important. The gospel intended to counter the Evangelion by Marcion was placed under the name of Luke. Now this Luke confesses, from the beginning of his text, that he has decided to compose, after many other authors, an in order account of "those matters which have been fulfilled among us." We are thus informed of the late and indirect nature of his narrative, which responds to the need to present in a continuous manner events which until then had been narrated in a scattered order and had no connection with one another.

As we have seen, Christianity was not born with a magic wand under the aegis of a master with a radically new and divinely inspired speech. The transition from Judaism to Christianity was gradual. Nearly half of the oldest texts of Christianity (Paul's letters, for example) don't use the name Jesus. The Gospels or other New Testament books, written in Greek and quoting 300 times the Septuagint or several Greek pagan authors, such as Aratus and Cleanthes; were written, not by Jewish peasants speaking only Aramaic, but by Greek-speaking (ex-pagan) Fathers and priests, far from the Holy Land of the Jews. The four Gospels are therefore not "contemporary" documents. They were not dictated by eyewitnesses or apostles, but result from several editors who accommodate them according to the quarrels and problems of their time. It is the least we can say.

According to Mead, the first germ of Gospels were probably written in Egypt during the reign of Hadrian, perhaps in Alexandria, a crossroads of religions. Gnostic versions of these texts besides were discovered there in 1945, in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt.

The writing of the early core or of the basic materials of these future four gospels, on the other hand, does not really begin until about the year 60. They are, in fact, anonymous. The attributions to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which appear in the present titles, date back only to the 2nd century, and are not part of the original works.

In the 19th century, Adolf von Harnack undertook a meticulous and useful task by inventorying all the verses ascribed to Marcion (85-160) by his despisers and reconstructing the evangelion they used for their criticism.

In this assembly of Judeo-Christian texts of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, we can only sort out a few passages that may come from Marcion, or which are in agreement with his doctrine. These remains establish that there was an early monument whose attackers have kept only a few re-use stones. This was a common habit of triumphant Christianity. How many Christian churches were built on the ruins of pagan temples, with the stones and columns of these temples?

The gospel of Marcion was simply the gospel of Luke (Luke disciple of Paul), but without the childhood tales, which were later added to counter Marcion. The gospel according to Luke, that Marcion had in his hands, was therefore to begin in Chapter III, whatever appears before having been added; and to have some differences with the one we now know about the God of the Old Testament who created this world. Marcion had united it with certain "Letter of Paul" to make it the "evangelical" part of an apostolic ensemble. Marcion undoubtedly also took advantage of the opportunity to touch up somewhat the content of the initial rumor come to his knowledge: a son of God, an angel, descended onto Earth somewhere in Palestine, he taught and performed miracles, then ascended back to heaven and so on

KEY POINTS OF THE ACCOUNT.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS (BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD).

We will never repeat it enough. "The fate of being conceived from a virgin is prescribed, required in advance and, as such, must necessarily be part of the biography of any person presented as the messiah. This removes all real value from the narrative which can no longer be considered as establishing a fact, but fantasized for the purpose in hand. "

As Henry Lizeray had already noticed it in his time, the later the document, the more it contains elements of the earthly biography of the man Jesus, what is nevertheless a little paradoxical. It is impossible to admit that the successive generations remembered better and better what the previous ones did not know.

What happened was that the Christianity of Stephen, Paul, or Marcion, gaining ground unceasingly, the other Christian preachers felt the need to give a little more human consistency to this character (Christ), for whom they then began to build a whole story.

The protoevangelium of James, which is, at the earliest, of the end of the second century, is a typical example of this. The legends about the childhood of Christ appear there for the first time.

First in the wake of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem (Nazarenes, Ebionites ...), and then in Antioch, fictionalized stories of the life of the new Messiah, rich in biographical details of all kinds, will appear in order to counter the Pauline Christian movement.

In order to better fight in the minds, the influence of him whom the homilies attributed to Clement call the false prophet, Paul, who has not known Christ, but who claims to have had the revelation.

The Christians of this tendency claim to be in line with founders who have known the Savior in his earthly embodiment.

But two of the four gospels (those attributed to Mark and John) tell us nothing about the origin, nor childhood, of Jesus, and begin only with his meeting with John the Baptist.

Mark does not mention the name of the biological or adoptive father of Jesus (Joseph) and John never quotes that of his mother.

The official Luke, on the other hand, has much embroidered on the subject.

The apostles, alleged authors of the Gospels, give of the accounts speaking about Christ and his genealogy, versions that contradict each other in several places.

The authors of the final version of the Gospels according to Saint Luke and Saint Matthew added to the version of St. Mark some non-historical details (stories and legends of Jewish Midrash type, see above) intended to show clearly that this Jesus was well Son of God as soon as his conception, and not only after his baptism. The announcement by the archangel Gabriel to Mary that she bears the Spirit of the Lord within her, and that he will be called Jesus; is mentioned in the gospel put under the name of Luke, only in order to oppose the existence of a historical Jesus, to the Christ of Marcion, without totally clashing head-on with this idea. The Christian Gnostics considered that the Jesus who died on the cross was a pure spirit, an angel, descended onto earth in the year 15 of the reign of Tiberius, in order to show men the paths of salvation.

These accounts of the Nativity or childhood of Jesus were therefore added, a posteriori, to texts that made the life of Christ on earth starting only when he was about thirty years old. Hence this gap in the biography of Jesus between his birth and the beginning of his public life.

In any case, what is certain in this account is that Mary's reaction to her son's words, and her perplexity; are really difficult to understand (was her so deprived of all memory?) if we admit as genuine the revelations which she is already supposed to have had about him (the Annunciation by an angel, the conception Virginal ...).

And on this subject besides, let us be a little Mongolian, that is, resolutely iconoclastic, what the devil! It was not even Mary herself who proclaimed far and wide that she was still a virgin. This idea, that of the virginal conception, is a later invention in the etymological meaning of the word ("discovery").

Matthew, on the other hand, was inspired by a popular, perhaps oral, source, mostly consisting of folk traditions about Jesus (which can have had a from now on undetectable historical core). But this material has been so well formatted that we can only detect the intention, not the original expression.

In the third century, Origen (185-250) will be the only Father of the Church to recognize the problem, when he dares to distinguish in the Gospels themselves certain narratives which have not happened according to the way it is said.

"The differences among the manuscripts have become great, either through negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or, in the process of checking, they make additions or deletions as they please." (Origen, Commentary on Matthew. 15,14).

Origen particularly opposed all Nativity stories because he considered celebrating a birthday as a pagan custom. "... not one from all the saints is found to have celebrated a festive day or a great feast on the day of his birth. No one is found to have had joy on the day of the birth of his son or daughter. Only sinners rejoice over this kind of birthday. For indeed we find in the Old Testament Pharaoh, king of Egypt, celebrating the day of his birth with a festival, and in the New Testament, Herod. . . . But the saints not only do not celebrate a festival on their birth days, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, they curse that day" (homilies on Leviticus 1,16).

On the other hand, some saving god-or-devil of paganism were indeed considered as being born on December 25, like Tammuz, Adonis, Mithra and the unconquered Sun (Sol Invictus).

At that moment in the sky, there is the constellation called the Virgin; not far from there the one which is called Praesaepe, that is to say, the crib in Latin; near the Milky Way, the Shepherds; finally, to the west, the constellation of the ram, still at the stage of the lamb.

It should be noted that one of the caves in Qumran delivered a horoscope of the Messiah, a proof of the importance of astrology in the messianic expectation.

As for the famous episode of Jesus in the Temple when he was twelve years old, and speaking for the first time to show that God is his Father (Luke 2:49); it is, of course, as we have seen it above, an invented account, or at least probably an independent episode, attached afterwards by this author, to the biography of the new Nazarene Joshua.

The Gospels are catecheses, not reports, historical texts or biographies. The most advanced of today's Christians acknowledge it implicitly. Jesus's childhood stories, and certain miracle stories, using the language of the magic, are in no way to be placed historically speaking on the same level as the very words of Jesus (the Logia).

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Having arrived at this point of our talk, let us make one thing clear: it is totally impossible for us to establish with certainty if what concerns John the Baptist in the four Gospels was:

a) either invented and then added to the original text;

b) or only partly invented but still added to the original text ... in order to establish a link with Jesus, for example by developing elements already present in the original text.

Many of the details provided by the New Testament are in no way objective or in keeping with factual reality, descriptions, but are as many references to the Old Testament, to which its authors wish to link it at all costs. This is the well-known mystical and literary process known as Midrash, that is to say, some kinds of profiles revised and corrected after the events, in order to make them more tally with the theory.

Another example therefore of additions or manipulations that change everything in the four gospels, those concerning the beginnings of the public life of Jesus as a member of the movement of his cousin John the Baptist and his baptism; because the process known as Midrash was not applied only to the person of Jesus the Nazarene. It was also used to profile John the Baptist, who was also artificially attributed, in these texts, characteristics typical of the prophet of the Old Testament.

Mark 1: 2-3 offers us a mixture of several biblical texts: to the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 (behold, I will send my messenger, who prepares the way before me ...) are joined a reminiscence of Exodus 23:20 (I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way); and a quotation from Isaiah 40: 3 (a voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord.....").

The Messenger whose voice resounds in the desert is none other than John the Baptist announcing the Messiah and preparing his coming. The geographical framework is that in which, in Jewish memory, God meets his people and leads them into the Promised Land. John's food (Bedouin food), keeps us in the same perspective.

In Mark 6:22, the words given to Herod are exactly those that are ascribed to the Persian king Ahasuerus in Esther 5: 3; 5: 6 and 7: 2 (what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you).

We write well "ascribed " to this Persian king, for it was already not the account of a historical fact, but a work of imagination destined to explain the festival of Purim.

In Matthew 3: 4, John the Baptist is said to wear "clothes made of camel's hair" and " a leather belt around his waist."

His dress is therefore well that of prophets, and it evokes particularly the clothing of Elijah. It is not a police report nor a journalist statement, it is a literal, except for one word, quotation, from 2 Kings 1: 8, and Zechariah 13: 4. The passage from Luke 3: 1-22 where John the Baptist is also attributed a kind of divine adoption is not the only one who has tried to make the Baptist play a considerable role.

Already, the first chapter speaks at length about the birth of John and his royal predestination. Now, Luke is the only evangelist to give the account ranging from 1:1 to 2:40, what shows that this passage comes from a source unknown by the other synoptic gospels. Moreover, in analyzing it, we see that there are two different histories in this text, which were artificially united: the birth of John and that of Jesus. The first story that was added as a preamble to the Gospel of Luke is that of John, the nativity of Jesus having been inserted later.

The baptism of Jesus. One of the most curious episodes of this narrative. The son of God being the son of God, it is hard to see why baptizing him (the day of the baptism of Christ was beside suppressed in the sixth century).

The reality is that Jewish-Christians have substituted for the descent of Christ on Earth according to Marcion, a message of John the Baptist presenting Jesus as the expected Messiah and illustrated by the descent of a dove. This invention had the further advantage of being interpreted as if it were an adoption. Jesus was an ordinary man whom God now adopted as his son, and endowed with divine power. The silence about the "when" of this divine adoption, of the only then known other texts, went in this direction. J. Marcus thinks that Jesus simply had a vision that day and spoke about that to the first of his disciples, a little like Muhammad....

What is probable is that Jesus began by joining the movement of John the Baptist and then left it in order to spread himself the good word from his part.

Some of the early disciples of Jesus therefore began by being members of the movement of John the Baptist. But this competition between the two tendencies has given rise to various negative reactions aimed at (subsequently) minimizing the role of John the Baptist. The evangelists do not conceal this tension between John and Jesus as to their respective design of the advent of the reign of God (cf. Mt

11: 2 ff.). The balance that Mark and Luke take care to keep between the incommunicable privileges of Christ and the role of the Baptist is not broken in Matthew. He even reinforces the border posts between the two characters and their respective missions.

Whereas according to Mark and Luke, John's baptism gets the forgiveness of sins, Matthew amputates it from this purpose to make it only a baptism "for repentance" (3:11).

Only the blood of Christ has the power to forgive sins, as Matthew specifies by changing the words of the Eucharistic Institution according to Mark (cf. Matthew 26:28; Mk 14:24). The inferiority of John's baptism, and even that of his person, are underlined, if necessary, by inserting once more in the original text an element which was not at all originally there.

The sentence "After me comes one who is more powerful than I" where Matthew rewrites Mark 1: 7, shows it. Even more eloquent is the license with which Matthew dealt with the scene of the baptism, by introducing in it a dialogue that cannot be more significant. John professes his unworthiness ...

What is little likely!

Nevertheless, rather paradoxically, it is in Matthew that the "Christianization" of John the Baptist is the most perceptible. For here the forerunner preaches the "Kingdom of Heaven" (3: 2) and in the same words as Jesus (4: 17 b), but, when according to Mark 1:15, Jesus declares that "the time has come" Matthew omits this sentence; for him, the dawn of salvation has already risen with the work of the Baptist, although the full light radiates only with Jesus (Matthew 4: 14-16). Here we have an interesting example of texts "intermingling."

In verse 16 Luke sends the disciples of John to the Lord; but according to Marcion, then it is Christ they address.

In any case, the words and acts of this Jesus do not correspond in any way to the terrible figure that John the Baptist announces in Luke 3, 16-17 and in Matthew 3, 11-12.

Matthew begins his narrative (11: 2-6) by telling us that John was in prison and had heard of the activity of Christ. Luke does not say that John was in prison, but he knows that he was informed by his disciples of the works of Christ. In the present text (which is certainly secondary and changed), the episode has become historical; in the Gospel of Marcion (verse 18) John is scandalized by the miracles of Christ, perhaps because, according to him, they do not come from the god of the Old Testament.

According to Origen, indeed, the Baptist was also an embodied *aggelos* (angel) sent onto earth, but sent onto earth by whom?

"24. John the Baptist Was Sent. But 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. The "whither" is quite plain on the face of the History; he was sent to Israel" (Commentary on John Book II chapter 24).

We can therefore only find logical the answer of Jesus in Marcion 7: 23: "Blessed is he if he [John] shall not be offended in me! ".

In other words, Jesus disapproves John.

On the other hand, this verse, even changed, is not understandable in Luke and Matthew, who have suppressed the annoyance of the Baptist. It is also surprising that John, if he is scandalized, sends his disciples to Christ, not to reproach him, but to ask him if he is the true Christ; when he should have known it if he had actually baptized him. Several notions are intermingled here: the opposition of the disciples of John to Christ, the anxious expectation of John the Baptist, the affirmation of miracles, and - as we shall see - the judgment that Jesus makes about John.

In verse 7, 24 of Luke begins the narrative that gives the testimony of Jesus on John the Baptist, but this testimony is rather ambiguous. Although given further as the last of the line of the prophets, John is here more than a prophet, and there is no greater than he among men; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Matthew may well add a verse to suggest that John is an incarnation of Elijah, we see two opinions struggling about him. The addition of Elijah to the text of Matthew alone (11: 14-15) suggests that the allusions to this prophet in Luke (1: 17,4: 25-26) and Marcion (9: 8 and 30) are not original. John is Jewish, he is from the earth, Jesus is from heaven (John 3:31, 8: 23). There is incompatibility between these two characters despite the efforts made subsequently to link them to each other.

The episode of the beheading of John the Baptist, including the narrative of the dance of Salome, is mentioned only by two of the four evangelists, Matthew and Mark. The name of Salome is not mentioned in the account of Matthew.

This episode seems to have been partly inspired by the accounts of the Roman chroniclers.

Flavius Josephus, the historian of the Jewish people, who will be the first to name Salome, will evoke the execution by presenting it as a political crime. Historians consider it improbable that a Jewish princess could dance alone before a banquet of men. The practices of the court in Galilee were to prohibit such practices. The myth of Salome seems rather to be the work of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in order to warn believers against the perverse effects of dance and feminine seduction. St Ambrose, one of the great Christian moralists of the fourth century, will specify that the dancing unveiled "in nakedness those parts of the body which custom has veiled." (Concerning Virginity .Book 3. Chapter 6, 27).

Germanic authors will enrich the myth, in the nineteenth century, of Salome's love for the Baptist and the scandalous kissing the severed head.

CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

Luke inserts in the text that he borrowed from Mark an ersatz for the call of the disciples; his narrative is much longer than the parallel narratives of Mark (1: 16-20) and Matthew (4: 18-22); those ignore the verses 2 to 9, and Marcion does not contain verses 5 and 7, which are obviously amplifications of the text. However, although the account of miraculous fishing is more developed in Luke than in the other synoptic gospels, Luke keeps the memory of a call addressed by Christ to Simon alone; the verse 10 a, which mentions James and John the sons of Zebedee, was added at the end of the episode in order to "harmonize" Luke with the other synoptic gospels, an incomplete correction since the mention "Andrew the brother of Simon" remains absent from the text of Luke. Some other inconsistencies are to be noted in Luke. In verse 3, Jesus gets into the boat of Simon; he asks the latter to leave the shore, then sits down and speaks to the crowd; the copyist has reproduced his text incorrectly; Jesus could not get away from the crowd if he wanted to teach it. In this verse, the sentence "and asked him to put out a little from shore" is therefore to be deleted; it is rightly absent from Marcion and duplicates verse 4b: "put out into deep water," what also establishes the adventitious nature of verse 4a. Marcion did not suppress something; it is Luke who, on the contrary, has added uselessly. The text was originally intended to indicate that Jesus was advancing in deep water to fish. To better understand the meaning of this miraculous fishery, it is interesting to refer to Chapter 21 of John's Gospel. According to this text, the miracle is due to the apparition of the resurrected Christ. When they recognize Jesus, the disciples call Him "Lord." But in Luke's narrative (5:5) Simon, who calls Jesus "Master," falls on his knees after the miracle and says, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Simon therefore recognizes the divine Lord whom he denied, the heavenly Christ who appears to him, man-shaped, and he confesses that he is not worthy of being honored by such presence.

The mission of fisher of men is therefore entrusted to Simon and to him alone while in Mark it also concerns Andrew. The Judeo-Christian will naturally see in this image a reminder of Jeremiah (16,16) "I am sending for many fishers and they shall catch them (the children of Israel)." However, Tertullian suspects here a Marcionite intention; why does Jesus choose his apostles among the fishermen indeed instead of taking them among farmers, shepherds or carpenters? Because Marcion was a shipowner, a sailor, and that Simon could symbolize Marcion, the fisherman chosen as an apostle of Christ? In verse 10, in Luke and Marcion, James and John come in overwriting and Jesus says to Simon, "Don't be afraid!" Perhaps because it is a supernatural being before which these men are evidently frightened. The proofreader of Luke changed a narrative of the risen Christ's apparition into an account of the vocation of Peter, James and John. Their calling is therefore not due to a holy man, but to the apparition of a ghost or a divine being. The narrative of the fishing, which is unknown in Mark and Matthew, therefore has nothing to do with the calling of the first apostles; it simply narrates a manifestation of the heavenly Christ; succinctly indicated in Marcion, and developed in two different ways by Luke and John.

Another design of "religious" fishing is to be reminded; it is that of the Gospel according to Thomas. Jesus compares the man to an old fisherman who recovers his net full of small fish in the midst of which is a larger and excellent fish. He therefore rejects the small fry in the sea and keeps the large one. There we are no longer very far from the mysterious fisher king of the quest for the Holy Grail.

THE APOSTLES.

Their names and numbers vary according to the text.

The institution of the apostolic college of the Twelve dates, of course, in the early days of the Church but it is difficult to admit that it comes from Jesus himself. It is easy to understand that he surrounded himself with a small group of intimate disciples; it is less conceivable that he had limited the number to a fixed in advance number.

Luke (10: 1-24) is very clear on this subject.

" After This the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go."

The Western Christian tradition most often referred to them as "disciples," while the Eastern Christians readily call them "apostles." If we refer to the Greek lexicon, an "apostle" is indeed someone sent on a mission while a "disciple" is only a pupil.

Anyhow he narratives concerning the 12 are certainly not part of the initial Evangelion of Marcion. The central figure of Marcion is St. Paul, the great apostle whom he venerated, and of whom we know that he lived and heard Christ without having met the man Jesus in flesh and blood. Saint Paul announced that he had been "set apart from my mother's womb and called to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him" (Galatians 1:15); a sentence that could have inspired a beautiful Nativity story to Paul! He also said, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me " (Galatians 2:20). In his Epistle to the Philippians (1:20), he wrote: " Now as always Christ will be exalted in my body." He also confided to his adepts: " I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven " (2 Cor 12: 2). Heaven, which presumably was the heaven of the good god and of the Christ of Marcion. As Irenaeus says (3: 13,1) according to the Marcionites : "Paul alone knew the truth, and to him the mystery was manifested by revelation ." Although the narrative of Acts (22: 6-11) was distorted by a Judaizing proofreader, it testifies to the belief in the apparition of Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus.

Anyway what is evident from the book of the Acts of the Apostles it is that early in Jerusalem there was formed a group of immediate disciples of Jesus who endeavored to bring their good news to the Jews, while Paul and some others, who had not known Jesus, inaugurated a propaganda work among the pagans that the apostles of Jerusalem at first regarded with suspicion. The qualifier apostle was also given by extension to St. Paul ("the apostle of the Gentiles") and to some others like Barnabas. " Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace..." (First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians).

To the cases of Paul and Barnabas, we may add Sylvanus and Timotheus. And perhaps Apollos, James the Lord's brother, etc.

Since there were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve patriarchs; The Judeo-Christians, but Greek speaking, proofreaders, of the initial rumor (a man died and rose in Palestine, he was perhaps the messiah promised by the prophets, etc.); decided to put forward among the disciples, twelve of them, called apostles, invented in the 2nd century at Antioch by Greek exegetes who don't know Hebrew and Jewish history. The largest confusion prevails over them in the canonical texts which constitute the New Testament and in the apocrypha which are sets of evangelical narratives, acts, revelations and logia or maxims, of which Jesus would be the author. The Christians themselves had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing between James the brother of the Lord and James of Zebedee, Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot, Judas and Thomas, John and John of Zebedee.

Mark who speaks of the apostles in 6, 30 forgets them in verses 35 and 41 to mention the disciples; in this episode, Matthew knows only disciples.

The referring to the apostles, however, will be used by the bishops to found their legitimacy; Paul in Corinth, Thomas in Edessa, James in Jerusalem, Peter in Antioch.

This more or less legendary Peter, who was first called Simon, was changed in our texts into a more or less comprehensive disciple of the earthly Jesus, then into a prince of the apostles, until to be admitted or proclaimed the first pope much later.

In the singular, the title of apostle was at first that of St. Paul. In the plural, it appears only ten times in the Gospels in dubious passages, whereas the term "disciple" appears there more than 230 times. Everything happens as if the word apostles had slipped into texts that knew only the disciples.

We read in Luke 6:13, " He chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles..." This shows that the writer of the passage knew well that there existed other apostles before those he was inserting into the text. It should also be noted that the word "apostles" constitutes an anachronism in this place (Mark uses it later in 6, 7 and 30), and that it was only used once the Church is established ; that is to say, at the earliest in the second half of the second century.

Matthew mentions the apostles only once, what may seem extraordinary; after having spoken of the disciples (10,1 a), he immediately gives the names of the twelve apostles. In the corresponding verses, Mark ignores both the disciples and the apostles, but he quotes the "Twelve"; a word which could only be used when it had become customary to use the term to designate the apostles constituted in an areopagus the foundation of which was attributed to Christ. Mark speaks of the apostles only once, at 6.30.

In the primitive account Jesus surrounded himself with disciples; these disciples became apostles under the hand of the Judeo-Christian scribes; then twelve were chosen, perhaps for symbolic reasons; these twelve apostles became "the Twelve," at last their names were given. John, who mentions the Twelve, does not list them. When we examine the narrative of Mark (3: 13-19), we are struck by the irregularity of its syntax, more apparent in Greek than in our language, of course. These are pieces put together end to end. There was no choice of the Twelve in Mark's Gospel. It is observed in Matthew (10:1) that there was no mention of these twelve before, and in Luke (6: 14-16) that the list of the Twelve is obviously an addition.

It is therefore probably an interpolation in the three synoptic gospels and in Marcion, an interpolation which was itself touched up later, for Marcion is the only one to say that Jesus prayed and that his Father listened to him. It will also be noted that this insertion is not in the same place in the Gospels. In Luke it follows the episode of the shriveled hand and is previous the speech "on a level place." In Mark, it comes after a retreat of Jesus on the shore of the lake and before the allusion to Beelzebul, which will be found only later in Luke (11:15). In Matthew, it succeeds the narrative concerning the healing of the demon-possessed man and is placed before a journey of Jesus through Galilee. The essential thing for the proofreaders was to place the choice of the Twelve somewhere in the Gospels; they have put it anywhere, but the result is got, it is there.

Mark, as a result of the choice of the Twelve (3:14), does not contain the "Beatitudes" that Luke gives, suggesting that the two narratives have a different origin and were united in Luke. Noticing confirmed by Matthew's (5,1) When Jesus recites to his disciples the "Beatitudes," the choice of the apostles is not linked with it; to find it, it will be necessary to read five more chapters, that is to say to reach 10, 2.

PASSION CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH.

The narrative makes use Christianly of the common datum of the divine character who takes a human form to deal with men without being recognized, and who disappears at the very moment when his identity has been manifested. Nothing could be easier than to adapt this theme to that of the risen Christ. When we read this story, we cannot help but notice that it is an artificial combination of various texts which sometimes have nothing in common with each other. The story of the betrayal of Judas provides the evidence and the very example, because it is divided into several sections scattered in the text.

The narrative of this founding Christianity reports facts whose credibility belongs to faith. These are texts of a religious nature, of which the intention of the original authors has still not been identified. They express the faith of the editors. The exegesis makes it possible to evaluate and compare the texts between them and to detect possibly the different layers of successive writings. Historians use this work of exegesis but accompanied by numerous other sources and information provided, for example, by archeology and epigraphy. Believers as for them tend to limit themselves to this work of exegesis in order to distinguish between the elements that they consider historical and others that they consider only "theological," legendary, accentuated or embellished.

In order to emphasize that the account of the passion and death of the hero of this initiatory novel seems to have been joined or added artificially years later to the original schedule of the events WHICH ARE THEORETICALLY IMMEDIATELY PREVIOUS IN THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE 4 GOSPELS FROM A CHRONOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW , we shall examine it from now in this place of our talk; because a very serious question arises indeed about it.

Is not this narrative of the death of the hero of this initiatory novel in reality secondary? Is it not a supplement added after the fact to the initial content of the rumors which would produce the four gospels such we know them?

Some critics thought so. So evident is the influence on our Gospels of some of the Scriptures (the Old Testament), for example, that of Psalm XXII; that we may seriously wonder if the primitive tradition ... really knew a narrative of the Passion and Resurrection; if the whole of this narrative, such as it is today in our synoptic gospels, was not composed simply by texts of the Old Testament outside all reality (which is the very definition of the Midrash) .

Another critic observes that when Jesus announces his death, no allusion is made to the crucifixion or to the trial before Pilate; the chapters XIV to XVI of Mark appear as a kind of appendix, comparable to the chapter XXI of John; they unbalance Mark's plan. And this critic wonders: was a narrative of Passion necessary to an author who dealt with the Good News (That's it the messiah has arrived, the people in Capernaum have seen him, he performed miracles among them , some say even that) and its propagation, but who did not feel the need to relate the Resurrection? The story of the Resurrection does not exist in Mark and the narrative of the Passion represents only a disturbing appendix in him... Mark's chapters XIV to XVI convey theological and ecclesiological ideas hardly compatible with the own feelings of the author of the part of the gospel of Mark which ranges from I to XIV.

Long before this criticism, another author had written about the part of Mark's Gospel that worries us that it was a coherent group of narratives constituted by the narration of the Passion. This part of the Gospel begins with a pericope (the conspiracy of the Jews against Jesus, 14, 1-2), which is not related to what is previous, but constitutes an absolute beginning which could perfectly be self-sufficient . " Obviously, the same question arises for the other two Synoptic Gospels, which reproduce largely the text by Mark.

It will be noted that the Acts of the Apostles, which are given as the continuation of the Gospel of Luke, begin with the following sentence: " I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles and was taken up to heaven."

Thus, according to this text, there was no question in Luke of the Passion, neither of the death, nor of the Resurrection, of Jesus. The divine Christ, once his earthly mission was accomplished, ascended to heaven from whence he descended, what is confirmed by the Epistle to the Ephesians (4: 8-10). "He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens" as well as by the Gospel of John (3:13): " No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven." The

Gospel of Basilides does not contain the crucifixion of Jesus and the Shepherd of Hermas spoke neither of Crucifixion nor of the death of the Son of Man.

It is certain that originally the Evangelion did not know, and could not know, a Christ of flesh and blood, persecuted, judged, sacrificed, and resurrected. Marcion, who did not give an account of the birth of Jesus, did not have to provide one about his death. Christ, who was returning to heaven, was not and had never been a man for him; he was a mere spirit that had taken a human form to be seen and heard, to convey a divine message of salvation to mankind. It was only later that some people wanted that this "spirit" is that of a man executed by crucifixion, corresponding to the name of Jesus, and they constructed around this postulate the novel of the Passion. (See also Acts 1: 22 where the word "resurrection" can mean the ascension to heaven of the "Lord.")

As the life of Jesus as such is very little messianic, as we have seen, it was especially his death that the early Christians used, not without difficulty, to prove his Messianity. A narrative of the passion taken up by the last three chapters of the Gospel according to Mark (and therefore previous to the latter) had to circulate immediately after the death of the new Joshua. It was especially Luke who was overprinted with this little novel. He tells the Passion in 180 verses, while Matthew includes only 160 verses, John 136 verses, Mark 133 verses and Marcion 88 verses, which obviously cannot come from the primitive Evangelion.

In the story of passion, Matthew added source material to what he took from Mark. Judas who will hang himself (27: 3-10), the dream of Pilate's wife (27: 19), Pilate washing his hands from the blood of Jesus (27: 24-25); a poetic quatrain about the extraordinary events which followed the death of Jesus (27, 51 b-53) and the account of the guard at the tomb (27: 62-66, 28: 2-4, 11-15). This material relating to birth and passion, has as characteristic traits a lively imagination (dreams, murder of children, innocent blood, suicide, conspiracy, lies); extraordinary heavenly and earthly phenomena (angelic interventions, a star that moves westward and stops above Bethlehem, earthquakes, resurrection of the dead); an unusual dose of scriptural influence (as if the narratives had been composed on the basis of the Old Testament, which is the very definition of the Midrash, rather than simply commented upon by references to the Old Testament); and strong hostility towards the Jews who did not believe in Jesus, hostility to which corresponds a sympathetic presentation with regard to certain "non-Jews" (the Mages, Pilate's wife). These characteristics reflect the imagination, the interests, and the prejudices of the Christians of the time of this writing, and they are largely missing elsewhere in Matthew. (We borrow all these details from Raymond E. Brown, an introduction to the New Testament.)

It is also to be noticed that the end of the "according to Mark" (16: 9-20) is not included in the handwritten collection called Codex vaticanus. And this is not a detail, since it is supposed to prove the resurrection.

The accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb are late (Paul does not mention them) and the details given do not coincide with each other. An angel or two, sitting or standing, a tomb already opened, or a stone moved away by an angel who is descending, words of the angels who are differing. In John 20 Mary Magdalene begins by suggesting that someone has taken the body and Matthew 28: 13-15 agree wholeheartedly with her.

The testimonies are also differing about the characteristics of the body of the resurrected.

Let us therefore conclude on this point that the accounts of Passion and Resurrection differ totally from each other, and that no one indicates at what age Jesus would have died.

JUDAS'S TREASON.

First, it is not placed in the same places in the synoptic gospels. In Luke it follows the institution of the Eucharist; in Mark and Matthew, it is previous. In Luke, the story begins in 22: 3-6; it continues in 21-22, jumping over fifteen verses; it resumes and ends in 47-48 after an interruption of twenty-six verses. In other words, the succession of events is as follows: treason of Judas, preparation of the Paschal meal, institution of the Eucharist, announcement of the betrayal of Judas, announcement of the denial of Peter, giving up Jesus by Judas.

In verse 22, 3 of the gospel by Luke, it is the Prince of Evil who uses Judas to kill Jesus - an important event unknown by Mark and Matthew - while, according to 1 Corinthians 2: 8, it is the spirits of evil who cause the crucifixion. Marcion, supported by Matthew, makes no allusion to the unleavened bread, unlike Mark and Luke; he says like Luke that the feast is coming up while Mark specifies "in two days." Marcion does not give verse 2 (high priests and scribes conspiring against Jesus), an incident that Matthew is alone in locating in the Palace of Caiaphas, this in order to make the scene more real; We have already suggested that this verse 22: 2 might be the continuation of the verse 19: 47. In verse 3,

Marcion - confirmed by Mark and Matthew - does not say (in spite of Luke) that Satan entered Judas; on the other hand, the copyist makes him say, like Luke, that Judas was one of the Twelve. Verse 3 is an addition in Luke's text. Similarly, verse 6 is unknown from the Evangelion. Luke does not say how Satan entered Judas, but the 4th Gospel reveals it to us, it is thanks to the mouthful of bread given by Jesus to Judas. Moreover, Matthew (26:50) reports that Jesus would have told Judas "Do what you came for, my friend".

Would he not have kept the memory of a narrative quite different from what we are reading today? Indeed, in our Gospels and elsewhere, we find a completely different conception of the role of Judas. According to John 6: 70-71, Jesus had chosen the Twelve, including Judas, knowing that he was a demon and that he would be "given up" by him; Jesus knew beforehand what role he entrusted to Judas in the perspective of his own death, and therefore of the salvation of men, and - for his part - Judas knew that he should be the instrument of these designs. With this in mind, Judas was therefore charged with accomplishing the mystery of the "betrayal" (Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I, 31, about the doctrines of the Cainites).

"He betrayed Jesus even though he was good...For the archons knew 'that if Christ were surrendered to the cross....And we must commend him and give him the credit, since the salvation of the cross was effected for us through him, and for that reason the revelation of the things on high'" (Epiph. Haer. 38, still about the Cainites)

Did not Jesus recommend him after giving him the fatal piece of bread "What you are about to do, do quickly"? (John, 13, 27.) And when Judas was gone, did Jesus not add (31-32) "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him...."

It makes rather think of the execution of a preconceived and accepted plan than of a true betrayal.

The Cainites considered indeed Cain, Esau, Korah and Judas as champions of spiritual freedom; they even had a Gospel (the Gospel of Judas). Marcion, on the other hand, proclaimed that only those who had been rejected by the creating god or demon of this no-good world, notably Cain, had been liberated by Christ, while Abel and Abraham had not been redeemed.

JESUS IS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE (Luke 21: 37-38).

This evangelical leitmotif is given here in a very short passage that resembles an addition; why this additional precision? If we compare our texts, we see that Mark (11:19) says simply that Jesus was coming out of the town when the evening came and it is further on - in 14:26 - that we learn that Jesus goes to the Garden of Olives in the evening. This allusion is an insertion; compare with the parallel passage of Luke 19: 48b where the Mount of Olives is not mentioned at all. But this mount is directly related to David, and if Jesus is Son of David, it is natural that he should imitate his ancestor. Luke is the only one to point out here that Jesus spent his nights there, perhaps because David did the same (2 Sam. 15: 30-32) and thus fulfilled Zechariah (14: 3-4).

THE PASSOVER.

Let us point out here to begin that certain details of the reconstructed narrative, such as the use of palm branches to salute the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:8, John 12:13), make one think more of a Jewish feast like that of booths (sukkot) than of the feast of Passover itself. As for the rest.... On 28 verses of Luke, the Marcionite text knows only nine of them and, however, the essential is said. The briefness and simplicity are on the side of Marcion. Mark ignores twelve of the verses of Luke, Matthew eleven. The missing verses in Marcion are the following ones.

7, mention of the day of unleavened bread, when it is necessary to immolate the Passover. The 14th day of the month of Nissan was not, properly speaking, one of the "days of unleavened bread."

Matthew cites Passover, but does not speak of the immolation of the lamb. In the account of the facts imagined by the Judeo-Christians, the so-called last meal was a Passover meal, but it is enough to read this account to realize the mistake committed by them, voluntarily or not.

The whole Passover lamb was to be eaten during the night; it was served with bitter herbs and unleavened bread; each participant drank four cups; but none of these characteristics are found in the Christian Supper.

At the time of Jesus, the word "Pascha" did not designate a feast, but the paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5: 7; John, 18:28); it is at a later period that this word has designated the feast of unleavened bread. These unleavened breads are not included in Mat. 2:2.

Luke, 16-18. Mark and Matthew do not know these verses where it is a question of a first cup which, undoubtedly, is overwriting in the text of Luke. But these three verses constitute a complete account of a symbolic Passover in which Jesus represents the Paschal lamb. Indeed what is in the dish in which

the disciples plunge their hands? Certainly not some bread since Christ will break it and distribute it. Certainly not wine since it is in the cup. Didache 9: 1-4 says us that this drink comes from "the holy vine of David" and that the broken bread represents "the life and knowledge" made known by Jesus. This "before the word is invented " Supper therefore consists simply of bread and grape juice; It anticipates the heavenly banquet that Jesus one day will offer to his happy few. Let us note that Luke's verse 18 will be added by Mark and Matthew, in conclusion, of their own narrative, which did not initially include it.

These verses 16-18 are an interpolation in Luke; Marcion did not know it. This account of the Passover and the cup stops in Luke 22:14 but resumes very naturally in verse 19.

THE ETIOLOGICAL NARRATIVE JUSTIFYING THE EUCHARIST PRACTICE.

19. The Evangelion does not contain the last sentence of this verse "Do this in remembrance of me." It agrees with Mark and Matthew who do not know this memorial. It is therefore here a further addition to legitimize the Eucharist.

Verses 19b and 20 are taken from I Cor. 11: 23-25. The "fruit of the vine" of Luke 18 verse is incompatible with the "blood" in the cup of verse 20 b. According to Luke, in 23 the disciples wonder who will betray. From 24 to 27, the narrative is interrupted by a without interest pericope that is not found in Mark and Matthew in the corresponding passages, which confirms the text by Marcion. Mark doesn't know verses 28-32 ; as for Matthew, he compresses the three verses 28, 29, 30 into one (19: 28) where he finds a way to substitute the Son of Man for Jesus.

35-38. These four verses are also lacking in Mark and Matthew. The purchase of the sword is an addition in Luke.

The verses common to Marcion and Luke are the following ones.

8. This verse is an addition in Marcion-Luke. "Peter and John, " are not mentioned by the two other synoptic gospels.

14. Jesus is at the table with the twelve apostles, but Luke writes the apostles. Mark speaks of the Twelve, while for Matthew it is the "twelve disciples." We see the progression, the disciples, the apostles, the Twelve.

Marcion did not know the twelve; but they have been inserted in his text, in verse 14, as they were in 9:1 and 9: 12.

15. Verse missing in the account of Mark and Matthew. A proofreader wanted to introduce into the Evangelion the Jewish "Passover," that is to say, the symbolic memory of the paschal lamb. Alongside, in verse 18, the cup containing "the fruit of the vine" was inserted in Luke's text, but it is not found in the other synoptic gospels.

19. Mark and Matthew do not say, "My body given for you," a sentence added to Marcion-Luke's text. In agreement with Marcion, they ignore the phrase "Do this in remembrance of me." Lastly, if Marcion was made say that the body is "given," Luke was not corrected, and he continues to declare that the body was "given." Here, perhaps, is expressed a degenerate Marcionism which had finally admitted the embodiment of the spiritual Christ in the body of a very human Jesus.

20. For Marcion, the cup is - in the text wrongly attributed to him - "the covenant in my blood," for Luke, "the new covenant in my blood"; For Mark and Matthew, "my blood of the covenant."

Contrary to the synoptic gospels, Marcion does not say that the blood "is poured out for many or "for the forgiveness of sins"; he could not have admitted that his heavenly envoy had a real human blood, because for him he was only a spirit having the appearance of a man. The text of verses 16-20 has been passed down to us in five or six different forms; the majority mention, like Marcion, a single cup instead of the two cups of Luke.

Let us not forget that Marcion used water and not wine in the Eucharist, and that, according to Ignatius (Smyrn. 7,1) "They [the Marcionites] abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ..." We know, on the other hand, that they did not eat meat.

21. This verse is found almost in Mark and Matthew, but these speak of a single dish; now, if it had been a paschal meal, each guest would have had his own dish.

22. Son of Man - which comes to interrupt the thread of the narrative - has been added to the original text.

33-34. Song of the cock and announcement by Jesus of a triple denial of Peter. These verses are unknown by Mark and Matthew.

JESUS GIVEN UP TO THE AUTHORITIES.

Mark and Matthew embroidered on this account, but Marcion did not know it because it is an interpolation whose beginning and end, that is to say the two edges of the suture, are indicated in Luke 40 and 46 by the same sentence: "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." The verses of the Evangelion are a summary of the scene intended for harmonization with a corrected Luc.

The kiss of Judas can be interpreted differently that it is said in verses 47-48; the Jewish disciples of the time greeted their master (rabbi) by giving him a kiss.

The comparison of the synoptic gospels makes important remarks possible.

Biekell discovered in 1885, in a papyrus of the 2nd century from the Fayum, a fragment of the evangelical text of seven lines, in Greek language, corresponding to Mark 14: 26-30 and Matthew 26: 30-34; But written in a briefer, more naive, and more original form, than in the first and second Gospels. What is to be emphasized is the omission in this fragment of Mark 28 and Matthew 32, which stated: "After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

There was no question therefore, in the tradition represented by this fragment, of a resurrection of Jesus followed by his return to Galilee. But it is precisely this tradition that follows the verse 22/39 of Marcion-Luke; he mentions neither the Resurrection nor Galilee.

On the other hand, in 43-44, verses unknown by both the other synoptic gospels and by Marcion, Luc alludes to the bloody sweat caused by the anguish of Jesus. This incident is unknown in several manuscripts. Of course Hilary (De trinitate, X, 41) suggests well that people tried to erase this bloody sweat.

"In many manuscripts, both Latin and Greek, nothing is said of the angel's coming or of the Bloody Sweat. But while we suspend judgment, whether this is an omission, where it is missing, or an interpolation, where it is found (for the discordance of the copies leaves the question uncertain), do not let the heretics, etc."

But Hilary should rather have suggested the contrary, that is to say that it was an addition to the generally known text.

In the same vein, Epiphanius says in his Ancoratus that the passage in which Jesus wept in his agony was erased in Luke; but it had been put there only to prove (against the aforementioned heretics justly) , that Jesus had well had a body of flesh.

The verse 48 contains the "Son of Man" who has nothing to do in this arrest; he is an intruder who, moreover, has not penetrated the other synoptic gospels at this place. Mark does not comment on the kiss of Judas; Matthew makes Jesus say "Do what you came for, my friend," words incompatible with the notion of "treason."

PETER'S DENIAL.

Unquestionably, it is the Marcionite narrative which is the simplest and the oldest. Of nine verses of Luke, Marcion gives only four. The synoptic gospels have complemented it each in his way. Luke and Mark do not give the name of the high priest; Matthew assures us that it was Caiaphas; John says that Jesus was first brought to Caiaphas' father-in-law, Annas. Speaking of Jesus, Mark says "the Nazarene," Matthew "the Galilean," John "this man."

The manipulators of the text wanted to show:

- 1) That Jesus was a man known by Peter.
- 2) That Peter, although a disciple of Jesus, denied him, thus keeping us the traces of a Peter who denies the Jewish Messiah.
- 3) That Jesus knew very well beforehand that he would not be recognized as the messiah by Peter.

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN AND BEFORE PILATE.

In Luke's verses 67-68, to the question, "Are you the Christ?" Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe. " But in verse 69, he equates himself with the Son of Man, what is different and out of the subject, whereas according to Mark (14: 62) he replies: "I am (Christ)," thus confirming Marcion in verse 70. In this same verse, Luke doesn't write "Christ," but "the Son of God." He removes the accusation of having "abolished the Law and the prophets" as he has already done in 4: 31.

Verse 69, retouched in favor of the Son of Man, has kept the memory of the "Divine Power," which receives (verse 70) the Son of God or Christ the King according to 23: 2.

Now, the expression "Christ the King" in verse 23, 2 had no meaning in Greek; It was equivalent to Malka Meshiha in Hebrew, and appears nowhere else in the New Testament.

Marcion, in verse 23, 3, confirms "Christ," but Luke, Mark and Matthew, substitute for him the "king of the Jews."

The appearance before Herod (6-12), missing in Mark and Matthew, is probably an insertion (it interrupts the account of the appearance before Pilate), but it contains an interesting idea. Luke has kept the verse 23: 11 that the Evangelion could have received and according to which Herod covered Jesus with a magnificent cloak. This is perhaps a symbol of Gnosticism. The garment of light which is given to the soul, especially by the Mandeans, so that it ascends to Heaven once cleansed from its body.

JESUS IS GIVEN UP TO THE JEWS.

Luke's verses 17-22 constitute an interpolation that begins after the sentence: " Therefore, I will punish him and then release him" and ends with a repetition of the same sentence in verse 22.

The famous episode of Barabbas is not original in Luke-Marcion; it visibly interrupts the narrative concerning the condemnation of Jesus through the shouting from the crowd. Originally the episode included, it seems, in Luke, only the verses 13 to 16 and 23-24. However, it should be borne in mind that verses 13-16 are unknown in the other two synoptics, gospels but are included in Marcion, while verses 23-24, missing in the Evangelion, are found almost in Mark and Matthew.

Marcion says nothing about an annual custom concerning the release of a convicted person.

One fact nevertheless appears certain: there was no "trial" properly so-called, taken by Pilate against Jesus, nor death sentence.

HE DIES CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO OTHER CONVICTED MEN.

The Marcionite text doesn't know the verses 35-43; Mark and Matthew do not have the equivalent of verses 32, 34, 35a, 37, 40-43, and suggest that Luke's verses 35-36, 38-39, belonged to another context.

The famous verse 34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" is unknown in certain manuscripts and omitted by other evangelists. Insertion is more likely than omission. In Luke, the verse 35 is the continuation of the verse 33 while verse 34 is an interruption; Tatian placed this verse in 46.

The death of Jesus includes the following words.

- According to Marcion-Luke " Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

-According to Matthew " He gave up his spirit. "

-According to Mark "He breathed his last "

-According to John." He gave up his spirit. "

The word spirit is consequently in three of the four official gospels.

The evangelists therefore thought that the spirit, freed from his flesh prison, was returning to heaven, which was his homeland, while the body was destined to remain on earth. Such is at least the idea expressed in this brief episode. Tertullian, however, believes it is pertinent to ridicule this Marcionite notion (Against Marcion IV, XLII). "

"If it was not flesh (upon the cross), but a phantom of flesh (and a phantom is but spirit, and so the spirit breathed its own self out, and departed as it did so), no doubt the phantom departed, when the spirit which was the phantom departed: and so the phantom and the spirit disappeared together, and were nowhere to be seen. Nothing therefore remained upon the cross, nothing hung there, after the giving up of the ghost; there was nothing to beg of Pilate, nothing to take down from the cross, nothing to wrap in the linen, nothing to lay in the sepulcher."

But such was precisely what the Marcionites of his time thought. The burial and resurrection of the body had been, according to them, an impossibility.

Some details are missing in the Evangelion, some are nevertheless very important in view of the event we are told. The role of Simon of Cyrene, the dividing clothes, the presence of the people, the mocking, the inscription of the cross (which varies according to the Gospels), the dialogue between Jesus and the good thief (dialogue also unknown by other synoptic gospels). For Paul (1 Cor. 2: 8), this "Lord of Glory" (i.e., God) is crucified by the "Rulers of this Age." The scene was heavenly. The Epistle to the Colossians (2:14) declares that Christ has nailed the Jewish Law to the Cross (it was not by letting himself be nailed to it), that this cross was his triumphal chariot; lastly, that the "authorities" (ruling over this universe) were disarmed and then ridiculed in the eyes of the whole world. We are very far from Pilate and the high priests.

Luke, in verse 23: 42, makes one of the thieves say ": Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

What is confirmed by Tatian. This is either an original element keeping a distant memory of the deeply political nature of the initial movement; (an umpteenth Messianist revolt against the Romans, with one of the crucified accomplices, who still believes in the Messianity of Jesus, and the other not); or an

addition of the Marcionite Christians concerning their heavenly Christ. It would seem, indeed, that an account of the crucifixion had nevertheless existed among the Marcionites.

But the Didache as for it knows in no way this crucifixion of Jesus.

According to the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (35-41), two luminous angels descended from the heaven, entered the tomb from which they came out, supporting Jesus and followed by the cross: their heads reached the heaven, but the head of the third personage exceeded the heavens.

THE RESURRECTION.

This resurrection does not appear in the original Evangelion, and the primitive narrative has been seriously falsified. Verse 24: 7 concerning the Son of Man is missing in Mark and Matthew; it interrupts the narrative. We meet here for the last time this Son of Man, who has already appeared in Luke in several verses absent in the Evangelion (7: 34, 11:30, 18: 31, 21: 36). Marcion speaks of two luminous angels, Luke of two men in dazzling clothes, Matthew of the angel of the Lord, Mark of a young man in a white robe.

The Resurrection concerns "The Living" for Marcion and Luke, "Jesus" for Matthew, "Jesus the Nazarene" for Mark. According to the latter, women are afraid and say nothing to anyone. According to Matthew and Marcion, they announce the news to the disciples; according to Luke, to the Eleven and to all the others. Tertullian does not remember that the disciples themselves did not believe in the Resurrection.

JESUS APPEARS TO TWO DISCIPLES AND TO THE ELEVEN.

What can we think of the final part of the canonical Gospels concerning the apparitions of the risen Jesus (verses 9-20 in Mark)... which appears only at the end of the fourth century or even later; for it is not in the Codex Sinaiticus or in the Codex Vaticanus. It is not, however, a detail, for Mark is perhaps the source of the other two synoptic Gospels; it is not a detail, since it concerns the resurrection.

The 23 verses of Luke are reduced to 16 in Marcion, but the most surprising thing is that they are nevertheless found there. The original text of the Evangelion too was also thoroughly reworked by Judeo-Christians. For the two disciples who go to Emmaus, the dead and crucified Jesus was a pretender to the role of the messiah of the Jews. The Christ in question is a ghost, a spirit, that the two disciples at first mistakes for a man of flesh and bone. This episode has necessarily been moved since the spirit of Jesus appears when he has already returned to heaven near his Father.

We read in Marcion "Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that he spoke to you" but Luke corrects this text and replaces it with "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!... "; and adds a verse 27, "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." This verse is not in the Evangelion, and we can guess that a Judeo-Christian proofreader wanted once more to insist on the role of the prophets of the Old Testament, which, however, here is an aberrant element. He will allude to it again- as well as to the Law of Moses and the Psalms - in the verse 44 of Luke that Marcion does not contain. This almost fanatical insistence on the Law and the Prophets, which is almost constantly exerted on the teaching of Christ, reveals in what senses the first Christian writings were revised and distorted.

The narrative also aims at confirming the rite of the breaking of bread. However, although they did not take part in the Last Supper, the disciples of Emmaus recognize Jesus to this breaking of bread, which suggests that this rite existed before the Last Supper or was very widespread even outside the restricted circle of the early apostles. This hypothesis is strengthened by the Didache which, while reminding of the blessing of the cup and of the bread in the order of Luke, as well as of the prayers, doesn't allude to the last meal or to the death of Christ. The account of the Last Supper is that of the justification of a rite by the invention of its institution. Cf. what is called etiology because it is indeed an etiological narrative.

This bread, broken and distributed by Jesus who pronounces a blessing, is a sacred bread. It is the Eucharist from which Christian communion derives. It is by no means the symbol of the body and blood of Jesus; it is the bread of the knowledge of Christ, it opens the eyes of the disciples and enables them to recognize their savior in the Gnostic way.

A continuation was given to this account. Jesus appears in the midst of the eleven and others. Marcion says: "In the midst of them."

To this spirit, a proofreader wanted to give hands and feet (and even bones, of course, invisible); then, judging this change insufficient and inconclusive, he made his ghost eat a piece of grilled fish, just as the ghost had previously broken (and doubtless eaten) bread with the two disciples of Emmaus. Our

text manipulator wanted to prove thus, against Marcion, the material resurrection of the body while suggesting that Jesus was passing through the walls and could appear and disappear at will, what considerably weakens his thesis. In the apparitions reported by Luke and by John (20,14-16, 19-23; 26-27); the disciples do not immediately recognize Jesus, what proves that His aspect has changed, or that they have not known Him as Spirit; they need a sign or a word.

THE TRANSFIGURATION (Luke 9: 28-36).

The Marcionite text speaks of three disciples, without giving their names. The synoptic gospels believe they know and add them. Verses 31, 32, 33 are absent from the text of Mark and Matthew. But if Marcion contains verses 30, 32, 33, it is because they were added to it. Verse 31 is a later addition in Luke's text. In Luke, the apostle John is named twice before James (8: 51 and 9: 28). Marcion doesn't know this account. On the other hand, the traditional order is followed in the other passages 5: 20; 6: 14; 9:54, the first of which is not in Marcion. There is a duality of sources in Luke; Marcion was completed only by the oldest one. The narrative seems us likely to be dissociated into several episodes.

First episode: on the mountain.

28. Jesus on his mountain.

34. A cloud comes, and the disciples are afraid.

35. Out of the cloud a voice came out: "This is my son, whom I have chosen." The voice from the cloud intervening in this episode is that which pronounced the same words at the baptism of water given by John the Baptist according to the synoptic gospels.

2nd episode: the transfiguration itself.

This episode has nothing to do with what is previous and what follows. It is not necessary to the prayer nor to the apparition of Moses and Elijah. This transfiguration of Christ resembles astonishingly the cremation of a body. "The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning," specify Matthew (17: 3), Mark (9: 3) and Luke (9:29). But we can also see, in the verses 29 and 34a, the vestiges of a narrative concerning the ascension to heaven of the Christ of the Gnostics, in his garment of light.

3rd episode: Moses and Elijah.

The apparition of these two characters is due to an interpolation in the three synoptic gospels. It includes, in Luke, the verses 30-33 a. The end of the narrative about Elijah found in Mark (9: 9-13) and Matthew (17: 9-13) does not exist in Luke's text.

It will be observed that Luke, in verse 30, first shows only two men, of whom he will speak again in verse 32. The explanation of 30 b-31 (" They were Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, who spoke about his departure, to Jerusalem ") is a secondary gloss. Originally the two characters were not named. They were two angels (Luke 24: 4, and 23); Act. : 10). Mark and Matthew do not know verse 31 concerning Jerusalem.

The second Epistle of Peter (1:17), which alludes to this episode, is unaware that Moses and Elijah are combined with it.

"When the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

If, originally, the Evangelion did not speak of Moses and Elijah, the episode may nevertheless have a late Marcionite origin. He points out that the spiritual Christ has given leave to Moses and to Elijah, who have had nothing to reply. It shows that it is Jesus who is to be listened to, not the Jewish prophets. And Peter is presented to us, still a victim of his Judaic blindness when he proposes headlong to put "a tent" (= an altar) as well as for Moses or Elijah as for Jesus (verse 9:33). The voice from heaven answers this absurd proposition, by presenting Jesus as his beloved son, by indicating that it is Christ alone that must be listened to and then by simply eliminating the Jewish prophets.

These observations provide us with an opportunity to point out that in the Gospel of Luke, the references to Elijah appear in interpolated or added passages, notably in 1: 17; 4: 25-26; 9: 8; 19: 30-33. Similarly, Moses is inserted in Luke 5:14; 16: 29-31 and 24-27, while he is absent from the parallel verses of Mark and Matthew. The episode is followed in Mark 9:1-9 and Matthew 17:1-9, by a comment that Luke doesn't know according to which John the Baptist is identified with Elijah.

The three announcements by Jesus Himself of His own death (Mark, 8: 31, 9: 31, 10: 33-34) are, of course, false prophecies; that is to say sentences introduced after the event, after that the events thus evoked have already taken place, post eventum as it is said (in Latin language).

MISSION OF THE APOSTLES.

Matthew 9,35-11,1; Matthew 28: 16-20. Verses unknown in the other evangelists. Of Luke's ten verses (44-53), the Evangelion knows only three of them (47, 50, 51). It is a construction made after the fact. Marcion's text does not contain the linking formulas that are Luke's verses 44, 45, and 46. But these verses are interesting in more than one respect.

On the one hand, by showing that they constitute an addition in Luke. Indeed, after having asked for something to eat (41) Jesus says, "This is what I told you while I was still with you," what is both inaccurate and out of the subject.

On the other hand, by making Jesus say (still according to Luke alone). " Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms...."

Here we have a repetition of what he already said in verses 24, 25, 26, 27 "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning him."

Between verses 27 and 44, the intermediate passage looks very much like a patch.

A scribe wanted, from verse 47, to give the apostles a mission that he imagined as coming from Christ himself, but Marcion knew neither the allusion to Jerusalem nor the mission entrusted to the Eleven.

Then Jesus ascends to heaven, where he had already ascended once a first time.

Editor's note. People considered therefore useful after the fact to make him come down again to justify the role that the newly constituted Church had assigned itself.

DOCUMENT.

THOMAS'S GOSPEL.

Should not be mixed up with Acts of Thomas, Book by Thomas or Gospel of Childhood according to Thomas.

Discovered in December 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt, associated in the same codex with other texts also written in Coptic, the manuscript dates from the 4th century but was probably written on the basis of a Greek original of which traces were found in the papyri of Oxyrhynchus N 1 dating from the third century.

This "gospel" could come from a Syriac or Palestinian background, drafted by successive editors between the 1st and 2nd centuries. Some researchers detect in it pre-synoptic elements. However, this point of view is not consensual.

It is a collection of sentences - logia - which, according to the incipit of the text, were uttered by Jesus and transcribed by "Didymos Jude Thomas," that is to say the Apostle Thomas. These 114 logia are thus most often preceded by the mention, "Jesus said." Many have their parallels in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, and to a lesser extent in the Gospel according to Mark. These parallels often have a wording and a conclusion different of what is found in synoptic gospels. The fragments that were found in Greek dating from the 2nd century showing themselves differences with the Coptic version.

Before this discovery, fewer than ten logia of this text were known, thanks to fragments in Greek language dating from the end of the 2nd or from the beginning of the 3rd century, especially those found in the excavations in Oxyrhynchus N 3, N 4.

There is no mention of the birth of Jesus, his death or resurrection. In Logion 12, the disciples simply ask Jesus, in order to know who will lead them when he has left them. Jesus then designates James the Just.

The original title of the text is not, of course, Gospel of Thomas - an expression that reproduces a secondary formulation at the end of the text, probably based on the title of the headings of the canonical gospels - but according to the incipit, the secret sayings of Jesus recorded by Thomas. Some writers have insisted on the esoteric aspect of the text and of its theology, but it is nevertheless to be put into perspective: the word "secret" or "hidden" refers more to the mysterious nature of the words of Jesus than to a handover between initiates. Beyond their obvious meaning, the words of Jesus have a deeper meaning which is revealed only at the cost of an effort of interpretation of which, in the logion No. 1 following the incipit, Jesus seems to give the Hermeneutic key. The rest of the text insists on the need to deepen certain words, by repeating several times : " Anyone here with two good ears had better listen ".

The dating is debated because the very nature of the text makes it difficult to date precisely: it consists of an assembly of quotations, its corpus is evidently more malleable than the best known canonical gospels and therefore the genesis of its formation must be taken up in a singular way. The question is rather to know when the compilation began, how it continued and when it was stopped if it was.

The collection of quotations is a literary genre that belongs to the first period of Christian literary activity, to bring closer to the source Q, a collection of proverbs and parables used for the composition of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. The fact that the name of Jesus is not accompanied by Christological titles whose appearance is later is also to be considered.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS.

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas recorded.

1. Jesus said, "Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death."
2. Jesus said, "Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find. When they find, they will be disturbed. When they are disturbed, they will marvel, and will reign over all. "

3. Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the (Father's) kingdom is within you and it is outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."

4. Jesus said, "The person old in days won't hesitate to ask a little child seven days old about the place of life, and that person will live. For many of the first will be last, and will become a single one."

5. Jesus said, "Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed."

6. His disciples asked him and said to him, "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray? Should we give to charity? What diet should we observe?"
 Jesus said, "Don't lie, and don't do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven. After all, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing covered up that will remain undisclosed."

7. Jesus said, "Lucky is the lion that the human will eat, so that the lion becomes human. And foul is the human that the lion will eat, and the lion still will become human."

8. And he said, "The person is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine large fish. He threw all the little fish back into the sea, and easily chose the large fish. Anyone here with two good ears had better listen!"

9. Jesus said, "Look, the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered (them). Some fell on the road, and the birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rock, and they didn't take root in the soil and didn't produce heads of grain. Others fell on thorns, and they choked the seeds and worms ate them. And others fell on good soil, and it produced a good crop: it yielded sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure."

10. Jesus said, "I have cast fire upon the world, and look, I'm guarding it until it blazes."

11. Jesus said, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away. The dead are not alive, and the living will not die. During the days when you ate what is dead, you made it come alive. When you are in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"

12. The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?"
 Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

13. Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to something and tell me what I am like."
 Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just messenger."
 Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."
 Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."
 Jesus said, "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended."
 And he took him, and withdrew, and spoke three sayings to him. When Thomas came back to his friends they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?"
 Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the sayings he spoke to me, you will pick up rocks and stone me, and fire will come from the rocks and devour you."

14. Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits. When you go into any region and walk about in the countryside, when people take you in, eat what they serve you and heal the sick among them. After all, what goes into your mouth will not defile you; rather, it's what comes out of your mouth that will defile you."

.....

91. They said to him, "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."
 He said to them, "You examine the face of heaven and earth, but you have not come to know the one who is in your presence, and you do not know how to examine the present moment."

92. Jesus said, "Seek and you will find. In the past, however, I did not tell you the things about which you asked me then. Now I am willing to tell them, but you are not seeking them."

93. "Don't give what is holy to dogs, for they might throw them upon the manure pile. Don't throw pearls [to] pigs, or they might ... it [...]."

94. Jesus [said], "One who seeks will find, and for [one who knocks] it will be opened."

95. [Jesus said], "If you have money, don't lend it at interest. Rather, give [it] to someone from whom you won't get it back."

96. Jesus [said], "The Father's kingdom is like [a] woman. She took a little leaven, [hid] it in dough, and made it into large loaves of bread. Anyone here with two ears had better listen!"

97. Jesus said, "The [Father's] kingdom is like a woman who was carrying a [jar] full of meal. While she was walking along [a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [along] the road. She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty."

98. Jesus said, "The Father's kingdom is like a person who wanted to kill someone powerful. While still at home, he drew his sword and thrust it into the wall to find out whether his hand would go in. Then he killed the powerful one."

99. The disciples said to him, "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."
He said to them, "Those here who do what my Father wants are my brothers and my mother. They are the ones who will enter my Father's kingdom."

100. They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "The Roman emperor's people demand taxes from us."
He said to them, "Give the emperor what belongs to the emperor, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine."

101. "Whoever does not hate [father] and mother as I do cannot be my [disciple], and whoever does [not] love [father and] mother as I do cannot be my [disciple]. For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life."

102. Jesus said, "Damn the Pharisees! They are like a dog sleeping in the cattle manger: the dog neither eats nor [lets] the cattle eat."

103. Jesus said, "Congratulations to those who know where the robbers are going to attack. [They] can get going, collect their resources, and be prepared before the robber arrive."

104. They said to Jesus, "Come, let us pray today, and let us fast."
Jesus said, "What sin have I committed, or how have I been undone? Rather, when the groom leaves the bridal suite, then let people fast and pray."

105. Jesus said, "Whoever knows the father and the mother will be called the child of a whore."

106. Jesus said, "When you make the two into one, you will become children of Adam, and when you say, 'Mountain, move from here!' it will move."

107. Jesus said, "The (Father's) kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them, the largest, went astray. He left the ninety-nine and looked for the one until he found it. After he had toiled, he said to the sheep, 'I love you more than the ninety-nine.'"

108. Jesus said, "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him."

109. Jesus said, "The (Father's) kingdom is like a person who had a treasure hidden in his field but did not know it. And [when] he died he left it to his [son]. The son [did] not know about it either. He took over the field and sold it. The buyer went plowing, [discovered] the treasure, and began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished."

110. Jesus said, "Let one who has found the world, and has become wealthy, renounce the world."

111. Jesus said, "The heavens and the earth will roll up in your presence, and whoever is living from the living one will not see death." Does not Jesus say, "Those who have found themselves, of them the world is not worthy"?

112. Jesus said, "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. Damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

113. His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it."

[Logion probably added to the original collection at a later date].

114. Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life."
Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven."

LITERARY DRESSING OF THE SAPIENTIAL WORDS OR LOGIA OF THE GOSPELS.

Some of the oldest collections of material about Jesus should therefore consist of collections of logia placed in the mouth of Christ.

The sapiential words come from the tradition of "Wisdom" such as Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach, etc. but it can also be precepts drawn from Jewish Midrashim.

Such logia, therefore, have little interest in the human life of Christ, to say the least.

It may also be true, of course, words really spoken by the historical Jesus who really existed, but we shall never be able to prove it; and what is important in this case, for this brief study of Christian mythology, is that these teachings were in any case put into the mouth of the messiah equated with the Nazarene Jesus. They are such words of wisdom that will be taken over by the various editors of the Gospels, if needed while rearranging them.

Some logia could, of course, be staged and changed into fables called parables. This collection of materials circulating freely here and there was to be close enough to this apocryphal gospel of Thomas, which we have just briefly examined, and of which we shall remind here as a collection of 114 logia or fables attributed to Jesus, sometimes in a brief dialogue with a disciple, discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi (Upper Egypt).

Half of these logia or words, approximately, appear in the official Gospels which we know today, in a near or slightly different form.

This apocryphal text is not the collection of materials mentioned above under the name of Source Q and which was used to compose the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Mark's Gospel being earlier), since its final wording seems to date from years 125-130 but it gives a pretty good idea of what it should look like.

These basic materials circulated freely here and there, but especially in the Gnostic Judeo-Christian current, and in the also Gnostic Pagan-Christian current, as far as Marcion and Tatian.

When translated into Greek, many logia lost their original meaning, or became difficult to understand (Semitism). These logia, which were attributed to Jesus, were later, in the second century, mixed with romanticized stories organized in documents with strong connotations of catechesis: the Proto-Gospels (like the protoevangelium of James).

According to the change from the Essenian or Gnostic elitism of the beginnings to the Greco-Roman pagan exoterism that followed; the sapiential words were indeed staged and gave way to anecdotes.

Since it is strictly impossible to distinguish between logia, fables, or parables, which can belong to Jesus himself, and those which have other authors or are ... anonymous; we shall content ourselves with reviewing some of them, as an example.

Some of these fables, put in the mouth of Jesus, were evidently rewritten by the evangelists.

An example of these manipulations of texts worked out by the first Christians, by successive rewritings, is furnished to us by the three known variants of the fable of the two sons.

The story is simple. Matthew (21: 28-32). A father who has two sons asks them to go and work at his vine.

Then Jesus asked his interlocutors to tell him which of the two sons, according to them, had fulfilled the will of the father.

According to the versions, the behavior of the sons and the response made to Jesus differ.

1. First version. Codex Bezae.

2. The parable is then rewritten in the second century. Codex vaticanus.

3. Towards the fourth century, a new modification of the text, recommended by Origen and probably carried out by his disciple Pamphilus.

Another example (the original logion is in Luke 13: 6-9). A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He went to look for fruit on it did not find any. He then says to the winemaker ...

"For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

This logion full of wisdom has been changed in Mark 11, 12-14, and in Matthew 21, 18-19, in ridiculous considerations about a fig tree growing before the gates of Bethany; and quite logically

devoid of fruit since it was not yet the season. The story of the sterile fig tree is therefore only a fable historicized within the pseudo-biography of Christ.

Let us notice in passing that the new Joshua is presented there as someone not very intelligent. It was quite normal that this fig tree should be fruitless at this time of the year in the account, since it was not yet the season. The anger that is ascribed to Jesus is therefore really ridiculous.

The genuine fable is found in Luke 13: 6-9, as we have already pointed out.

We wonder well after what process it could be changed in Mark 11, 12-14, and in Matthew 21, 18-19, in misplaced considerations on this unfortunate fig tree of Bethany. This fuss of Jesus against the sterile fig tree that he curses is in any case worthy of a child who throws a tantrum.

BE GOOD.

The Marcionite origin of these precepts of goodness is more than probable; Matthew changed them slightly while Luke developed them. Some alterations are interesting. Thus, Luke's verses 6: 32 and 33 evoke sinners but Matthew uses in one case the word "tax collector" in the other the word "pagan." Marcion writes in 32 the "pagans." The Evangelion, like Matthew, does not know verse 33, but it reads verse 34, which refers to pagans (whom Luke transforms into sinners) and who is not found in Matthew. In 35, the "sons of God" are Judaized in Luke; They become "sons of the Most High." However, Matthew will replace "For he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" by "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good" so as to substitute the creator of the universe of the Old Testament to the good god of the Marcionites.

The goodness reserved for Christians is symbolized by that of milk and honey they absorb when they are converted to "Marcionism."

Verses 27b and 35 repeat the phrase, "love your enemies, do good". Do they signal a resumption after insertion?

The charity advices (verses 27, 28, 31) are given to the second person of plural, the patience advice in the second person of singular (verses 29, 30). The latter seem to have been added to the others.

According to Tertullian, Marcion would have added, after verse 28, the verses 5, 38 and 39 of Matthew, which neither Luke nor Mark contain, that is, the reminder of the famous Jewish maxim "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." This is unlikely.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke 16: 19-31).

Luke is the only evangelist to report this famous story. The characters and notions highlighted are essentially Jewish: Abraham, Lazarus, Moses and the Prophets, the Sheol, the impassable abyss, the resurrection of the dead. The author of this edifying story did not hesitate to insert his revealing prose in a gospel where it was not really in its place; some critics have observed that the language of this passage was not that of Luke. In 22, there is no mention of the burial of the poor, but of his transport by the angels of the heavenly kingdom to Abraham who sits at the banquet of the happy few. On the other hand, the rich man is buried because he is destined for the abode of the dead, who is underground (Sheol or Gehenna). In 23, the writer believes that from Hades (he uses this Greek word), people see the place where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rest, a place that is not to be mixed up with the Kingdom of heaven. Let us notice that the rich man did not commit any other crime than the fact of not having shared his property.

This criticism of the rich is doubtless due to certain Judeo-Christian sects. In verse 24, it should be noted that it is not the living water of the 4th Gospel that is requested, but water from near the place where Abraham is. The theology of this narrative differs from the ancient theology of the Hebrews, which, while attributing to the dead a survival in the Sheol, foresaw neither reward nor punishment. However, it must be emphasized that Abraham is in the abode of the dead, not in the Heavenly Kingdom; the rich man also, since he speaks to him. In verse 30, where the rich man (according to Marcion) says: "Father," Luke corrects in "Father Abraham." The name of this patriarch is an addition in Luke. Similarly the verse 31 with his "Moses." Verse 27 "I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family" remains incomprehensible. According to Adolf von Harnack, another specialist of Marcion, all this passage was taken from an anti-Marcionite work called The Dialogues of Adamantius.

THE TAX COLLECTOR ZACCHAEUS (Luke 19: 1-10).

Mark and Matthew don't know this account. The primitive narrative was so distorted by Luke that it became absurd, whereas Marcion's text is logical and clear. The Evangelion did not contain the precision that Zacchaeus was small and contained neither the climbing of the sycamore nor the

mention of Abraham. It was changed; a verse 10 was added to make room for the Son of Man and his charity was put into perspective as well as the ideal of Christ. Whereas he must doubtless, as an example, give all his possessions, the proofreader left him half of them. Let us retain from it that Zacchaeus is said to be a rich tax collector, non-Jew, sinner, that Jesus comes to see by declaring that salvation has entered his house. Now Zacchaeus (according to Epiphanius, Haer 37,1) was the name of a Gnostic sect. Sycamore was a sacred tree in Egypt; the souls came to place themselves on its branches. Climbing a sycamore meant that you were detached from the things of this world.

THE PARABLE OF THE MINAS (Luke 19: 11-27, Matthew 25: 14-30).

One of the most ambiguous logia. Some commentators believe that this is a vestige of the life of the true Jesus, who would have been only a Jewish agitator among many others, fighting against the Romans.

Mark does not know this story; Matthew gives it in a somewhat different form. Marcion doesn't know the verses 14, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28-48.

"He who is faithful for a small thing is faithful also for a great one" such is the idea of verse 17. It is not necessarily exact besides.

Luke speaks of minas, Matthew (25, 14) of talents. The story is paradoxical. This roughness of the master who wishes to make his money yield is contrary to the advice of poverty or of giving up material goods; it is certainly not the good god of Marcion who inspired this passage nor - the verse 27 of Luke, where Jesus wants to have his enemies slaughtered in his presence, a verse that has no connection with the story of the minas. Here we see at work a fanatical and violent proofreader. In his original conception, the narrative must have resembled that found in Luke 16: 1-10, but a resolute proofreader wanted to identify the master of servants with a royal pretender determined to conquer an earthly throne by force. As a result, he overwrote the first account of verse 14 "His subjects hated him"; added in verse 15 the precision "having been made king," affirmed in verse 27 that he wanted to kill those "enemies who did not want him to be king over them," pointed out in 28 that "he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem"; lastly (in 45) that he entered the temple of this city, where he caused serious troubles. We therefore understand the priests asking him by what right he acted thus and their desire to get rid of him.

It will be observed that the verse of Luke 19: 47b ("The chief priests and the teachers of the law were trying to kill him") is reproduced verbatim in 22: 2; would it not be the mark of the interpolation? If it does not constitute an ultimate vestige of the political commitment of the true Jesus as a messiah pretending to the throne of King David; this passage of Luke can very well also evoke a historical episode analogous to the revolt of Bar Kokhba in 132. A zealot teacher of the law has slipped his messianic pretender into a narrative of Luke.

REST OF THE TEXT.

JESUS IS REJECTED FROM NAZARETH (OR NAZARA?): Luke 4: 16-30.

Let us first note that our text says "Nazara" and not "Nazareth." Nazareth was added (with the title, which is not original, first manipulation of the minds effected by Christianity).

We know that Jesus declared that he had no place to lay his head (Matthew 8: 20). For the Gnostics, indeed, he did not need it, since his body was "spiritual, ghostly," and had of a man only the appearance.

The village of Nazareth was therefore inserted in a text that did not originally contain it, for the reason you know (error on the meaning of the term "Nazarene"). The fact is confirmed indirectly by the synoptic passages parallel to Luke 4:16. Neither Mark 6: 1, nor Matthew 13:53, allude to this village, they say that Jesus came into his homeland. For the fourth Gospel, it was at Capernaum that Jesus stayed. In many places of the synoptic gospels, Jesus withdraws in "his" mountain and spent even his nights there. The man Jesus, different from the angel Christ, knew where to "lay his head." It will also be remembered that the mention of Nazareth is found almost exclusively in the preliminary texts of the Gospels; that is to say, in those which were subsequently placed before the beginning of the early texts, i.e., before Luke 4: 31, Mark 1: 21, Matthew 4:23. In the oldest text (the one that begins with these verses), the mentions of Nazareth are never attested to the same verse by the three synoptic gospels; and they are only once or twice, in the same verse, by two of these gospels.

It seems, therefore, that "Nazarene" is a primary state or a qualifying adjective of the character Christ, and that the city of Nazareth was invented to explain this term whose meaning (nazir) had been forgotten, or whose origin was hidden.

The Judeo-Christians, who had reworked the original Gnostic rumor, have therefore perhaps replaced the symbol that was Capernaum by the name of the town where, according to them, their Jesus Christ was supposed to have spent his youth. The author of this rearrangement laid out his text in a remarkable disorder, in relation to the continuation of the verses of Luke. From the fifteen verses of Luke (16-30), there are only eight in Marcion. Fortunately, the other two synoptic gospels contain the same episode (Mk 6: 1-6 a; Mt 13: 53-58). A comparison of texts is therefore possible. Now, we find that - unlike Mark and Matthew - Luke was overwritten with verses 16b to 21, 22b - 23 and 25 to 30. Marcion cannot, therefore, be accused of having suppressed verses 17-21. On the contrary, his text was cluttered with verses 23-26 and 28.

The story of a widow in Zarephath visited by Elijah was of no interest for Marcion; no more than that of Naaman the Syrian for Luke in the corresponding passage, and which would rather concern the episode of the man with leprosy that we read in 5, 12-14. The added story of 17-21 aims to put Jesus in harmony with the Jewish scriptures (Midrash).

The end of this episode is more interesting. The way Jesus can escape the people of his village who want to stone him. Everything happens in this part of the story as if Jesus had not had a material and human body (a rest of Marcion's Christian conceptions?)

The theory of the angel sent on earth to preach was then very widespread in the beginnings of Christianity, since Origen applied it even to the character of John the Baptist (Commentary on John, Book II, chapter 24).

JESUS FORGIVES A SINFUL WOMAN (Luke 7: 36-50).

This pericope contains fifteen verses in Luke and only nine in Marcion. These two narratives are some variants of the accounts of Mark 14: 3-9, Matthew 26: 6, and John 12:1. The story is completely denatured in Luke. It has two stories: that of the forgiven prostitute, that of the anointing. The parable of verses 40-44a belongs to a literary layer different from the rest of the narrative.

As it is told to us, the scene lacks likelihood. The attitude of this Pharisee who invites Jesus to his table and neglects the rites of hospitality, the rebuke of Jesus to his host, can only be astonishing. The text was reworked because the profound sense of the episode was no longer understood. The woman carries out the anointing because she loves Jesus, and it is according to her love (47a) and her faith (50) that she is forgiven.

On the contrary, in the parable of the two debtors (40-43), love is no longer the condition of forgiveness, but its consequence. Jesus is loved only in accordance with the grace He grants, what suggests that the love from the woman comes only after the forgiveness.....

This antithesis is well marked by the opposition of the two sentences that constitute verse 47. Marcion knows only the idea of the crowned love, he ignores the more material interpretation of 40 b-44a (the story of a generous creditor and of his debtors) and of 47-1, verses that are obviously an interpolation in Luke. Marcion does not admit that one may doubt that love is redemption of the sinner, and his text does not contain verse 49 according to which people may be astonished at such forgiveness of sins.

In reality, the content of the original narrative was to have been the anointing of the body of Jesus. It was to be directly related to the episode concerning Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42) and that of the women at the tomb (Luke 23: 35-24, 2). For Luke, this Simon is a Pharisee of Samaria, and the woman is "a sinful woman," but for Mark and Matthew Simon is a man with leprosy living in Bethany. This account is not of Jewish origin. While a Greek or a Syrian was accustomed to link women with certain rituals, a Jew would not have tolerated it, especially if the scene took place in the house of a man with leprosy.

If we consult the other evangelists, we realize that - in the sequence of events - this episode should be placed in the text much further. The narrative describes the scene of the anointing of the body of Jesus in view of his resurrection. The woman weeps because it is a dead she baptizes, and it is the god ritually dead, but eternally alive, who speaks to her. Matthew (26:12) causes Jesus to say: "She poured this perfume on my body to prepare me for burial." What Mark confirms in 14: 8. This is probably the pagan vestige of a myth of resurrection. St. Paul also knew himself a baptism of the dead (1 Cor 15:29). The scene is mystical, ritual. The evangelists wanted to "historicize" it. In our texts we can follow this gradual changing a myth into a historical narrative. Luke gives neither the name of the locality nor the name of the woman whom he simply designates as a sinful woman, a word that perhaps means "Pagan" or "Gnostic." The woman represents therefore perhaps a religious sect.

Now, Mark (14) and John (12) believe that they can specify that the scene takes place in Bethany, in the house of Simon called the "leper," no doubt because he belongs to a "heretical" sect. Finally, the 4th Gospel is able to give us the name of the woman: her name is Mary.

Can we not see in this episode the reminder of the priesthood entrusted to a prophetess, for example a Montanist, who practiced a rite that the Christians who had carried out these revisions no longer understood, or no longer admitted?

THE TITLE OF TEACHER (Matthew 23: 8-10).

These verses are attributed to the Evangelion by Ephraim the Syrian. They are not in Luke or in Mark. Only Matthew knows them. However, Matthew substituted the word "rabbi" for the first "teacher" in verse 8. It is written that Christians must not grant in this world the title of Teacher or Father to any man. If, then, they call Christ "teacher," would it not be because he is not a man, but a divine emanation?

Matthew's account is entirely consistent with what Flavius Josephus wrote in his History of the Jews (Book 18, chapter 1) about the sect of Judas of Gamala, who refused to give a man the name of Lord and Master.

JESUS = GOD.

Another example of design that escaped subsequent manipulations in the Stalinist style (retouching photos): the new Joshua never called himself God.

In Mark 10: 17-18, to a man who addresses him by calling him "good teacher" Jesus answers: "Why do you call me good?" No one is good—except God alone!"

This proves that he did not identify himself with God.

The passage of John 20:28, going exactly in the opposite direction, therefore had to be invented well afterwards (towards at least 90 if it was at the time of the writing of the original core of this gospel). But this may also be a vestige of the Gnostic ideas about the good and superior god, considered by the Gnostics to be different from the god creator of this world according to the Old Testament.

Tertullian (Contra Marcionem 3, 2) reports that for Marcion, the like a man birth of a god would have been a shameful thing. Chrysostom specifies that, according to Marcion, God could not be embodied while remaining pure: "God, if He took upon Him flesh, could not remain pure" (Homily 23 on Ephesians). Marcion's Christ had only a human form in appearance. Traces of this idea are still to be found in the three synoptic gospels: he walks on the water (Matthew 14: 26, Mk 6: 49 and John 6:19), he appears to the disciples after his death (Luke 24:37) and passes through the closed doors. Jerome

tells us that " When the blood of Christ was but lately shed and the apostles were still in Judea, the Lord's body was asserted to be a phantom " (Adv. Lucif. 23).

SON OF GOD.

In the Old Testament, the expression " son of God" Hebrew Beney Elohim is also sometimes translated by the word "angels"; for example, in Genesis 6, Job 1.6; 2.1; 38.7. Now many of the early Christians readily equated their messiah to with a messenger of God.

In his dialogue with Trypho (chapter 126) Justin for example calls him "Angel of the Great Council."

"If you knew, Trypho, who He is that is called at one time the Angel of great counsel, and a Man by Ezekiel, and like the Son of man by Daniel, and a Child by Isaiah, and Christ and God to be worshipped by David, and Christ and a Stone by many, and Wisdom by Solomon, and Joseph and Judah and a Star by Moses, and the East by Zechariah, and the Suffering One and Jacob and Israel by Isaiah again, and a Rod, and Flower, and Corner-Stone, and Son of God, you would not have blasphemed Him who has now come, and been born, and suffered, and ascended to heaven; who shall also come again, and then your twelve tribes shall mourn. For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that He was God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God. For Moses says somewhere in Exodus, etc."

And Tertullian himself, in his poor polemic with the Gnostics will concede that: "He has been, it is true, called "the Angel of great counsel," that is, a messenger, by a term expressive of official function, not of nature. For He had to announce to the world the mighty purpose of the Father, even that which ordained the restoration of man. But He is not on this account to be regarded as an angel, as a Gabriel or a Michael. I may, then, more easily say, if such an expression is to be hazarded, that the Son is actually an angel, that is, a messenger, from the Father, than that there is an angel in the Son. Forasmuch, however, as it has been declared concerning the Son Himself, "You have made Him a little lower than the angels" how will it appear that He put on the nature of angels if He was made lower than the angels, having become man, with flesh and soul as the Son of man? As "the Spirit of God," however, and "the Power of the Highest," can He be regarded as lower than the angels—He who is verily God, and the Son of God? Well, but as bearing human nature, He is so far made inferior to the angels; but as bearing angelic nature, etc. " (On the flesh of Christ, chapter 14).

Editor's note. All this polemic comes perhaps from a bad translation into Greek (aggelos) of the Hebrew term elohim or malakh which designates a kind of heavenly creature influenced by the idea that the Babylonians had of gods.

SON OF MAN.

The first Christians who had heard of the rumor circulating about Jesus systematically brought his messianic claims to the Gnostic Jewish symbol that was the concept of the Son of Man. A title borrowed from the Sethian Gnostics, which referred to the third son of Adam and Eve.

While also bringing it closer to the topic of the suffering servant of Isaiah.

In Isaiah, the Servant of the Lord, having dedicated his sacrifice to men, rises in the heavenly light where he is sitting on the right hand of God.

Now Messiah and Son of Man are two very different things, for if the Son of Man were indeed to be betrayed and murdered according to the Jewish Scriptures, it was by no means the case of the Messiah who was to triumph.

This character is found, either in passages common to the three synoptic gospels, or to only two of them, or in verses peculiar to one.

Mk 2:10, Mt 9: 6, Luke 5:24.

In this verse, the mention of the Son of Man is part of the healing of the paralyzed man, with which it has no relation. It is therefore an interpolation with resumption on the words "get up." This Son of Man is here a being both heavenly and earthly.

Mk 2: 29, Mt 12: 8, Luke 6: 5.

Simple explanatory gloss; the character is here simply a man.

Mark 8: 38, Mt 16:27, Luke 9:26.

Insertion with no other use than to announce a heavenly and future, therefore different from the man Jesus, Son of Man. In a parallel passage Mt 10: 23 and Luke 12: 9, it is only question of Jesus.

Mk 9: 31, Mt 17: 22-23, Luke 9: 44.

The circumstances are not similar in our three synoptic gospels. Luke does not say that Jesus was traveling through Galilee or that the Son of Man would be put to death and will be resuscitated. On the other hand, he specifies that the disciples understood nothing of their Teacher's words. Mark knows it too, but Matthew doesn't know it. This verse aims to predict a hitherto unknown "passion" of the Son of Man.

Mk 10:33, Mt 20:18, Luke 18:31.

The text is not the same in the three synoptic gospels. Luke does not say at first that the scene takes place on the way to Jerusalem, but he is alone to claim that the Prophets announced the Son of Man. Moreover, where the two others predict that this character will be delivered to the chief priests and teachers of the law, Luke sees him delivered over to the Gentiles. He repeats that the disciples do not understand Jesus, a precision missing in Mark and Matthew.

Mk 13: 26, Mt 24: 30, Luke 21: 27.

The texts are different, but, in any case, the Son of Man is here a heavenly being.

Mk 14: 21, Mt 26:24, Luke 22:22.

The interpolation is most noticeable in Matthew. In Luke, it is seven verses shifted. In any case, Jesus is mixed up with the Son of Man. What is strange in these additions is that their various authors do not have the same idea of him. Let us observe, on the other hand, that Jesus never says that He is the Son of Man. He always talks about this in the third person. Moreover, no one – speaking to him - gives him that title.

Mk 9: 9, 12; 10: 45; 14: 21b, 41b.

These verses added to the Mark's manuscript that Matthew used were probably not included in the manuscript of Mark that Luke possessed. He had no reason not to reproduce them.

Mt 8:31.

On the other hand, Matthew did not read in his manuscript by Mark this verse that Luke reproduced in 9:22.

For the common to Matthew and Luke mentions – therefore unknown by Mark - we will simply quote Luke.

In Luke 7:34, the addition is not at all linked with what is previous, and informs us that the Son of Man has already come. In 9: 58, the insertion cuts the meaning of the text. Verse 11: 30 is inserted in a confused passage that targets Jonah in 29 and 32. Verse 12, 10 was part of a speech about birds which stops in 8, and continues in 22. The passage 12: 40 breaks the thread of the expressed thought and is contradicted by verse 41.

We will leave aside the nine mentions of the "Son of Man" that Matthew has in exclusivity, as well as the eight allusions that Luke is the only one to make on this subject. In both cases, the gospel of Mark, which is the most ancient, argues against those passages which are later to it.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (Luke 21: 5-34).

All this passage is a conglomerate of predictions and various recommendations.

Mark and Matthew do not give the verses corresponding to Luke's verses 11b, 12, 15, 18-20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 34-36. On the other hand, they contain verses that are not in Luke.

In Luke's text, the passage from 12 b to 17 appears as an insertion with resumption on the words "on account of my name." This narrative of threats and persecutions is in contradiction with Luke's verse 18. It is not Marcion-neither Mark nor Matthew-who has shortened Luke, but Luke that has been largely increased. Mark and Matthew were also, but in another way. It is thus that they make Jesus speak on the Mount of Olives, specification unknown by Luke and Marcion.

In reality, the original text, so differently corrected, should not mention the Mount of Olives; neither Peter, James, John, Andrew, nor the verse 10 from Isaiah 19: 2, nor the laying on of hands of verse 12, nor the encircled Jerusalem, nor verses 22, 24, 25 b, 26, nor the Son of man, who duplicates Christ, nor the verse 28; nor the parable of 29-30 which breaks the narrative and finds its place elsewhere, nor the verse 35. Moreover the original text supposed facts that Luke did not reproduce, notably the

gospel preached to all pagan nations (Mark 13:10). What was embarrassing for the Judeo-Christian reviser, for this placed logically this word of Jesus after Paul's preaching, as the Clementine writings indicate.

The very length of development, its Jewish mentality, its tendency to date events around a fall of Jerusalem, its apocalyptic and nationalist spirit, all that suggest a Judaizing and late rearrangement. Let us note, however, in verse 21: 29, that in the Docetist system God is the seed of the fig tree which contains immense potentialities; its stem, leaves and fruits, are the symbol of the three eons which will be the principles of the development of the universe (Hipp. Ref.VI, 9). This doctrine is found again in the systems of Simon, of the Naassenes, Perates, Ophites, and Sethians. Marcion's proofreader added in verse 29 "all the trees," to conceal the importance of this not very kosher fig tree.

SATAN.

According to Mark 1:13, Jesus is tempted by "Satan." According to Mt 4:1 and Luke 4: 2, the tempter is the "devil." This vocabulary difference is to mark an editor difference. The scene holds in a verse in Mark, it is developed in 10 verses in Mt and in 12 verses in Luke. Marcion doesn't this account. In Mark 3: 23-26, "Satan" is quoted three times; Mt 12:26 names him only twice, Luke 11:18 once, as Marcion.

Mark 4:15 mentions "Satan"; the parallel verse of Mt 13:19 bears "the Evil one"; Luke 8: 11 replaces this word with "devil"; Marcion does not know it.

We read in Mt 4:10, "Away from me Satan." Mark has no corresponding verse. Luke 4: 8 mentions the devil, but does not know the exclamation caused by Satan. Matthew himself had spoken previously of the devil, not of Satan.

According to Mt 16: 23, Jesus would have called Peter Satan; if Mk 8: 33 contains this episode, Luke does not give it, nor Marcion either.

Luke 10: 18 speaks of Satan falling from heaven; the other synoptic gospels, as well as Marcion, are unaware of this passage.

In 13:16, Luke is still the only one to claim that Satan "has kept bound for eighteen years a daughter of Abraham." This passage, absent from the other synoptic gospels, has nevertheless forced the entry of the Evangelion by Marcion.

Luke 22: 3 also informs us that Satan entered into Judas and that through him Simon will be "sifted as wheat" (22:31). The other two synoptic gospels and Marcion do not know these verses, which are interpolations in Luke.

A bringing together is necessary with the Gospel of John, which contains in 13: 27 only a Satan, but this Satan is remarkable. He enters into Judas through the mouthful of bread that Jesus gives him. Luke confirms the fact, but he is careful not to say that Jesus is responsible for this possession of Judas by the devil. Marcion and the other synoptic gospels don't know this fact, which is, however, extraordinary.

GOSPEL WILL LAST FOREVER (Luke 16:16 and 17).

Here we have here a fine example of the perseverance with which the Judeo-Christian scribes manipulated the text of the original Evangelion. Verse 16 says that John the Baptist marked the end of the reign of the Law and Prophets, and that it was only then that the Kingdom of God was announced. Some even wanted to appropriate it by violence (parallel verse in Matthew 11: 13-12). The original writer of the Evangelion (Marcion?) therefore very logically was to write in the following verse: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Prediction that will repeat Mark (13: 31), Matthew (24: 35), and even Luke in 21: 33.

Now a Judeo-Christian proofreader has replaced Luke's verse 17 and Matthew's verse 5: 18 with a contrary affirmation that is totally incompatible with verse 16. "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." The Scripture of God, which was to last, was no longer the gospel of Christ, it was the Jewish law. Stalin did not do better by having the political opponents of which he no longer wished to be spoken, eliminated from certain photographs.

THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

Marcion's Christ had "come to abolish the Law and the Prophets." We understand why "they were all astonished at his doctrine" (Luke 4:32). There was good reason to! In Mark and Luke, this very embarrassing passage was suppressed, but the astonishment of the audience was retained, but it is explained by the authority with which Jesus spoke, which is not a very credible justification.

It may be objected that Mark and Luke did not know this passage of Marcion, and that this part of verse 31 was added by a disciple. However, it seems that Luke knew it, for he expressed the same idea with less aggressive words in 16:16: "

"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached... "But even in this moderate form, truth was not good to be said; and a Judaizing proofreader attenuated it by adding verse 17: "However, It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law."

Matthew 11:13 also knew the words of Marcion, and answered too that not a single stroke of a pen would drop out of the Law (5:18). He took the opposite view of the Marcionite affirmation by daring to make Christ declare: " Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill them ." Now, not only did Marcion's words are previous their denial by his adversaries, but the latter, in order to fight them, did not hesitate to falsify a sentence of Jesus which said the contrary; "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." This sentence is found in Mark 13: 31, Luke 21: 33 and in Matthew himself (24:35). Marcion's three lines about the abolition of the Law and the Prophets were suppressed by later copyists.

Adamantius (11:15) affirmed this in the fourth century, in the following terms: "The Judaizers wrote this, I did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it ". But Christ did not speak this way. He said, " I did not come to fulfill the Law but to destroy it."

Words like "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5: 17) were inserted in the original text, only to counter Marcion and his current.

Their intrinsic contradiction remains nevertheless, what it can well mean, concretely? It sounds like a French intellectual or journalist of the clan in power. Hence, in the present Gospels, embarrassed explanations IN FOOT NOTES, of the kind: it means: "Not to fulfill all the ancient law in its detail, but to perfect it by renewing it." A subtlety that can justify anything as in politics.

BAPTISM.

The first Christian baptisms were simple and intended to purify the sinner in water, like that of John the Baptist or the Essenes. Christian baptism, offered to all those who recognized Jesus as Messiah, is, of course, the continuation of the one that John (the Baptist) dispensed in the ford of Bethabara (in Aenon according to the evangelist). It was not a unique magic act kind sacrament of the baptism of the newborn babies but a simple rite of purification renewable ad infinitum.

Though originally respectful of the Mosaic Law, first Christians have, it seems, indeed, added rather early baptism to circumcision. Judeo-Christian texts, taken over in the Didache, even speak of the "circumcision of the heart," but different later additions changed its meaning.

Paul baptized in the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by laying out his hands. " A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 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 and the Holy Spirit came on them " (Acts of the Apostles 18: 24-19). Practice also attributed to John and Peter, by the writer of the Acts, during the baptism of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:16).

The compromise found at the end of the second century between these two designs of baptism, preserved in the Gospels the ritual of the immersion in the water of John the Baptist, but explained it by the descent of the spirit (Greek pneuma)). Hence the additions in the narrative of Jesus' baptism by John, the episode of the dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit descending upon him, and God's own voice proclaiming from heaven: "You are my son whom I love (Luke 3: 22-23). As we have had the opportunity to see, Marcus J. Borg thinks that the new Joshua had really on that day a vision , but what is certain is that this episode was interpreted from an Adoptionist perspective . Jesus had hitherto been only an ordinary man, whom God now adopted as a son, and endowed with divine power (which went very well with the Gnostic designs of many of the Christians of the time). This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the authors of the final draft of our modern gospels according to St. Luke and St. Matthew; later added to the version of St. Mark: a childhood narrative (intended to make it clearer that Jesus was indeed the son of God from his conception).

THE BAPTISM OF THE DEAD. There was also a baptism for the resurrection of the dead mentioned by St. Paul (1 Cor 15: 26-29) and practiced by the Marcionites as well as the Mandaeanes. Luke may allude to this type of baptism in 12, 49-50.

CHRIST TAKES AS DISCIPLE A SINNER (Luke 5: 27-32).

This sinner, a customs agent (profession hated by the population) is called Levi, son of Alphaeus according to Mark (2:14), simply Levi, according to Luke and Marcion, but his name is Matthew in the Gospel of Matthew (9: 9). Is it the same man who would have two names? Mark (3:18) mentions, in his list of the Twelve, Matthew and not Levi. Does the episode have any consistency?

According to Matthew (9:10) and Mark (2:15), the meal in question takes place in Jesus's house (who therefore would have finally found accommodation) and who is accompanied by many tax collectors and sinners. On the other hand, according to Luke, it is Levi who organizes a banquet in honor of Jesus.

Our texts report that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees are scandalized at seeing Jesus eat or drink with sinners; we do not know from where come these protesters, suddenly introduced into the narrative. Jesus answers that the doctor should treat only the sick, an answer that corresponds to the allusion to the physician already found in Luke 4:23, where it is not in its place, but of which we now guess the meaning.

When, in 4, 23, the Jews think that Jesus should heal himself, it is because they are furious to see him "convert" the pagans, and act like a pagan. Let us explain this passage.

The last verse in Luke 5:32 shows that Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. Now Marcion, supported by Mark and Matthew, makes no allusion to repentance. Jesus came to call men, especially sinners, to follow his doctrine, it is a conversion. This last verse enlightens the whole episode, the meaning of which was forgotten or rejected in the time of the evangelists.

It is the Eucharist or the original supper of the Christians, understood as a banquet; it takes place either in the worship house or in that of a non-Jewish Christian, and the divine Christ is supposed to preside over it. Christ is converting the pagans, not the Jews.

There was here, Marcion says, a crowd of pagans and tax collectors. Mark and Matthew say of "tax collectors and sinners"; "These sinful Gentiles," specifies the Epistle to the Galatians 2:15. The Pagans are called sinners. Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke does not say that the disciples of Jesus are there.

The meeting room had to be large to contain all these men. Mark is the only one to report the question of the teachers of the law in the form "Why does he eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew and Luke make the question asked to the disciples, "Why do you eat and drink?" but everywhere the answer is attributed to Jesus. This is the mystical meal presided over by the Lord who calls to him the Gentiles and even certain Pharisees (Luke 7: 36, 11: 37, 14: 1). The Jews displeased call Jesus as a glutton and a drunkard (Mt 11:19, Luke 7:34). Same kind of criticism placed under the authority of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 21.

Neither Luc nor Marcion mentions that the episode takes place at the seaside, and that crowds follow Jesus who teaches them; these details have been added in Mark (2:13). It is only in Luke that Levi gives up everything to follow Jesus; he answers in advance what Jesus will say in Luke 14:33, but that the other synoptic gospels don't know.

THE FAITH OF A PAGAN (Luke 7: 2-10).

This story tells of Jesus's cure of a centurion's servant. The scene takes place in Capernaum, the verse that informs us about this specification in the Gospel of Luke subsisted in Matthew 8: 5. Matthew doesn't know the verses 3 to 6 of Luke, and we discover thus a new Judeo-Christian correction of the narrative of Luke. A text manipulator introduced into a purely pagan episode Abraham Isaac and Jacob to play a role and thus neutralize verse 9, where Christ declares that he has "not found such great faith even in Israel ." The criticism was all the more serious because the example chosen was not that of a simple pagan but of an officer in the Roman army. Perhaps the episode taught something else, what would explain why he was so upset. Verses 8-9 constitute an unnecessary digression. In any case, all is summed up in three verses of Matthew 8: 5-7.

HERE IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 17: 20-37).

No parallel verse in Mark and Matthew. Verses 21-22 constitute an interpolation with resumption on the words "Here it is, there it is" (23). The phrase "The Kingdom of God is in your midst (or among you)" (21) as well as the allusion to the Son of Man (22) are not original. There is, besides, a contradiction. If the coming of the Kingdom is not observable, nobody can say that this Kingdom is

near, nor that it is in our midst or among us, nor that we must go running off after it or even (23) not go running after it .

The day of the Son of Man is interpolated; verse 23 is related to 21 a. The recommendation "do not go running off after them," concerns the Kingdom-space, not some days or a duration. The Son of Man has been substituted for Christ. Compare to Mark 8: 31, 13: 21 and Matthew 16: 21, 24: 23. In his first statement, the text was not to speak of the Kingdom or of the Son of Man. "Here it is, there it is" concerned Christ. Christians were urged to be wary of "false Christs who would perform signs and wonders to deceive the elect" (Mk 13: 21-23, Mt 24: 23-25); A recommendation which could, besides, also target the false Jewish Messiah Jesus, who performed miracles unceasingly. Luke's verse 25 is considered as an interpolation by some people; it resembles, in fact, an explanatory and clearly tendentious gloss, come from the same pen as that which inserted verse 9, 22. The narrative in Luke is composed of at least two sections 20-25 and 26-37, which have nothing in common, and which are inspired by the Bible. They are found in various parts of Mark and especially of Matthew (24).

On the other hand, there is a contradiction between the days of Noah in question and the days of Lot. The Son of Man cannot at once trigger the flood and a rain of fire and sulfur. There is a contradiction because - once again - there has been interpolation. The resumption is seen in verses 27 and 28 with the redoubling of the words "people were eating and drinking."

KINGDOM OF GOD AND MUSTARD SEED (Luke 13: 18-20).

The parable of the mustard seed, original in Marcion, was to assume another form; the synoptic gospels borrowed it while transposing it from the spiritual plane on the material plane.

The parable about the leaven is not found in Mark. The idea that a little leaven makes the dough rise, that is to say that it is possible to change Judaism, probably comes from non-conformist Jewish circles. According to Hippolytus, the Naassenes thus commented on this parable (Refutation of all heresies, book 5, 4): "The Spirit is there where likewise the Father is named, and the Son is there born from this Father. This is the many-named, thousand-eyed Incomprehensible One, of whom.... This is the word of God, which is a word of revelation of the Great Power (notion already known by the great philosopher of Samaria Simon) . Wherefore it will be sealed, and hid, and concealed, lying in the habitation where lies the basis of the root of the universe viz. eons, Powers, Intelligences, Gods, Angels, delegated Spirits..... The Invisible Point from which what is least begins to increase gradually. That which is nothing, and which consists of nothing, a point— becomes through its own power a certain incomprehensible magnitude. This is the kingdom of heaven, the grain of mustard seed, the bearing point which is indivisible in the body and no one knows this (point) save the spiritual only." This passage, which is found in the synoptic gospels at three different places, is borrowed by them. The insertion into Luke is obvious, through the repetition of the same words in 18-19 and 20.

THE VIGILANT STEWARD (Luke 12: 41-48).

The verse 41 of Marcion-Luke resembles an addition intended to make Peter intervene. This one does not appear in Mark 13: 37. This whole story doubtless comes from one of the disciples of Marcion who had an argument with the Twelve. He thought that the previous verses could be applied to the apostles.

"Are you telling this to us ?" asks Peter to Christ and - to suggest to him a satisfactory answer - he adds, "or to everyone. "

But the Lord replies to Peter, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master has put (or will put) in charge of his servants? What can be understood: "To whom, other than you, who claims to be the leader, could I answer? And does not Jesus blame indirectly Peter when he expresses a warning to any steward who, not seeing his Master come back, would profit from that to beat the other servants of God and get drunk? "The master will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers (46)". Jesus appears to address an ill-directed sect and intervenes to put Peter back on the right track. In any case, Peter's question was useless, since Mark reported (13:37): " What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" The text of Mark is previous to Luke 41-47, and it has not been harmonized.

Matthew 16:18. " I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

A posteriori and somewhat retroactive justification of the role of the Bishop of Rome in relation to others. This idea is already found in a manuscript of the Essenes, in which, speaking of his community, the Teacher of Righteousness says: "You have established my community on rocks."

What perhaps led the first authors of the Gospels to take over the play on words in their texts was that Simon was bald, and that his skull resembled a pebble. Hence his nickname Cephas.

This same version of the four Gospels also confers on the successors of the apostles exorbitant and very convenient magic powers, of which even a druid could not dream.

The Gospel according to Matthew (16:19) indeed entrusts to Peter the power to bind and loose.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The Gospel according to John (20:23) entrusts the same power to all disciples.

"If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

These two passages are, of course, interpolations: the historical Jesus never said that.

Twenty lines later the aforementioned Simon will be called great Satan by Jesus himself, but now, let us pass over, he could not know everything! Errare humanum est!

On the other hand, it is probably to counter Montanus, who claimed to be a new Christ inhabited by the Holy Spirit, that the Christian communities at the origin of our present Gospels of Mark (13 : 21-23) Matthew (24: 23-25); have added to the original text some words of the kind: if anyone says to you , "Look, here is Christ!" or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

REMAINS OF Gnostic IDEAS IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

A certain number of elements of our four official Gospels, on the other hand, are quite the opposite. They escaped censorship or later rewriting by the Judaizers, and still bear witness to the early ideas of those who have formatted the rumor circulating about Jesus.

There are therefore still rearrangements, but of early or of first generation rearrangements, unlike those which followed, and which consisted in a re-Judaization of this first oral literature.

The threefold division of Mankind as in the case of the Gnostics, the material (hylic), the psychic, the spiritual (pneumatic) is found in Luke's verses 9: 57-62.

Three men want to follow Jesus. The narrative is symbolic, as Irenaeus tells us (apud Epiphanius, Haer 31:25). The first kind of man is material according to the answer: "The Son of Man has no place to lay his head"; the second (in the third place in our text) is psychic according to the answer: "No one who looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." The third (second in our passage) is spiritual if we trust the word "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Clement of Alexandria tells us (Strom. 3/4/25) that it was to Philip that Jesus had said, "Let the dead ... and follow me." It would be the three degrees of a Christian initiation. But the Gospel account itself resembles a commentary on separate sentences ascribed to Jesus. Matthew (8: 19-22) knows only two sentences and places the episode during the crossing of the country of the Gadarenes, while Luke puts it in relation to the final departure for Galilee and the mission of the 70. As for Mark, he does not reproduce this episode.

This passage 57-62 is part of the interpolation which goes from 9: 52 to 10:1, the repetition of the text taking place on the words "He sent ahead of him" messengers or disciples.

THE GIVING UP THE WORLD (Luke 14: 26-33).

The original idea of the narrative was misunderstood or disguised. Mark doesn't know this teaching, while Matthew (10:37) presents it in moderate form: "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"; it is a renunciation to the world as practiced by certain religious orders. This giving up is of the Gnostic type. For example, in the Pistis Sophia or book of the faith wisdom (Book 5 chapter 138), we can read these words ascribed to Jesus: "My brethren and beloved, who have abandoned his father and his mother for my name's sake, unto you will I give all mysteries and all knowledge."

THE FASTING DAYS (Luke 5: 33-35).

These three verses constitute a short episode that has nothing to do with what is previous and with what follows. It begins and ends with transitional expressions ("They said to him ..." and "He told them..."), which aim only to link episodes that were originally separated.

Our three verses were to be part of a much more detailed and important account of the mystical marriage required of certain Christians. But Luke's manipulator dismissed this narrative for doctrinal reasons, not without borrowing from it the verses which preserved a logion (a word) of Jesus.

To introduce this declaration of Jesus, a question is asked by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Mark adds (2:18) the disciples of John. Matthew (9:14) knows only the disciples of John, whom he wanted to give a role. Their presence is unusual in this narrative, for whatever questioners, it is only a question of knowing why - while the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees fast and pray - those of Jesus eat and drink. At first sight, the question is astonishing, for if you have read the Acts of the Apostles (13: 2-3 and 14: 23), you may think that the early Christians practiced fasting frequently.

It will be noted that the objection addressed to Jesus receives from him two contradictory answers.

1. "When the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." That is, fasting will take place after the death of Jesus (verse 34).

2. "No one pours new wine into old wineskins" (verse 37), what means that fasting is an obsolete institution, incompatible with the new era brought by Christ.

These two answers do not come from the same intellectual circles; only the second is Marcionite.

However, Jesus's answer suggests a Gnostic background. "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?" What amounts to saying: "Can we fast during a wedding?" "We are so informed that it is on the occasion of a wedding that Jesus is asked.

This example makes it possible to suppose that an episode of the evangelion about spiritual marriage was (largely) changed by a subsequent anonymous proofreader.

THANKSGIVING OF JESUS (Luke 10: 21-22).

Two verses having not the same origin have been assembled. The first is a Thanksgiving, the second a comment. In 21, it is the Father who reveals; In 22, it is the Son. Mark doesn't know the verses that Matthew reproduces. The comparison of the words, between Marcion and Luc, underlines a remarkable opposition between the ideas of the one and of the other. The first speaks to the Lord of Heaven, the second to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, that is, to the Creator of this failed world, and no more to the good god infinitely above all. Tertullian (C. M. 4, 25) simply reads, "Lord of Heaven"; likewise Clement of Alexandria (Exhort. 1, 10; Pedag. 1. 5. 20 and 9; Strom, 1. 28, 178). The precedence of Marcion's text over that of Luke is sure.

ADDENDUM. OTHER GLIMPSES and not least, of the practice of the first Christians, retroactively justified by subsequent insertion in the evangelical text of origin, of various anecdotes.

The cross. (Luke 9:23.)

Verse 23 brings us an interesting revelation. Jesus declares that to become his disciple, we must bear a cross each day. As Jesus had not yet been crucified, and the cross become the symbol of Christianity, what would we think of such a piece of advice?

It can only be an addition to the original text in order to justify the wearing of the cross in pendant or as a string.

The phrase quoted in Matthew (28: 19). " Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," was added very late, in order, of course, to legitimize the opening of Christianity to the non-Jews, and to counter the tendency to the withdrawal of the Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem, grouped around James the brother of the Lord.

CONCLUSION.

The text attributed to Marcion is largely non-Marcionite. It was changed by Judeo-Christian proofreaders. This result is extremely disappointing for all who hoped to have finally a text from the greatest disciple of St. Paul. The same is true, of course, on the historical level. Nevertheless, our astonishment disappears when we remember that the elements of the reconstruction are merely citations and criticisms coming from the adversaries of Marcion, who wrote more than half a century after him. We realize that these polemicists did not even work on an authentic text of evangelion; they had before their eyes only a text, allegedly derived from Luke, in which were incorporated various elements, notably several pericopes of Matthew.

A good example of this tendentious use of information drawn from evangelion is the presence, in the Gospel of Luke, of verses 3,1 a and 4,31. Which are separated by a long development that we have pointed out while - originally- they were following each other in to say to us: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Christ descended out of heaven and appeared in Capernaum".

Another observation is obvious. Luke himself admitted that he had arranged in a continuous narrative, in a "orderly account," the numerous accounts that he had, what is a precious indication. It suggests, in fact, that the evangelion of Marcion was composed of small independent or isolated narratives, of diverse episodes without connection between them. And this is what we verify when we read the Evangelion. This text can be divided into 106 episodes, mostly independent of each other.

And it comes to mind irresistibly to think of the famous oracles of the Lord, the logia, which were here and there united in various collections, after being transmitted to the initiates through word of mouth. Thus the Gospel of Thomas - found in the sands of Egypt in 1945 - contains one hundred and eighteen sentences almost all of which begin with the phrase, "Jesus said." The evangelists have not known or used all these logia, which are but a small part of the immense literature which existed in the early days of Christianity.

The primitive gospel was the good news of the salvation brought to the people of God; it was taught by Christ and was first confided in secret, then preached in public. Collections of these sentences of the "Lord" were then composed, and it seems that the evangelion of Marcion also belonged to this kind of collection.

After him, scribes like Luke surrounded each logion with a historical framework; and each declaration of Christ became Jesus gave birth to an episode. Next, the writers or copyists gathered these episodes and, through linking sentences, made them a continuous story that had no longer something from the "good news" announced by its Greek.

The teams having composed the four Gospels; have also inserted, a posteriori, at the mercy of polemics or controversies, and some decades afterwards, the principles which presided over the birth and the future of the forthcoming Christian current, in the original core of the four Gospels; and this process of addition or revision lasted at least until the fourth century.

Many passages from the four Gospels are only initially marginal glosses, but have ended up being incorporated voluntarily, or by mistake, into the body of the text (interpolation). For example, the beginning of the gospel "According to Luke," the end of the "According to Mark" (16: 9-20). They do not appear in the Codex vaticanus.

Thus, the original legends (in the strict sense of "text having a core of truth") will also gradually enrich themselves with positions taken to counteract the Marcionite and Montanist currents. These various developments, added over the years, in the body of the circulating texts, will take the form of anecdotal and biographical details,

or warnings (against false prophets, for example).

When the Christ angel (aggelos christos) of the original Gnostics was equated with the Jesus, we know (see Epistle to the Hebrews), after having been equated with John the Baptist by Origen (Commentary on John, Book II, chapter 24) the precepts and the words justifying the rules of life of the communities were also put into the mouth of the Teacher or Messiah; in order to base them on an authority, and to settle the problems which divided the churches.

Many of these logia are obviously trying to answer the questions that were asked to the first Christians. Penance, end of the sacrifices prescribed by the Jewish ritual, anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism, adultery, forgiveness of the adulterous wife, status of woman, asceticism and chastity; the path of salvation and

the rules to be followed to reach it, etc. But some additions to the initial rumor (the one circulating in Judea or the Diaspora about the Nazarene named Jesus ... maybe he was the messiah, this man performed miracles and so on) are probably already due to Marcion himself.
Luke 23: 29 "Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed! " This kind of appreciation is indeed typically Marcionite.

Other elements have indeed contributed to the formation of the gospels. For example, the liturgy or worship as we see in the baptismal and Eucharistic expressions of the Gospels. The reworking of the material, through catechesis, can be detected in Matthew. At least according to Raymond E. Brown. Some practices, for various reasons (see above: community of origin of the first disciples - most of them were dissidents from the movement of John the Baptizer, himself dissident from the Essene movement - phenomena of fashion, influence of other religions) were spread very early in the first Christians; and had, of course, a retroactive effect. They were incorporated a posteriori, and afterwards into the four gospels.

See, for example, the account of the last meal of Jesus (the Last Supper).

The phrase "Do this in remembrance of me" is not found in Mark or Matthew. This is, no doubt, a liturgical directive of the time of the preaching (about 60?) and introduced afterwards into the stories of Luke 22:19.

The first formulation is found in the writing of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25. Paul prefaces it with the mention: "This is what I received from the Lord, and what I also passed on to you," a sentence which is to be understood as follows. I have received a tradition that goes back to the time of the Lord, and I have handed it to you.

It is only afterwards, by definition, that this design of the Last Supper will be incorporated into the Gospel according to St. Luke, since the latter is LATER to St. Paul's epistles.

The somewhat magical design of the Eucharist is borrowed from the Eastern pagan religions, such as the worship of Cybele, perhaps through Montanus, who was one of his priests before passing with all his cultural knowledge, to Christianity. With the success we know. This new prophet, supposedly inspired by the Holy Spirit, had a considerable influence on the rites of incipient Christianity.

The Marcosians mentioned by Irenaeus at the end of the second century of our era, used, for example, philters and magic potions during the Eucharist (according to Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1:13) and Ignatius of Antioch himself, a few years earlier, also considered the Eucharist as a medicine of immortality: Greek *pharmakon tes zoes* (at the beginning of the second century of our era).

Other community controversies also brought color, such as struggles with the leaders of the Jewish synagogues (in Matthew and John), and among the disciples, with some who shout "Lord, Lord" in Matthew 7:21 (some enthusiastic spirituals?) At least still if we may follow Raymond E. Brown on the subject.

It is therefore the rules and customs of the early Christians, attributed a posteriori to Jesus, but, of course, responding well to the will of the various communities or churches, to give credence to their practice.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Final date of writing: around the year 80 of our era. Let us point out first that the Acts of the apostles are so closely linked to the gospel according to Luke that certain scholars think that it was originally the same work, the work to Theophilus. When Luke wrote his Gospel, this eminent man was keenly interested in Christianity, though he was not yet a Christian; but when Luke sent him the Acts, Theophilus had converted.

It is in reality an anonymous work and there is no reference to this book before the end of the 2nd century. In its intention as in its form, this writing is not different from the Gospels. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, besides, formed originally only the two volumes of the same work. Perhaps this was split only later, by the insertion of the fourth Gospel, the Gnostic Gospel of John. The contents of the book do not correspond to its title, for it is not a question of all the apostles, but only of Peter (John is only a minor part) and of Paul.

The story begins with the Ascension followed by Pentecost, after a few episodes devoted to the saga of Peter, it mainly relates the preaching of Paul of Tarsus, who is his main hero. The action ends in Rome in the early 60s.

Its complex composition, arranging history according to theological biases and dismissing the relation of certain essential episodes, raises many problems which have led some scholars to deny it any historical value.

In the ancient manuscripts, the Acts of the Apostles exist in two great versions - with variations - to which critique has given the names of "Western Text" and "Alexandrian Text."

The Acts of the Apostles have been the subject of a devastating review for some decades, to the point of being denied by any historical value. Any documentary use therefore requires a prior critical choice. Indeed, a set of problems arise, and, first of all, the question of the sources, for the author of the Acts does not indicate in his work the sources he used.

The first mention of the work appears in Irenaeus of Lyons (second part of the 2nd century). It is also the first literary witness of the title "Acts of Apostles." Other titles existed: Acts of the Apostles, Acts of the Holy Apostles. This title is in line with the Greco-Roman writings that magnify the lives of great men by telling their actions.

But in reality it is not the "acts" of these apostles that we find in this book, but rather the history of the spread of the Gospel in the world.

This final adjustment of the last details of the work of God on Earth (the action of the Holy Spirit, etc.) is the result of an attempt to reconcile two conceptions of his role.

That which is defended by James and Simon Peter in Jerusalem (tradition still supported by the Elcesaites in the second century).

That which is developed by the Hellenistic current of Stephen and supported by the testimony of a certain Saul / Paul claiming to have had the revelation of him whom he calls Christ.

Between the two currents there was a quarrel of derivation, each claiming to be in line with Christ through different apostles; and the multitude of rumors about Jesus, then in circulation, each one richer in genuine or supposed details about his life, did not put things right.

The narratives of the Acts are chronologically and geographically very selective. According to a reasonable estimation, the chapters 1 to 8 cover a period of about three years and the chapters 9 to 28 almost 25 years. The events narrated in this period are few. ...

After the burial of Jesus, there were initially only a hundred Christians gathered in Jerusalem. There is no doubt, for example, that the picture of the early Church in Jerusalem was embellished with regard to the rapidity and the number of conversions and the sanctity of its life, the generosity of the sharing, or the unity of hearts.

The author implicitly admits the rather simplified nature of this description when he tells us the stories of the "fraudsters" Ananias and Sapphira, and the division between Hebrews and Hellenists ...

The Acts of the Apostles are far from being objective, they have a selective memory and are very tendentious.

Let us not forget that they were written to convince a certain Theophilus to join the movement (unless Theophilus is only a name symbolizing the God-or-Devil fearers of Judaism).

The purpose of this second volume is to show the action of the Holy Spirit in the first Christian community and through it in the surrounding world.

This, therefore, determined the choice of historical materials: the author, who was a Christian of the ultra-Pauline movement, in other words, a Marcionite, did not accept what was contrary to his thesis or what did not interest him. It is thus that the short end of Peter's story is to be understood: he left for another place (12:17).

In any case, what is evident is that the Acts of the Apostles were indeed written or rewritten for the Pauline current, to which Marcion constantly refers.

The account of Pentecost proves it. We may suppose that the initial framework was perhaps a pilgrimage to the Temple, with its enormous crowds. It is clear that Peter speaks to Jews.

The today draft suggests nevertheless a gathering in Jerusalem of all languages and nations. In reality, if it is not a lie; at least it is an anachronism anticipating a few steps. An indication of this is given by the mention of the three thousand new baptized, who seem very volatile, for we lose sight of them immediately afterwards. The narrative of the miracle of Pentecost (Acts 2: 3) is therefore probably an addition of the second century to give more weight to the role of the apostles (their divine illumination by tongues of fire, etc.). Whence also some gaps and distortions. The speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Paul, while keeping the main ideas of each of these characters, evidently reflect the theology of the author of this writing.

Many of the facts related in the book of Acts are found in the epistles of Paul, but sometimes with divergences. For example, when we compare Acts 15: 1-29 and the Epistle to the Galatians 2: 1-10, which very likely report the same event: the Jerusalem Conference.

These divergences concerning the first council of the history of Christianity, the "council" of Jerusalem, held under the arbitration of James, as well as the others; are due to the fact that the testimonies at the origin of these passages in the Acts have been written or rewritten by the Marcionite author of this book in order to bring them closer to those of the Epistles of Paul. But nevertheless without daring to go to the end of this falsifying logic.

According to the present wording of the Acts, James apparently rules against the Judaizers: circumcision is not necessary for the admission into the community by baptism, and the case of Cornelius is approved. However, if we isolate James's answer from its context, another meaning appears.When the end of the Time, which is beside imminent, will come, God will rebuild David's tent, and for that he also chose a people among the Gentiles/Pagans; here for them some precepts which are connected with the covenant of Noah, but which do not include circumcision; as for us, we have Moses.

There is, therefore, no commensality (no sharing the same table), and finally James is quite close to the state of mind of the disciples during the Ascension: he keeps a kind of apartheid between Jews and Pagans.

Moreover, when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and accused of being an agitator, James did not defend him, quite on the contrary.

Other inconsistencies in the Acts are explained by the fact that the text was subsequently rewritten in the opposite direction by the future official tendency of Christianity, in order to somewhat unmarcionize it and to bring it closer to Judeo-Christianity.

Some extracts gleaned here and there.

1:18. Judas dies by falling, breaking his neck and spreading his entrails. Contradiction with the narratives of the Gospels (Matthew. 17: 5) in which Judas hangs himself.

9: 7. During the vision of the Lord, Paul's companions hear him, but do not see him. In complete contradiction with 22: 9 where they see him, but do not hear him! Make up your mind!

13: 16-17. The author makes Paul say words never mentioned in his epistles.

THE DISTRIBUTED BY MARCION PAUL'S EPISTLES.

With perhaps the exception of Peter and Thomas (died in India in 70?), the twelve apostles traveled very little. The first Christian generations lived in a climate strongly colored with eschatology: for them the last days were imminent and they did not doubt that Jesus was going to return soon: "Marana tha" (1 Corinthians 16:22). "Come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

This expectation of the end of the Time did not encourage Christians to write for future generations who perhaps would never see the light of day ... The only literature that mattered to them was the immediate literature dealing with present problems. The first Christian writings were therefore letters. This is in summary the thesis of our most famous today exegete, Raymond E. Brown.

The first testimony of such a collection of writings dates from the year 200 approximately. This is the papyrus numbered 46 (Chester Beatty collection). It contains all the Pauline Epistles except those sent to Titus or Timothy. It should be noted, however, that many of these epistles may be false, or then have been subsequently lengthened.

The letters attributed to Paul do not appear until 140, although the state of the language makes it possible to trace back certain passages of them to some 100 years before.

The first ten have been published by the great exegete of the Bible, whose positions in Christology have forced others to define themselves, that is to say Marcion; who made them known in Rome in 144. They were probably revised by him in passing (he was for instance the first to give them a title, like in the case of the letter to the Ephesians. And a title it is very important because that can influence the reading of what follows). It seems well that Marcion has amalgamated several fragments of Paul under the same title, for example the second letter to the Corinthians, or that he inserted in these letters certain passages due to his hand and not to that of Paul, in other words, some additions or interpolations.

Many of the passages in these letters are therefore doubtful. In any case, there were to be other Paul's letters; and Marcion, of all the letters which the various communities he knew had kept in their archives, evidently kept only those that interested him.

This fact must incite us to the utmost prudence with regard to Pauline theology. Paul was not a systematic theologian, but an itinerant preacher, a former student of the rabbi Gamaliel, converted to Christianity in Damascus, by sympathizers of Christianity come from Essenian-Baptism.

As we have said, the state of the language makes it possible to trace back certain passages of these letters to about the year 50. What makes them therefore actually documents older than the gospels, what is besides rather embarrassing, for these letters of Paul indeed don't know most of the apostles quoted in the Gospels; who in turn apparently ignore the disciples that Paul mentions.

Other passages, however, are later and can be dated back only to the year 160 (passages added in these letters by Marcion's followers as Tatian or by adversaries?)

A number of these letters (if not all) have been composed with the help of various texts, really due to the hand of St. Paul, or borrowed from ancient (Essenian?) Jewish and Christian texts?) translated into Greek.

Strangely enough, these documents are hardly wordy about the life of the "historical" Jesus. He is "born of a woman"; He was born under the Jewish Law (Galatians 4: 4), he comes from the people of Israel (Romans 9: 5), from the seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:18) from the seed of David (Romans 1: 3); he died on the cross (Philippians 2: 8; 1 Corinthians 1:23). What makes very little things!

Let allow us here to be a little clear, or incisive, than our friend Raymond E. Brown, being in any way, we uns, bound to the Vatican.

Paul mostly believed in a mystical Christ and, of course, did not know the man Jesus. It is clear that his letters regard Christ above all as an angel or spirit descended on earth, sent by the Father, and ascended to his right hand, like Isaiah (or the different Gnostic saviors mentioned at the time); after a certain number of sufferings inherent in his human materialization and in his death.

The Christian current at the origin of our modern churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Reformist) that will emerge at the end of the 2nd century; will fight Marcion (see St Irenaeus in 180) and Tatian ... but will

keep his "Pauline" letters; while expunging them from the elements contrary to his views. Besides there are still in the today text of a certain number of these epistles attributed to the ex-pupil of Rabbi Gamaliel, some passages echoing the argument started by the first faithful of this tendency, which was going to become that which we know today; against the Gnostic Christianity of Marcion. But they nevertheless kept within themselves a number of typically Gnostic expressions (pleroma become "totality," eon translated by "century," etc.) testifying well to the form of Christianity having presided over their birth in the time of Paul.

The additions and manipulations intended for faking the gospels also exist, of course, in the letters or epistles. What are the criteria for determining the authenticity or pseudepigraphy of a text? Internal data, form, style, vocabulary, and the thought, the theology. Statistics and computers are used for this purpose.

The German exegete Bornkamm calls pseudo-Pauline, for example, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Colossians and also Ephesians. For A.O. Morton and J. McLeman, there are only five Proto-Pauline letters, that is to say genuine, and probably the first works of the New Testament. Half (if only the first five are considered genuinely Pauline) or at least therefore a third (if only the first ten are considered genuine) of the letters of St. Paul; would be therefore later false (Deutero-Pauline), dating back to before or after Marcion, that is to say, to the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th centuries; even if these fakes could be composed with pieces of older texts, of course.

A SUCCINCT ANALYSIS OF THE LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

(The titles are by Marcion.)

Epistle to the Romans (56 or 57?)

Several sentences are incomplete, but the singularity of this text comes mainly from its composition: a long apostolic instruction inserted in the middle of a true letter with a recap postscript. The apostolic instruction in question is composed of five more or less autonomous editorial blocks. Their structuring is not very clear.

It is perhaps here an epistle written by Marcion and under a title of his own, with several small texts or fragments of texts by St Paul gleaned here and there. Renan distinguishes in it four or five finals, what supposes as many extensions ...

8:19 "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." About what sons of God are we talking if it is not Jesus?

1st Epistle to the Corinthians (56 or 57?)

Perhaps also an epistle written by Marcion and under a title from his hand, with several writings of Paul.

4: 5. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

For the author of this passage visibly, end of Times and last judgment are close.

11: 3-16. I want you to realize that the head of the woman is man....But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncover—it is the same as having her head shaved.....woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels (sic)????????????????????

16: 21. If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Marana tha (on the translation of these Aramaic terms, see above).

2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (56 or 57?)

These are three or four letters of Paul assembled by Marcion, under the same title.

11: 4. Because any chance comer only has to preach a Jesus other than the one we preached, or you have only to receive a spirit different from the one you received, or a gospel different from the one you accepted....

These people are counterfeit apostles, dishonest workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." Could it be the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John?

Epistle to the Galatians (54 or 55?)

St. Jerome, in his commentary on this epistle, notes that the Galatians spoke more or less the same language as the Treviri, the present region of Trier in Germany. And the life of Saint Euthymius (5th century) still mentions a monk named Procopius whose first language was Celtic. This is paragraph LV (page 77 of the edition of Edward Schwartz, Kyrillos 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".

1: 6-9. 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.....[Editor's note: Which?]If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

1: 13. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.[Editor's note. This narrative therefore somewhat contradicts the Acts of the Apostles].

3:1.You foolish Galatians *, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

3: 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female.

* Anti-Celtic Racism! The life of St. Euthymius mentioned above associates in any case this language with a case of demonic possession.

Epistle to Philemon (58 or 59?)

Apparently, one of the few true letters by St. Paul. As usual, Paul still does not condemn slavery, but asks the Christian master to see also in his slave ... a brother.

Epistle to the Ephesians (90s?)

Eighty percent of the scholars believe that this letter is not from St. Paul but from one of his first disciples, inspired by the letter to the Colossians, and a few others.

2: 15-19. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups [Jews and non-Jews] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two.

Epistle to the Philippians (58 or 59?)

Two or three letters (see for example chapter III) combined by Marcion under a title to him.

Epistle to the Colossians (80s?)

60% of the scholars think that this letter is not of St. Paul but by one of his first disciples (Timothy?)

Having taken inspiration from the letter to Philemon.

3: 11. There is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ.

1st Epistle to the Thessalonians (50 or 51?)

The oldest known Christian document if we understood well Father Brown .

Some think that it is two letters of Paul assembled by Marcion under a title of his own.

4: 14. Strange reasoning! Where is the faith in all that? Why does Paul not evoke Pilate, Judas, Golgotha?

4:15. In other words, he will be alive when the Lord will return in all his glory! Again a failed prophecy!

2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians (50 or 51?)

Perhaps also a forgery written by a visionary persuaded of the imminence of the end of Time.

2: 2. "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter presuming to be from us and alleging that the day of the Lord has already come."

It is to be an allusion to the famous Day of the Wrath of YHWH as the end of the Time as a prelude to the Last Judgment.

Paul or his proofreader changes his mind on this subject, and now specifies that this "Day of the Lord" is not almost coming!

Three other falsely Pauline letters were added to the ten published by Marcion and his disciple Tatian, and a fourth added in the East to make the link with the Gospels (the letter to the Hebrews). The latter will also be considered authentic in the West until the fourth century. It is, however, a crude forgery which is not of St. Paul, and of which the very title (to the Hebrews) is an imposture.

1st Epistle of Paul to Timothy (98 or 99 ??)

As we have said therefore, an obvious fake drafted by a disciple of the Pauline School.

1: 19-20. They have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (Ah the joys of the religion of love, forever!)

2: 9-15. "A woman] should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing, etc.." [signed Muhammad son of Amina].

6: 1-4. All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing (sic) masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers (again-sic: signed Muhammad son of Amina).

2nd Epistle of Paul to Timothy (98 or 99?)

Another obvious fake written by a commentator of the Pauline School.

4, 1-4. I charge there in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they.... will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.

Epistle to Titus.

Another crude fake written by a disciple of the Pauline School.

1: 10-14. For there are also many disobedient, vain talkers, and seducers: especially they who are of the circumcision: Who must be reproved..... One of them a prophet of their own, said "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slothful * bellies" THIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, who turn themselves away from the truth (no comment).

* Let us replace Cretians with Arabs, Negroes, or Jews, and here we have again a typically racist statement!

Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, a contemporary of the Revelation, coming from a Christianized Jewish author or group, was belatedly inserted in the letters collection. This text was originally intended for Jews freshly converted to Christianity (some Judeo-Christians, therefore). This epistle knows a Son of God whom it places above the angels, a without genealogy eternal high priest Jesus, but doesn't know the man who would have been the founder of Christianity, who would have performed miracles, and suffered a Passion. His address or title (epistle to the Hebrews) was invented a very long time after, but not by Marcion ...

The introduction of the Epistle "To the Hebrews" affirms the superiority of Christ over everything that happened in Israel before. The main contrast concerns the two divine revelations: one by the prophets and the other by a pre-existing Son, through whom God created the world and spoke to us. The description, in a language perhaps borrowed from a hymn, shows that the writer interprets Christ from the portrait of the Divine Wisdom outlined in the Old Testament. Just as Wisdom was the outpouring of the glory of God, the immaculate mirror of the power of God or of the demiurge, who can do all things (Wisdom of Solomon 7: 25-27); the Son of God is the reflection of the divine glory and the imprint of the being of God, supporting the universe by his word (Hebrews 1: 3). Exceeding the model of Wisdom, the Son, however, is a real person, who brings the purification of sins.

Since 1914, the Church grants only an "indirect authenticity" to this "Epistle to the Hebrews."

Clear Language Translation: The Church was forced to acknowledge that it was an obvious fake in a holy Bible yet "directly inspired by God" ...

Even though it is not of Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews is nevertheless a recognized major spiritual and literary work. It can be attributed to an eminent personage having the authority of a Peter or of Paul, not to a disciple of "second-hand" or "second generation." It could be written in the turmoil that followed Stephen's death, for a dispersed community, necessarily far from the Temple, in search of new landmarks.

Author of this letter.

Arguments for the attribution to the named Apollos.

It is significant that the character most often regarded by critics as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is Apollos, who offers certain points of comparison with Barnabas; including the following one: he knew Paul's entourage after this had separated from Barnabas. He was like him a Jew of the Diaspora. A native of Alexandria, Apollos could also have abolitionist or Philonian ideas about the Temple.

He had known only John's baptism, and he was informed of Jesus by Priscilla and Aquila, who told him about the different rumors circulating about the latter.

If so, the Epistle to the Hebrews would be therefore nevertheless more or less indebted to Paul. It will remain to justify in this case that Apollos proposed to give up the liturgy of the Temple and did not integrate the pagans to his teaching on the old or new covenant; while being more abolitionist than Paul, who, on the other hand, went back to Jerusalem several times in order to sacrifice. Hypothesis:

by inheriting his audience in Corinth, he would have begun to speak as if he had in front of him "Hebrews" called to mind by the liturgy of the Temple ...

Arguments for the attribution to Barnabas.

A Jew of the Diaspora, Barnabas was none the less a faithful circumcised observing Jewish law. The Epistle to the Hebrews is not interested in the pagans, but in some believers from Judaism who have known the sacrifices offered at the Temple. Even if it is breaking-up with the latter, it is not anti-Jewish. Barnabas, who was a Levite by birth, was the only disciple of the priestly class to have left us a name in the New Testament writings. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows a proximity to the liturgy of the Temple, if not a significant interest for it, and knowledge of the holy books, especially the Psalms and the Prophets. Some authors therefore have been led to think that it was "normally" addressed to priestly mentalities.

Living in the desert with John, Barnabas was to know Qumran and the communities of the Essenian movement. After the generous benefactresses, he was the first to give the prize of a domain to the Apostles (Acts IV: 35) thus being in line with the Essenian movement as for the goods pooling. Now the author of the Epistle exhorts precisely to a pooling of resources (13:16) in terms reminding of the beginning of the Acts (2:42), but which will not be seen again afterwards, if not episodically (Romans 15: 26). Barnabas was known by the Apostles and elders of the Church in Jerusalem, who sent him to Antioch between 35 and 40, where he became leader of the "Prophets and Teachers" (Acts XIII: 1) .

Epistle of James (80 to 90).

Composed in fact after the death of James the brother of the Lord, by one of his disciples. Writing strongly marked by Judaism. The only real interest of this epistle is that one of its passages (verses 13-20 of chapter 5) is used to justify the existence of the sacrament of the sick among the Catholics. See hereafter our chapter devoted is the case to say, to sacraments.

First letter of Peter (70 to 90).

Not from St. Peter, but from one of his disciples in Rome.

Second letter of Peter (about 130).

Here also a fake. This letter is not of St. Peter.

First letter of John (about the year 100).

Is not of the author of the Gospel of the same name.

Second letter of John. Also a fake!

Third letter of John. Same thing

Letter by Jude (90 to 100).

A fake perhaps from the Jewish-Christian community in Palestine, where being a brother of Jesus was a reference.

17 "But you, beloved, remember you the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Editor's note. Bornkamm affirms that the first epistle of Peter is not by Peter, that the Epistle of James is not by James; and that the Epistle of Jude is not by Jude (but that it is in fact Jude who copied 2 Peter). Help !

THE REVELATION BY JOHN.

The violence of this text, a veritable polemical tract, explains the wave of destruction and arrests ordered in 303 by Diocletian at the instigation of the Tetrarch Galerius and which Christian historiography has considered as a religious persecution, the last and most serious! Diocletian had long procrastinated before taking action against the Christians: but they are bad soldiers, always ready to abandon the army for fear of betraying Christ's militia. The emperor considered them impious, on a par with the magicians and Manicheans, whom he also fought. It is an unevenly distributed Christianity, moreover: dense in the cities of Asia; absent, on the contrary, from the Gallic countryside.

The edict which is promulgated in Nicomedia in 303 prohibits Christian assemblies, envisages the destruction of churches and sacred books, condemns Christians to the loss of their civil rights, privileges, dignities and honors as well as their freedom. The death penalty was not considered.

It was then that Galerius intervened: a fire broke out in the imperial palace of Nicomedia; the Christians accused Galerius of having set the fire in order to attribute responsibility to them. Diocletian took fright and let it happen. Galerius advocates the mines or the stake. The prosecution will last eight years and will be mainly the work of Galerius, then of his nephew Maximinus Daia.

The martyrs are relatively few in number. The persecution was more focused on buildings: destruction of churches that had been built everywhere, such as that of Nicomedia, which adjoined the imperial palace.

.....The vogue of apocalypses is between -200 and +150 of our era. They express a pessimistic conception of history, which is explained by the successive reverses of the Jewish state, annexed in turn by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. His third phase (that of the triumph of the Righteous person) of course never happening, the meaning of the word apocalypse was gradually changed from that of revelation to that of disaster.

Christian censorship kept as the only apocalypse that was attributed to John. And yet ... Gaius of Rome tried to eliminate it by arguing that this text was of the Gnostic heretic named Cerinthus.

This revelation therefore will be officially considered as a holy text only in 633, at the Council of Toledo (in order to compensate for the rejection of the other revelations and in particular those - Christian Gnostic- known as of Peter and Paul).

The work was not written by the evangelist of the same name, but probably taken over from an earlier tradition. In 18: 20 and 21: 14, the author speaks of the apostles without appearing to count himself among them. He has a vision of the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the foundation walls (21 :14) thus implicitly forming a distinct group of his own person. Vocabulary and language also differ from the Gospel of the same name. This work, written about the year 70, and originally Jewish, was revamped by an anonymous Christian author about 130-140.

The Revelation of John is a mixture of various texts. Jesus is mentioned nowhere in this book supposedly written after his "death" by his servants: the authors, perhaps some Nazarenes, speak of a mythical Christ. Jesus does not yet have an earthly existence. No allusion to the history related by the Gospels. The mother of Christ is not yet Mary, but the heavenly Virgin. What is astonishing in this composite work is that the Christians who completed it to adapt it to their beliefs, don't know the man Jesus; and equated their Christ with a heavenly lamb or a supernatural rider on a white horse (or even with a divine child escaping the dragon). In this book, therefore, Jesus is considered a purely heavenly character (somewhat like in Paul's writings) sitting near the throne of God or of the Demiurge. It is probably a text originally written in Hebrew (the number 666 designates the Abaddon, the destroying angel); adapted and reworked in Greek language by a Judeo-Christian; whose language was not the mother tongue, given the number of mistakes that can be found there. Hence also the rapprochement between this Abaddon and our poor Apollo, the final author of this text seeming not to doubt the existence of this sun god-or-demon whose he contests only the (negative instead of positive) nature.

This, moreover, was one of the constants of the thought of the first Christian "intellectuals" who like everybody or almost at the time, did not question the very existence of these entities, but only made

them demons. Impossible to be more racist! The gods of others are demons! What next ! For the record also see Tertullian's Apologetics about this subject.

Some gems gleaned at random.

1:3. "The one who reads the words of God's message is happy. And the people who hear this message and do what is written in it are happy. The time is near". [Bother! Still missed !]

2: 6 to 15. The Nicholaites.

We find in this revelation ascribed to John echoes of the polemic started by the future official Christians against Gnostic Christianity (which makes the creating god of the Jewish Bible an evil god, and the serpent a good "god," who wanted to reveal knowledge to Man).

9:11. What is interesting to note in this text, as we have said, is the conscious or unconscious bringing together of the sun and healing god or demon of the Hyperboreans; Apollo, Abello or Abellio ... (as it is written in certain inscriptions of the Garonne Valley in France or even in the Lugdunum located in the Pyrenees, the Lugdunum of Convenae, where he is associated with the apple tree) with the Sumerian Babylonian god-or-demon called Abaddon in Hebrew. Every religion has a tendency to equate the gods or angels of the other religions to demons. What toleration or non-racism (respect for others).

22:18. The writer devotes to the Gemonian stairs of God or of the Demiurge the one who will change his book. What proves that at that time the "pious fraud" consisting in changing texts for the needs of the moment was already very widespread.

The Revelation of John is the last of the New Testament books. In this set of works considered "canonical" by the Christian Church, it appears as a completely separate boulder.

The contrast is first in the form. Besides the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, it represents an entirely different literary genre. The strange nature of the visions it contains, the advanced, sometimes even incoherent, symbolism, that expresses them, the dramatic look of the spectacular scenes which are evoked, contribute to making this work a true enigma. This mysterious aspect is further strengthened by the doctrinal contrast between the content of the Revelation and the rest of the New Testament. Although some close links with other canonical writings can be discerned, especially with the Epistle to the Hebrews, the comparison with the Gospels reveals a fundamental difference. The "historical" aspect of the Christian message is almost entirely ignored.

Chapter 8, verse 8 was later added to the body of the text. About Jerusalem: "This is where their Lord was also crucified." In the opinion of several Catholic authors, it seems that one is in the presence of a posterior gloss and then included "by mistake" in the very body of the text. On the other hand, the "theological" content of the message of the Apocalypse is extremely rich in the fields in which the Gospel is on the contrary particularly sober. And especially in the sphere of eschatology, that is to say, of the doctrine on the end of time, which occupies a primordial place here.

This enigmatic and singular character of the Apocalypse of John makes it all the more interesting. His study is indispensable to anyone who seeks to know Christianity in its primitive form. Far from constituting the crowning or the completion of "Christian revelation," it appears rather as one of the oldest or most primitive forms of the Christian message. The author describes his visions in Patmos, a small island off Asia Minor. And it is besides seven Churches of Asia Minor that he destines his work: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Seven letters, full of encouragement or reproach, and addressed to the angel of each of them, form a sort of introduction. For a thousand years, the Righteous, only risen, reign with Christ (19-20). Then comes the time of the ultimate fight. The Devil, released for a moment, is thrown into the lake of fire, where he joins forever the two beasts. God or the Demiurge has vanquished, his reign is definitive. The dead are resurrected and judged. A new heaven and a new earth replace the old world. Then comes down from heaven "the new Jerusalem, clothed like a bride adorned for her husband." These are the "marriages of the Lamb." God or the Demiurge now dwells among men (21-22).

This strange book had great difficulty in being admitted among the sacred books of Christianity. Although quoted with respect by several ancient authors, he even met in Rome at the end of the second century, opponents, who saw in him a work by Cerinthus. Later, in Egypt, his apostolic origin was questioned. The whole Church in the East therefore showed a great hesitation as for it, to the extent of being positively excluded from its catalog of Holy Books to be meditated. If, finally, the Revelation succeeded in being essential, it was only because it was regarded as a work of the Apostle John, written towards the end of the reign of Domitian; according to the data furnished by Irenaeus of Lyons (*Adversus haereses*, V, 33:3), whose authority dispelled such widespread and tenacious doubts. Modern review shares these doubts and hardly admits that the same personage may be the author of

two works as dissimilar as the revelation and the Gospel (of John). It considers it unlikely that the seer of the Apocalypse is an apostle, and especially the Apostle John, if, as many admit, he was already dead long before the traditional date attributed to this event.

The hesitation of the Christian authorities was, moreover, kept by the very contents of the book. The announcement of the end of the world, the description of its strange adventures, and the idea of the reign of a thousand years, all that fed the fervor of the early Christians, but seemed incomprehensible to the faithful of the succeeding centuries. The delay in the advent of the end of time, the internal evolution of the Church, had changed the perspective.

Above all, the Alexandrian thinkers, Origen particularly, had "spiritualized" the Christian message. The millennium was no longer to come, it was already realized (with the coming of the Church). This idea spread very quickly among the Greeks, and later among the Romans, through Augustine. It prevailed for centuries.

It was only around the end of the 19th century that the real solution emerged. It consisted in returning to the oldest interpretation, by considering the work as an "apocalypse" among others, which announced the imminence of the end of time, and described it according to the usual methods of the genre and of the time. What had been missing to come to this solution earlier was the possibility of finding points of comparison. They had been sought in vain in the New Testament, where the eschatological texts were of little importance. They had been found in certain prophetic texts of the Bible, in Ezekiel and Zechariah, especially in Daniel. But a long interval separated them from the Revelation of John, according to traditional views. The critique in the nineteenth century came to change this view. The book of Daniel appeared as the first of the revelations, written around the time of the Maccabean revolt (167). The discovery of works of the same kind, such as Enoch, Jubilees, the Syriac Baruch, was also able to supply the scholars with a whole body of Jewish apocalypses. This perspective enlightens the literary form of the work. Written by a clairvoyant, it is entirely conceived according to the rules of the apocalyptic genre. The symbolism of images and figures, the characters and the realities involved in the drama, are borrowed from the material and uses of this literary genre as it is expressed in all Jewish apocalypses. This is a style where descriptions are stereotyped, where disasters are composed according to numerical patterns; where realities take forms borrowed from the myths of the past, that of the lost paradise, to describe the happiness of the happy few; that of the plagues of Egypt, to detail the misfortunes of the ungodly.

The assessment of the profound meaning of the work benefits from this new perspective. It depicts symbolic characters who take leading roles in the drama. The two great protagonists are, of course, the Lamb and the Dragon. The Lamb is the triumphant Word, the Son of Man, the Great reaping Angel.

He concentrates in his person the varied currents in which the Jewish apocalypse had been expressed, and especially the Book of Enoch. In front of him, the Dragon is Satan, the Serpent, who opposes him to the end. But these two giants are themselves supported by two extraordinary beings: the Lamb by the two Witnesses, the Dragon by the two Beasts. The Witnesses are borrowed from Zechariah (4: 2), but what reality do they hide? Two apostles? Two prophets? No definitive explanation could be given. For the two Beasts, obviously inspired by Behemoth and Leviathan (Enoch LX: 7), scholars thought to know the solution. The Beast of the Sea would be the persecuting Roman Empire. But it must be noted that it is closely connected with the "Great Prostitute," the "Great City," whose symbolism is opposed to that of the Heavenly Woman and of the new Jerusalem. It is strange, moreover, that the author, or more likely a glosser, can see in this "Great City" the earthly Jerusalem, since he says about it: "This is where their Lord was crucified" (11: 8). As for the Beast from the earth, it is also called "False Prophet" (16:13, 19:20), which evokes a truly Jewish fact.

Therefore we may wonder, then, whether the characters in question are not in the field of the Jewish realities. The links are so close that it would be possible to think of a Jewish work, to which some verses interpolated here and there would have given a Christian flavor. Some thought it, but it was at a time when eschatology was regarded as a Jewish 'fault,' of which Christianity had 'gotten rid.' The eschatological nature of primitive Christianity has since been rediscovered. Better still, it is admitted now that there exist a form of Christianity which is expressed in the terms and according to the concepts peculiar to "late Judaism." It is Judeo-Christianity, whose influence appears to be determining in the rise of Christianity, and whose first characteristic is to be an eschatology. If the Apocalypse of John rings "Jewish," it is because it belongs to this background. It is the almost single

representative of it among the New Testament books. This explains the contrast which is clearly evident between it and the group of Gospels and Epistles, which represent another form of Christianity, whose triumph has led to the gradual disappearance of Judeo-Christianity.

It is therefore this Judeo-Christian background that is to be taken as a framework for studying the Revelation. We can then compare it to an abundant literature, which did not have the honor of being admitted among the Scriptures, but was instead relegated to the humble category of the "Apocrypha." There is a whole group of Christian works whose analogies are evident with the Jewish apocalypses. This is particularly true of the Christian part of the Ascension of Isaiah, which is very close to the book of the revelation by John. The latter is therefore at the point of contact of two important groups of works, which are called apocryphal. If the word has taken on a pejorative meaning today, it actually applies originally to the "hidden" nature of the doctrine contained in these books. This "esoteric" aspect is obvious when it is a question of the Revelation of John; But the Jewish and Christian apocrypha that we have provide us with the "key" that enables us to decipher the enigmas of it.

THE ALMOST CANONIC WRITINGS.

A certain number of writings, although not included in today's official list, have never been officially excluded from it (have never been officially declared apocryphal) although they have not been in it for centuries and centuries. They are, therefore, in the curious position of being a part of the New Testament, though being not in it, but some of them have played (and still play, for example, for the exegetes) a large part in Christianity.

Several of these texts attempt to answer the questions asked by the Christians of that time. Penance, end of the sacrifices prescribed by the Jewish ritual, forgiveness of the adulterous woman, asceticism and chastity, the way of salvation and the rules to follow in order to reach it. These polemics are found in texts that official Christianity could not destroy or conceal because they continued to be read in communities that had rallied to its "Great" Church. The ancient substratum of the letters of St. Paul (its primitive core) the epistle attributed to Barnabas, the Didache, the Homilies falsely attributed to Clement (originally written in Greek language around the 4th century, but from an earlier material dating from the end of the second century).

THE DIDACHE OR DOCTRINE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES (about 90 to 120).

Appears in the Codex Hierosolymitanus.

For the Didache, the Scripture is the Old Testament; it speaks of the Gospel (in the singular), what makes it possible to think that it knew neither our four current canonical gospels nor the apocryphal gospels. It shows itself as a pre-Christian work, arisen in a Jewish background around 90, changed later around 120, by a Christianizing Jewish sect, and contradicts the four official Gospels on many points.

In this text which in fact doesn't the crucifixion of Jesus and contains no allusion to the life of this personage; the apostles are not yet equated with followers of Christ, but with simple itinerant messengers of the first Christian communities being constituted. Chapters XI and XII advise communities about the reception of these itinerant preachers. "

"Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet...Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known" (Didache 11: 4-8). This text also contains advice on life and liturgy.

THE CLEMENTINE LITERATURE.

These two texts were admitted at the beginning into the list of official writings recognized by the Church since they appear in the Codex Alexandrinus of the beginning of the 5th century.

They were later excluded from the official canon, probably because of their Gnostic nature, but never officially.

The pseudo-Clementine writings include two works, probably independent at first, the Recognitions and the Homilies.

The Recognitions, divided into ten books in the Latin translation due to Rufinus, existed in Greek.

The homilies, which have reached us in Greek language, are divided into twenty books, and are preceded by three documents: the letter by Peter to James, the solemn promise of James, and the letter by Clement to James.

This compilation integrates the Peter's kerygma, the Acts and the odyssey of Peter (Tyre, Sidon, Beirut...), as well as a Jewish treatise of apologetics.

Doctrinal divergences are inevitable.

The two works which contain many parallel materials have a Greek origin.

If their writing is dated to the fourth century, their oral traditions go back to the third or even to the second century, and come from Syria in all likelihood.

The book which relates the preaching of Peter in the cities of the Mediterranean coast is supposed to have been written by Clement of Rome for the attention of James, before Clement succeeded Peter at the head of the Roman Church. The preaching of Peter would have been revised later in the form of a Route of Peter to deliver his secret teaching. Rufinus' translation, which has pruned some shocking traits for the then-dominant ideology, has been called "Recognitions" (Recognitiones); by reference to

a literary genre that was widespread at the time and which had it that an individual, after many wanderings, to find the members of his family.

It is a set of variants of the same basic text, often revised and falsely attributed to the mythical pope (bishop of Rome) called Clement. There is, in fact, no trace of a pope or bishop of Rome by the name of Clement, who would have succeeded St. Peter, outside of the pretended author of these homilies and recognitions; which are Judeo-Christian texts, giving the primacy to James in Jerusalem, the brother of the Lord, and to Peter to a lesser extent, considered to be the only trustworthy true apostles (unlike St. Paul).

The initial core of this corpus often referring to the brother of Jesus (James of Jerusalem) was undoubtedly worked out by Judeo-Christians who fled Jerusalem after its destruction by the Romans in 70 (Ebionites or Elcesaites).

The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (years 80 to 140).

Although many details remain obscure, it is generally accepted that this treatise letter was sent around 100 to the Church in Corinth, on the occasion of a schism.

The earliest Christian communities will almost put this letter in the ranks of official writings, as Eusebius of Caesarea points out: in many churches, for a long time now and still today, it is publicly read in common meetings.

The Epistle attributed to this Clement living in Rome is inspired mainly by the Old Testament; nevertheless it evokes "Our Lord Jesus Christ" and his blood, while omitting to speak of his Passion and to quote the Gospels. His Christ is presented as the Son of the Creator of the Universe.

The second epistle of Clement (years 130 to 160) is perhaps the result of the reactions risen from the distribution of the first.

The system of the Clementine (texts attributed to Clement) is a combination of Jewish theism and Stoic pantheism, directed as well against the Christian dogma of the Trinity s against polytheism and Pagan-Christian gnosis. Saint Peter appears as the representative of true Christianity, which is identified with true Judaism for the author; Simon the Sorcerer, his great rival, is the representative of all erroneous doctrines, first of the error that bears his own name, then that of Paul, and finally that of Marcion ... The world, according to him, has not been made from nothing, but from an eternal matter, emanating substantially from God or the Demiurge in its four elements ... etc.

THE EPISTLES BY IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH (120 to 200).

After having headed for at least three decades, the Church in Syria and Cilicia, St Ignatius was arrested, under rather strange circumstances, since the Church enjoyed then a large period of peace. He was apparently the object of a complaint from certain citizens of Antioch (some Jews?) and, therefore, arrested and transferred to Rome for trial.

He was allowed to write letters during his detention, and these letters constitute one of the oldest testimonies of the fanaticism of these early Christians, or of their initial intolerance, worthy of the suicide bombers of our modern jihads. There were many monks called Parabolani among us.

Bishop of the first pagan metropolis touched by Christianity after Caesarea, Ignatius indeed exhorts his faithful to flee from other Christians. We have said this before, but it is always good to repeat this kind of thing; which gives a much better idea of what was really original Christianity (aim of this book) than the multitude of conventional discourses about it, which, all, mislead more or less. It is rather to be compared with the Islam of the Taliban. "You must flee them as you would wild beasts. For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, against whom you must be on your guard, inasmuch as they are men who can scarcely be cured. There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in the flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible— even Jesus Christ our Lord." "Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and ate and drank. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and truly died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He also was truly raised from the dead [...] Because if, as some that are without God, that is, the unbelieving, say, that He only seemed to suffer [...] I die in vain [...] Flee, therefore, those evil offshoots [of Satan], which produce death-bearing fruit..."

Editor's Note No. 1. This is the first time the nascent Christian Church attempts to give a historical reality to the character of Christ who, over the years, will become Christ Jesus. If such interpolation advocates for a made man Christ, it cannot be denied that the original texts mentioned only a spiritual Christ, a kind of angel.

Editor's Note No. 2. We do not resist the pleasure of reminding here of the position of Islam on those who do not share its vision of the world. Holy Quran chapter 6 verse 68. "When you see those who engage in discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversion. And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people."

The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch were in reality drafted about 120-130 by a Marcionite bishop of Syria, and deeply reworked between 190 and 210 by a Proto-Catholic or Proto-Orthodox proofreader.

THE EPISTLE OF THE PSEUDO-BARNABAS (80-120).

The text still appeared in the Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century. Very close to the Essenian dualism, between the path of light and the path of darkness. It was written at the beginning of the reign of Hadrian, therefore about 118-120. Its chapter 15 constitutes one of the main arguments of the Christian millenarianists. The Epistle attributed to Barnabas, found in the 4th century codex Sinaiticus, is obviously the result of Judeo-Christian circles who are already at odds with Jewish orthodoxy. This text, the first version of which dates from the end of the first century, shows that Christianity quickly broke with this Jewish orthodoxy (it proposes to replace the circumcision of the penis by the circumcision of the heart); and passed to a Hellenized Christianity (which will remain predominantly Gnostic until Marcion). The epistle attributed to Barnabas gives us a good idea of the shift from a still Jewish Christianity to a Greco-Roman pagan-Christianity: refusal of sacrifices, of circumcision, of Sadducee and Pharisee rites. His author (of which Barnabas, of course, was not the real name) obviously does not know the man Jesus of the Gospels and knows only Christ or the Lord, what is not the same thing. As for the apostles, he does not even name them. The Epistle often quotes the Old Testament, as well as apocryphal works, but mentions our 4 Gospels nowhere. His author speaks 84 times of a "Lord," he often alludes to his sufferings, but does not speak of his crucifixion; the cross he quotes is not an instrument of death. He compares his Jesus to the two goats of the Jewish fast (one sacrificed to the altar and eaten by the priests, the other driven into the desert) and to the young bull slaughtered and burned (Leviticus 16: 8-10) comparisons that are not consistent with the evangelical themes on this subject.

THE SHEPHERD BY HERMAS (100-160). This text still appeared in the Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century.

The book probably dates from the middle of the second century (140-155). Set of five visions, twelve precepts and ten parables, written by Hermas, a Christian of Rome. This text seems to be unaware of the notion of papacy or primacy of the Bishop of Rome in his remarks about the organization of Christians. This work was cited as Scripture by the Fathers of the Church and considered as being from divine inspiration. It was read publicly in churches, but did not find a place in the canon. His Son of God is previous to the creation and is not called Jesus or Christ. This text doesn't know the name of Jesus, it does not know our gospels and reveals no trace of Judaism. It is therefore Christianity without Jesus and without Messiah.

THE TESTAMENTS OF TWELVE PATRIARCHS (70 to 200).

Other pure product of the second century of our era, claiming to contain the last will of the twelve sons of Jacob to their children, each telling the story of his life and the lessons he draws from it. Certain passages are undoubtedly Christian. It is therefore perhaps a text coming from Jewish circles, but converted to Christianity. Composed before the year 200.

THE DIATESSARON (170-175).

Tatian is the author, like Marcion, of one version of the Gospels called the Diatessaron, enriched by some other non-canonical elements.

The text is known from various later harmonies, and from the commentary of St. Ephrem.

The work had an enormous influence and was used for centuries in the Syriac Church.

It was a bold effort to find a solution to the divergences or differences that appeared in the four Gospels we know about the life and words of Jesus and to try to harmonize them in a single writing. It is impossible to know whether Tatian composed his work in the West or about 175-180 after his return to the East. Nor do we know whether he composed it in Greek or Syriac, even if the Syriac is the most

probable. A fragment of the Greek Diatessaron was found during the excavations of Dura-Europos. No manuscript of the Syriac version has been preserved, but we know from the commentary he wrote that St. Ephrem used the Diatessaron; which, by the middle of the fourth century, was the only text used in Edessa and the region. We know from Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus from 422 to 458, who put an end to this state of affairs, that it was still used in his time in two hundred of the about eight hundred churches of his diocese.

THE DATE OF APPEARANCE OF EACH OFFICIAL GOSPEL TAKEN SEPARATELY.

The New Testament writings, as we have seen, can be divided into different literary genres: the letter, the historical monograph, the apocalypse, and finally a new literary genre, the gospel.

The Gospels are narrative texts that tell the coming and death of the god-man Jesus in a precise theological perspective. Unlike letters, for example, the Gospels are not aimed to specific recipients and are first and especially a saving proclamation.

There is no sure trace of the use of any of our canonical gospels before the first half of the second century of our era.

When St Justin wrote his "Life of Christ" about 160, he had obviously never heard of them.

The Gospels are not "first hands" emanating from eyewitnesses having directly attended all these events.

The text of the Gospels that we read today is not a "first-hand" that would have come to us *ne varietur*.

On the contrary, this text is the outcome of a long-term drafting effort, the end result of the accumulation of many successive layers.

More and more exegetes claim that the Gospels were formed from distant sources, by means of small units gathered little by little, sometimes unconnected. Clerics would have gathered the so-called memoirs gleaned from the churches, then the collections thus made were found in the Gospels.

But when are the oldest units, the layers closest of the events they are supposed to relate?

It appears that between the initial drafting of the oldest units, their collection and their definitive composition, the stages are multiplying - and time is growing. Many passages have too much theological nature to be original: Matthew's trinity expression, for example, presupposes an implausible doctrinal elaboration in the early Christian communities.

Editor's note. The only known example of Jesus's use of the word Church, let us say with a capital letter, in Matthew 16,18, as we have just seen, is very suspicious, for this statement is AT THE MINIMUM to situate ... after the resurrection . The "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church," unknown in the second century by the doctors and apologists like Clement of Alexandria or Irenaeus of Lyons, implies an important development of the ecclesial institution, etc., etc.

All these sentences or all these elements of a sentence, therefore, had to be added a long time after. The reworking are hundreds. If they are sometimes different from an exegete to another, it is absurd to deny the reality of them, they alone explain the innumerable contradictions contained in the Gospels, and the many Jesus that we have been able to find in them. They are sufficient to forbid the assigning of a fixed date to each gospel. Each verse has its age and it seems vain to seek to follow their evolution step by step. Year 36, 50, 70, or 90, of our era, such ranges can only situate the writing of the first few fragments mentioned above, but their importance should not be underestimated.

According to Mead, the first germs of the Gospels were probably written in Egypt during the reign of Hadrian, especially in the city of Alexandria, a crossroads of religions. Gnostic versions of these texts were discovered there in 1945 (in Nag Hammadi).

According to Massey, it is therefore these Gnostics who spread in the Roman Empire the texts on which the different gospels whether canonical or not, were founded.

THE DATE OF THE COLLECTION.

Most people imagine that Christians have always had Bibles like we have today, or that Christian writings existed from the beginning. In fact, as we have already seen, the formation of the New Testament ... was a rather complicated affair.

In the third century, our Gospels, as well as the portrait they give of Christ, were still unknown by a certain number of Christian writers or Christian sects. We shall give as an example only the Octavius by Minucius Felix in the third century: the ambiguous, almost equivocal manner in which Octavius alludes to Christ: " You attribute to our religion the worship of a criminal and his cross, you wander far from the neighborhood of the truth, in thinking either that a criminal deserved, or that an earthly being was able, to be believed God. Miserable indeed is that man whose whole hope is dependent on mortal man..."

The question is: how can it be that in an apology for Christianity, this Minucius Felix did not want (or could) pronounce once the name of Christ?

Some chronological landmarks therefore.

140. Marcion's Evangelion doesn't know them and knows only one gospel.

150. Papias knows only Mark and Matthew.

160. St Justin uses only logia to build his Life of Christ. This does not mean, of course, that everything was invented after him, but that the construction of the evangelical edifice was not yet finished when he wrote.

185. St. Irenaeus knows four gospels well (for him the gospel is "tetramorph").

Whatever the text is put forward, there is in no way to go back on the certainty (as much as it is possible to have some in History); that from this period the initial Church knows the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and gives them enough consideration to prefer them to the sixty "apocrypha" which hitherto had been their competitors, and that the Church regularly mentioned in the second century.

Nevertheless, are we assured of the content of the Gospels of this period? No ! If the names of some evangelists are attested, we know little or nothing about the content of the texts attributed to them. Papias has read two different Gospels from those we know, for example judging Mark "disorderly," whereas it admitted that on the contrary he is over organized. Do not have the pagan polemicists like Celsus and Porphyry, in acerbic controversies, joined the fears of Christians such as Dionysius of Corinth or Irenaeus in Lyons, by evoking a manipulation of the texts? They encourage us to think that, for a long time, "pious authors" have rewritten these narratives at their convenience. As we have had already the opportunity to say it besides St Jerome, in the fourth century, will again complain of the falsification and mixture of the Scriptures (the pope will charge him to "harmonize" them in a single Latin version).

".....So that if any may then wish through diligence to make known what in the Gospels may be either the same, or similar, or singular, he may learn their differences. This is great, since indeed error has sunk into our books; while concerning the same thing, one Evangelist has said more, into another they have added because they thought it inferior; or while another has differently expressed the same sense, whichever one of the four he had read first, he will revise the other to the version he values most. Whence it happened how in our time that all have been mixed; in Mark are many things of Luke, and even of Matthew; turned backwards in Matthew are many things of John and of Mark, yet in the remaining others, they are found to be correct. When, therefore, you will have read the lists which are attached below, the confusion of errors is removed, and you will know all the similar passages, and the singular ones, wherever you may turn to.....".

It is therefore very probable that during the second century, if scraps of the Gospels certainly exist, if the names of certain authors are already attached to them; The four Gospels as we know them today are not yet definitively constituted. This stage will be crossed, at best, only around 170.

It was only at the 3rd Council of Carthage in 397 that the New Testament will take its definitive form (without the Revelation). That is to say in the fourth century.

36, 65, 70, or 90, such dates can only situate the writing of the first few scraps mentioned above. The final drafting of the Gospels is to be found much later, more than 100 years after the events they intend to relate. It was precipitated to supplant the other Christian tendencies which were spreading, as St. Irenaeus admits it. The Scriptures had to coincide with the beliefs of the first communities.

These Gospels are written for the training of the neophytes, the refutation of heretics, the foiling hardened Jews, the needs of the liturgy. It was necessary to provide the message with the narrative framework it lacked painfully, and to be able to say that it was in such and such a circumstance that one or other of its aspects had been revealed. In the land of Islam, such a process is called *asbab al-nuzul*, literally the "occasional causes of the descent" (of the Quranic verses), in other words, the "circumstances of the revelation."

Since they have been formed only on the basis of theological criteria, by taking over a set of written and oral traditions, of which the genre has is that the dominant feature is hagiographic; the Gospels inform us more about the faith of the first Christians (they are the expression of it) than about Jesus himself; if, however, he has existed, what we are entitled to seriously doubt, as we shall see. To make its way through the amplifications of the catechesis done by the proofreaders during the first two centuries, and the mistakes of the copyists (men then wrote without separating the words) is an impossible challenge.

As we have already had the opportunity to see it, it seems difficult to admit that Marcion has devoted himself to the useless work of suppressing in important proportions Luke's particular passages, of which he is accused by the now dominating Christianity; especially if he could have taken as a basis for his work another synoptic gospel, Mark for example, with which he has so many similarities. The textual concordances of Marcion with Mark (or Matthew) against Luke tend to establish Marcion's priority over Luke. If the present "Luke" is a composition later than the gospel of Marcion, or if it is a second version of a Marcionite gospel; in this case, the material belonging to him is chronologically secondary compared with the rest of the text, what means that Marcion did not know it (nor did the other synoptic gospels know it besides).

Therefore we may consider that it is the gospel of Mark, in a state previous to that which we know to it, which was the least distant away from the initial text of the Evangelion; and therefore that it is the gospel of Mark that was first added to the single gospel preached by Paul and published by Marcion.

The editorial team that developed the so-called Mark's gospel used to compose its work a collection of *logia*, including five controversies, narrated from 2:1 to 3:6, but also various materials written down previously (the story of the Passion for example). This first writing down the words of Jesus took place probably around the year 50. This first document is called the Source, German "Die Quelle" (= acronym Q). Jesus was presented as a wise man.

This first written document was probably much like the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas discovered in the sands of the Egyptian desert in Nag Hammadi in 1945. This text has no narrative structure. It is only a collection of *logia*, that is to say of words from Jesus, numbering one hundred and fourteen, most often preceded by the words "Jesus said." Three quarters have their parallel in the canonical texts, with the difference that none of them put Jesus in situation by references of time or place. There is no mention of his death or of his resurrection.

The second stage in the writing of the Gospels therefore was perhaps the Gospel of Mark, around 70. The big novelty was to present Jesus as a "divine man" (*theios aner*), in the imitation of the heroes of Greek mythology, and no longer as an angel or mere spirit: Christ. Many miracles were then attributed to him.

The third stage was the writing of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, about 80-90. These gospels would have paraphrased Marc (triple tradition), and inserted in his plot various parables, as well as the matter contained in Q (double tradition). Drafted at about the same time in different geographical areas. The belief in the divinity of Jesus having developed, these gospels made the history of his ministry, preceded by largely legendary stories, relating his wonderful childhood.

A last stage was the writing of the fourth Gospel, which is usually known as being "according to John," at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. This new collection uses an original tradition, different from that of the synoptic gospels. The first form of this tradition was a collection of "signs" (*Semeiaquelle*), later enriched by a collection of "revelations" (*Offenbarungsquelle*, still in German language); presenting Christ as a heavenly being, coming from above and returning to where he was before ("high" Christology contrasting with the "low" Christology of the synoptic gospels).

DOCUMENT. THE MURATORIAN CANON.

The official list of the sacred books of a religion is called "canon." The canon of present-day Judaism, for example, was worked out after the dramatic capture of Jerusalem in the year 70 and the moving to Jamnia of a handful of surviving pharisaic rabbis. The canon of the Catholic Church was only definitively established by a decree of the Council of Trent (1546). The Muratorian canon was only a phase in the process leading to this result.

This list of canonical texts of the New Testament bears the name of his discoverer, Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), and was discovered in the 18th century in a Latin manuscript (of the 7th century) in the Ambrosian Library of Milan. This text, which dates perhaps from the end of the 2nd century, circulated and was handed over for several centuries. Written with numerous misspellings, the text copied by the scribes was not still understood, and probably dates back to a Greek original. The beginning of the text is mutilated and should include a notice on the Gospel of Matthew as well as on that of Mark.

"...at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed them in his narrative. The third book of the Gospel [is that] according to Luke. Luke, the physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, one of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], he said, 'Fast with me from today to three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it. And so, though various elements may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things have been declared in all the Gospels: concerning the nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, concerning life with his disciples, and concerning his twofold coming; the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, the second glorious in royal power, which is still in the future.

What marvel is it then, if John so consistently mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, saying about himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you? For in this way, he professes himself to be not only an eyewitness and hearer, but also a writer of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order. Moreover, the acts of all the apostles were written in one book. For 'most excellent Theophilus' Luke compiled the individual events that took place in his presence — as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] when he journeyed to Spain. As for the Epistles of Paul, they themselves make clear to those desiring to understand, which ones [they are], from what place, or for what reason they were sent. First of all, to the Corinthians, prohibiting their heretical schisms; next, to the Galatians, against circumcision; then to the Romans he wrote at length, explaining the order (or, plan) of the Scriptures, and also that Christ is their principle (or, main theme).

It is necessary for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the Corinthians first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans seventh.

It is true that he writes once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians for the sake of admonition, yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth. For John also in the Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to all.

Paul also wrote out of affection and love one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy and these are held sacred in the esteem of the Catholic Church for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also [an epistle] to the Laodiceans, and another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul's name to further the heresy of Marcion, and several others which cannot be received into the universal Church — for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey.

Moreover, the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned bearing the name of John are counted (or, used) in the universal Church and the book of Wisdom, written by the friends of Solomon in his honor. We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church.

But Hermas wrote the Shepherd very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while Bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the episcopal chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among the Apostles, for it is after their time. But we accept nothing whatever of Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades, who also composed a new book of psalms for Marcion, together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians (Editor's Note. The Montanists)...."

END OF THE FRAGMENT.

This Latin manuscript of the seventh century, but perhaps written about 180, and published by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in 1740, is therefore a valuable witness to the beginning of censorship rewriting of the history performed by the future official Christians (around 180) ;unfortunately truncated (the beginning and what concerns the first gospel as well as the second are missing).

He still accepts the writings entitled the Wisdom of Solomon, the Shepherd of Hermas, as well as the Apocalypse of Peter. But he rejects two letters from St. Paul, one to the Laodiceans and one to the Alexandrians, under the pretext of Marcionism; as well as many other writings, notably those of Arsinous, Valentinus, Miltiades, the new book of Marcionite psalms, as well as the writings of Basilides, and the Montanists (the Cataphrygians in Asia ...) The dating of this first list is still subject to discussion. While some seek to trace it back to the great period of the constitution of the canonical texts (4th century), there are elements making it possible to be dated from the end of the 2nd century or the beginning of the 3rd century. They are noticeably:

1) the reference to the nature recent of the Shepherd of Hermas, which argues for a working out of the list in the second century.

2) the allusion to the tradition of the prophets and apostles, which is closed, what implies that the Montanist crisis has already taken place, which therefore also argues for a working out at the end of the second century, at the earliest.

THE WORKING OUT OF THE CURRENT CANON.

The Gospels are not the first written works of Christianity. The earliest written texts of Christianity were perhaps prayers, the kerygma, some professions of faith in order to answer questioning, liturgical formulas for the performance of some rites, collections of teachings or words, letters, whether pastoral or not.

The longer but very structured texts called gospels were only elaborated after these first writings. And probably starting from the end. The resurrection, the passion ...and then the childhood. The parts concerning childhood and even nativity are indeed among the last to have been inserted in the initial outline. No theologian specialist of the New Testament advocates today the idea that the authors of the Gospels would be some apostles of Jesus (like Matthew, John ... who, if they existed, had died since a long time).

The Bible we know today is therefore the result of a human.....sort . Marcion was the first to make for his Church a choice in the multitude of texts circulating in the Christian communities. To keep some ones or to leave others.

The future official Christianity did the same, and it also gradually developed an official list of texts to retain for his followers. This first official list of writings to use or to exclude was therefore an essentially negative reaction of rejection, of the other Christian currents, especially facing Marcion and Tatian's attempt to compose a text synthesizing the Gospels (the Diatessaron). Without forgetting the Montanists who produced new writings on the basis of the "oracles" of their prophets (a situation that we nevertheless experiment again since the proclamation of the pope infallibility on dogma); and the profusion of writings (the famous apocrypha) developing particular aspects of Christian belief.

Key dates for the appearance of the four Gospels as a collection of four different texts. Reminder.

140. The Evangelion of Marcion, written about 140, ignores them and knows only one gospel.

150. Papias knows only Mark and Matthew.

160. St Justin uses only logia to build his Life of Christ. This does not mean, of course, that everything was invented after him, but that the construction of the evangelical edifice was not yet finished when he wrote.

The first accurate literary traces show that several gospels circulate at the same time (probably Matthew and John, perhaps Matthew, John and Luke) date from the period of Justin in the middle of the second century, although it is difficult to think that Justin himself knew several gospels, read commonly during the Sunday morning service.

Around 170 things become different: we have quotations of texts presented as belonging to a canonical ensemble.

In 180, for Irenaeus, the gospel is fourfold "in forms" (tetramorph). The four living creatures of the Revelation are for him the figures of the four evangelists.

The existence of different Gospels attributed to Luke, Mark, Matthew and John is therefore attested only at the end of the second century; for it is only at the end of the second century, as we have seen, that texts explicitly attributed to the latter will be disseminated for the first time.

It remains to be seen what was circulating when these gospels began to be spread. Were these texts as we know them? The question is valid.

Indeed, in the second half of the second century, there were gospels quite different from those that are known today; for example, Mark without the end of chapter 16 (absent from the codex vaticanus and from the codex sinaiticus), John without chapter 21, Luke without chapters 1 and 2 (for the Marcionites), and so on.

Third century: writing of the Chester Beatty papyrus which contains the four Gospels (in the order Matthew - John - Luke - Mark), and the Acts of the apostles. Discovered in the Fayum in Egypt, it is currently kept at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

The oldest complete or nearly manuscripts that we have, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, are from the fourth century only.

The codex is the ancestor of the current book. It consisted of sheets that were folded, assembled and then joined together as a notebook. Sheets were written on both sides, the whole of the sheets being protected by a cover. The first codex was not very similar to today's books, but like most other inventions, it evolved and changed according to the needs and preferences of his users.

According to some, the ease with which specific passages were found in the codex played a decisive role in the favorable welcome that Christians and professionals, such as lawyers, reserved for it. For their work of preaching, the Christians found it very useful to have little cumbersome texts, or simply a practical list of biblical quotations. In addition, the codex had a cover, often made of wood, giving it a life longer than that of the scroll.

The codices lent themselves well to individual reading. At the end of the third century, parchments of the Gospels, in pocket format, were circulating among those who aligned themselves with Christianity. Since then, billions of complete or partial bibles have been codex shaped produced .

CODEX SINAITICUS AND CODEX VATICANUS.

WARNING TO THE READER. We must not confuse anonymous works (works whose name cannot be identified by name) and pseudonymous or pseudepigraphic works (works which claim to have been composed by someone who has not written them).

The gospels, for example, are anonymous in fact; they do not identify their authors. The attributions to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which appear in their title, go back only to the second century, these titles are not part of the original works. Also anonymous are the Acts, Hebrews and 1 John (2 and 3 claim to have been drafted by "the Elder").

The pseudonymous or pseudepigraphic works of the New Testament are those whose wording itself identifies an author who cannot have written them, they are the following letters or epistles below. The second letter to the Thessalonians, the letter to the Colossians, the letter to the Ephesians, the first and second letters to Timothy, the letter to Titus, James's letter, the first and second letter of Peter, lastly Jude's letter.

What makes a lot nevertheless! But it was a question of composing a writing while fictitiously attributing it, in the text itself, to a person more celebrated than himself; either to claim to be in line with his heritage or to use his prestige in order to spread ideas that were not his.

Now, instead of following the footsteps of today's Christians stupidly and of explaining Paul through the Gospels, that is to say, the beginning by the continuation or by the end; let us wonder therefore rather how the religion preached by Paul to the pagans could have become the Christianity of today. To seek how Paul, who had recently been converted to a nonconformist Judaism, has been able and has wanted to change in a few years the religion that he adopted, constitutes a nonsense and a false problem. It is the opposite question that must be asked: how and why did the future dominant Christianity gather in its "New Testament" the Epistles of Paul and a part of the Evangelion of Marcion, after having distorted the meaning of it? For what is certain is that it is by reaction to the Marcionism that the future Orthodox or Reformist Catholic Church will decide to add to its gospel 3 other narratives resembling it, since having roughly the same origin; some not Jewish-Christian, but pagan-Christian, Greek-speaking, communities.

And it is probably to the Emperor Constantine I, after his "conversion" * to Christianity, that we owe the ambition to gather in one format all the texts constituting the Holy Scriptures. Previously the "sacred" texts were not compiled, but copied separately on scrolls or parchments.

The Codex Sinaiticus is a complete uncial manuscript of the New Testament dating from the 4th century (written between 330 and 350). It also contains parts of the Septuagint. Written in Greek uncial letters on vellum. The Codex consists of 346 folios and 1/2, namely, 199 for the Old Testament and 147 and 1/2 for the New Testament.

The whole of the New Testament is taken over, in order: Gospels - Epistles of Paul - Acts of the Apostles - Catholic Epistles - Apocalypse. Then follow the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas.

Originally one of the fifty copies of the Holy Scriptures sent by Eusebius of Caesarea to the Emperor Constantine I and paid by him in the fourth century.

The Sinaiticus is one of the two oldest manuscripts (with the Codex Vaticanus) taking over the entire biblical canon as we now know it. It is therefore a crucial step in the development of Christendom.

The Codex Vaticanus.

Preserved in the Vatican Library, the Codex Vaticanus is a manuscript on vellum in uncial Greek writing dating from the 4th century. It is the oldest complete preserved manuscript of the Old Testament and of a large part of the New Testament.

It is composed of 759 sheets, written in three columns, with 42 lines per column, except the poetic books, written on two columns.

Perhaps one of the 50 copies of the Bible ordered by the Emperor Constantine I from Eusebius of Caesarea? Perhaps the Bible ordered by the Emperor Constantine I in 340 from Athanasius of

Alexandria, then in exile in Rome? Specialists hesitate as to its exact origin, but it dates from the middle of the fourth century.

The four Gospels and the Epistles of Paul (kept from 120) therefore will be part of this first official list of Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews, the revelation (of John), and the epistles of James, Peter, John or Jude, will be included in this list only later. The letters of Clement of Rome, the Didache, the apocalypse of Peter, and the epistle of Barnabas, will be nearly to be included. The gospel of John came near not to be kept, for its mystic streak looked very Gnostic.

At the same time, and in order to counter the Marcionism, the testified in the Torah traditions (set by the Jews) were also included in the list and they will give therefore the first part of the Bible: the Old Testament.

The canon discovered by Muratori is the oldest trace of it.

And since it is a question of the canon, let us not forget here that John Toland wrote in his indictment of 1697 against the Fathers of the Church, that they happen to contradict in one place what they established in another (as they ordinarily do in most things) therefore that they would be excluded from being a true rule for others, that they are men apt to forget. etc.etc....

The remark is a little excessive. What is certain, on the other hand, is that the formation of the New Testament ... was indeed a rather complicated affair ...

For the fact is that the Church finally did not keep one, but four gospels, composed roughly in the period 65-100. Why four and not one? Although Paul makes no allusion to a written statement, his warning in Galatians 1: 8-9 against "a gospel other than the one we preached to you," suggests that the idea of a single gospel was then the most natural one. The Gospel of Mark, that most biblical scholars consider the most ancient, gives itself this solemn title: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"; what does not suggest that there may be another version of the proclamation. Let us repeat it once more, the simplest, the most logical, would have been that there was one gospel, and not four....

But using a single gospel could be embarrassing for a mass movement like the Great Church, which wanted to be universal, focusing on a single gospel could indeed end up supporting a theology rejected by many other Christians.

In order to also have something to offer to the Judeo-Christians, Gnostics, or Marcionites, the acceptance of more than one gospel became the practice of the "Great Church" ...

Saint Irenaeus himself acknowledges it. "So firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these documents, each one of them endeavors to establish his own peculiar doctrine. For the Ebionites, who use Matthew's Gospel only, are confuted out of this very same, making false suppositions with regard to the Lord. But Marcion, mutilating that according to Luke, is proved to be a blasphemous of the only existing God, from those passages which he still retains. Those, again, who separate Jesus from Christ [Cerinthus] preferring the Gospel by Mark, if they read it with a love of truth, may have their errors rectified. Those, moreover, who follow Valentinus, making copious use of that according to John, to illustrate their conjunctions, shall be proved to be totally in error by means of this very Gospel. Since, then, our opponents do bear testimony to us, and make use of these [documents], our proof derived from them is firm and true."

We wonder well nevertheless why some texts have been declared canonical and other apocryphal.

The last part of the four Gospels, for example, is not in the Codex Vaticanus, but the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle to Barnabas are on the same footing as the others represented in the Codex Sinaïticus.

In short, after having divested itself of Hellenized Judaism and Gnosticism, the current at the origin of official Christianity gradually worked out a compromise; between the upholders of the Jewish Bible, renamed the Old Testament, and the Marcionite heretics supporters of texts consecrating the break-up, speaking above all to a Greek or Roman public, called by Marcion the New Testament precisely. A compromise in which Christ appeared as a more and more historical character in the strict sense of the term; and in which the importance of the two apostles Peter and Paul, symbols of the two currents reconciled ex compulsory and somewhat arbitrarily besides, for the occasion, was emphasized.

A corpus of texts will be gathered, whose authority will be no longer subject to any dispute, since they are supposed to come from God or the Demiurge and his prophets with regard to the Old Testament texts; from the Messiah and his apostles for the writings of what Marcion, translating the Essene expression "new covenant" had called (the first) "New Testament."

This ideological current, a direct ancestor of present-day Christianity (of which the mentors Tertullian and Irenaeus, among others, were determined in relation to Marcion or Montanus), what is to be kept, what is to be rejected?

- 1) Keeps the works of the Pauline or Marcionite current: the Gospel attributed to Luke, but reworked (addition of chapters 1 and 3) the Acts of the Apostles (also revised too, in order to reduce the opposition between Paul's thought and that of the other apostles); as well as the Pauline epistles to which it adds the pastoral epistles, which are not by Paul, of course, if not Marcion had published them.
- 2) But takes over most of the sacred books of the Jews constituting the Torah (Marcion's rejection of the Old Testament having disoriented many of the early Christians).
- 3) Removes the gospels of the old Judeo-Christian current (the Gospel of Ebionites or the pseudo-Clementine texts, entitled in Latin language Recognitiones, Homiliae, etc.) and various others.
- 4) While taking over some of their elements.
- 5) Generalizes also the use of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.
- 6) Attaches to its official corpus the Gospel attributed to John, which still contains traces of Gnosticism. See in John the declarations of Jesus according to which he came from above, that neither he nor his disciples are of this world (8:23, 17:16), and that he will also take them with him into another one (14:23).
- 7) Editor's not. The Revelation by John will be decreed holy text only in 633, at the council of Toledo, to justify the rejection of other Revelations like these - Christian Gnostic - of Peter and Paul.

Generally speaking, the canon of the New Testament was not formed by addition, as we could think, but by elimination. To constitute the New Testament, the Fathers of the Church, so rightly stigmatized by John Toland, for instance included in it the Gospel of Mark ... but rejected other writings (the Gospel of Thomas) that they declared "heretic." Same thing for the gospel of Peter. This gospel was removed from the official list of writings to be used by Serapion, bishop of Antioch around 190. Serapion found one day the assembly in Rhossus, a nearby locality, reading a work that was not familiar to him. Being informed later that this gospel was also used by Docetists (a Christian tendency in competition with his own) he made the use of this book forbidden in the communities depending on his authority.

At the beginning of the second century, not only the apocryphal gospels, but also many other Christian writings (like the writings of the Apostolic Fathers) were composed; which, although they could not claim to go back to the origins, in principle did not have a lower authority than the writings which are now part of the New Testament.

The decisive fact is therefore the appearance of the idea of canon. The first canon was the work of Marcion, about 150. This canon contains only the Gospel of Luke and 10 Pauline Epistles (neither the letter to Titus, nor the two letters to Timothy, nor the Epistle to the Hebrews). The books admitted later therefore imposed themselves on the members of the Church. These debates, though not definitively concluded, were largely closed in the East (with the exception of Syria) and in the West around the end of the fourth century. The decisive dates for the East were the 39th festal letter from Athanasius in 367, and for the West the Synod in Rome of 382, with the Pope Damasus I and the African Councils in Hippo (393) or Carthage (397).

Much later, however, Luther will still subtract from it certain texts, notably the Epistle of James (which balances faith and works), but this is another story.

Eusebius of Caesarea, the great manipulator of the history of the official Christianity, that he literally founded, taking advantage of his favored position with the political authorities, left us traces of the debate aroused by the incorporation in the stammering official list; of the last letter (falsely) attributed to St. Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"In this he [Caius] curbs the rashness and boldness of his opponents in setting forth new Scriptures. He mentions only thirteen epistles of the holy apostle, not counting that to the Hebrews with the others. And unto our day there are some among the Romans who do not consider this a work of the apostle" (H. E, Book 6 chapter 20, 3).

CONCLUSION. The official Gospels, the letters attributed to Peter, Paul, or James, are the result of unceasing rearrangements (just as their illustrious model the Jewish Scriptures besides). Let us not forget that half of Paul's letters are late fakes. The "genuine" ones having been produced by Marcion around 140, reworked by him, then by Tatian. But the protagonists of the current which has become a majority have undoubtedly also revised these texts in order to unmarcionize them; which gave our 4th-century manuscripts (Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaïticus), presented by Christians as if they had come out of the decades following immediately the death of Jesus. But they are not really historical narratives of eyewitnesses, but romanticized history, or legal-theological pleadings, with a very selective memory. In short some catechesis!

Rewritten from generation to generation, the synoptic or canonical Gospels will be fixed only in the fourth century, and will then become synonymous with absolute truth testifying to a divine inspiration. The unconscious equating of the text in these four gospels with words of truth will continue to prevent a critical examination which finally gives a good report on the formation of a mythology that has become Catholic, Reformist or Byzantine (for the Slavic countries) orthodoxy.

With the exception of the few free minds who paid with their lives the record of the evangelical inconsistencies - Noel Journet, burned in the sixteenth century, Giordano Bruno, burned in 1600 (after seven years of torture) ; the denunciation of the absurdities or contradictions of the canonical gospels was nevertheless chiefly the work of Christian exegetes; whether it be Rudolph Bultmann, Charles-Harold Dodd, or Gunther Bornkamm.

Any historian of religions, the slightest bit serious, can only admit that Jesus is not a historical person who really existed in this way, and you must be particularly blind in considering the Scriptures as historical texts. This blindness is called Faith ** and like all faith it that has nothing to do with intelligence or reason. For who is not blinded by this Faith, the Bible is only a book like "The Count of Monte Cristo." The story we are told is supposed to be true, but it remains to be proved. For example, by a confirmation in non-Christian writings. Unfortunately, there is no trace of Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, his miracles before thousands of people, his crucifixion and his resurrection, in the (very important) literature of the time.

The case of Flavius Josephus being apart. He was not contemporaneous with the facts in question, since he lived from 37 to 100, and his work tells more about the early Christians as well as about their beliefs than about Jesus himself.

See particularly his version of the facts preserved in Arabic by the bishop called Agapius of Hierapolis; "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus.... Those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that... he was perhaps the Messiah."

The Old Testament is a more or less successful syncretism (from the Sumerian-Babylonian myths such as that of the original transgression, on this subject see Pelagius, to the Persian myths, those of Egypt, of the land of Midian, or elsewhere). The New One also (some pagan Hellenistic elements on a Jewish basement).

* Constantine was never baptized during his lifetime, but early on he became interested in Christianity, which he saw as an excellent means of strengthening his authority.

** Or conditioned reflex in the Pavlov's way

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

(Synoptic, that is to say comparable, or that can be paralleled.)

THE OFFICIAL GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

Date of final drafting around 80 or 85.

Church of origin: the Pauline churches of Antioch.

Around 80 (after the separation between Judaism and Christianity) drafting of the proto-Gospel of Luke, a man generally regarded as the disciple of Peter and Paul mentioned three times in the Epistles. But this is a presumption that is not accepted by all critics. The author or the authors take over partially the account of Mark and admit that they have not personally witnessed what they are telling. The parish team having composed the Proto-Luke, but also the Acts of the Apostles (which originally formed one work); took over Mark's text, but also used the logia collection called "q source" by German exegetes. At the beginning of the 80s, in Antioch in Syria, in a community mainly composed of Christians from paganism. As we have seen, the Evangelion of Marcion, corresponding perhaps to the original gospel of Luke; had to be challenged by a gospel of Luke, mutilated and systematically distorted, to convince the Marcionites, that Christianity in the process of becoming dominant wanted to convert and recover. The beginning (prologue) of the "According to Luke" is for example an anti-Marcionite gloss, initially marginal, but which will eventually be incorporated (by mistake?) into the body of the text (interpolation).

This anti-Marcionite gloss had to be drafted by an ethnic Greek, unlike some other parts of the text, and it is therefore very late.

The author of the final anti-Marcionite draft was probably a cultivated Greek-speaking man, but not an ethnic Greek, who knew the Jewish Scriptures and who was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. This writer, who never called the Gospel his gospel, is inspired by Mark and a collection of Lord's words as well as other rumors of this kind, oral or written. Perhaps converted to Judaism before becoming a Christian. In every case, he is not a Palestinian.

He was not one of the Twelve but ... well aware of Mark's Gospel, that he almost completely includes in his own and he has an important source of various words of the master that Matthew also uses [the collection of logia referred to as "Q source"]. He has researched, is well informed, has gathered all that tradition has deposited in the community about Jesus.

Some extracts taken randomly.

2: 1. Jesus was born during the general census ordered by the Emperor Augustus. But there was no general census ordered by Augustus! A census for taxes was ordered in Judea by Quirinus in the year + 6. This census did not require moving to his birth place.

2 : 2. Jesus was born under Herod and under Quirinus (Luke 2: 2). However, Herod died in - 4 and Quirinus was appointed in +6! A big problem for Christians! The stone discovered at Antioch in 1912, indicates that Quirinus played a military role, but does not solve the problem.

2: 46. Jesus and the teachers of the Law. Parents are amazed to see their twelve-year-old child talk to the doctors. Yet they already know that this is the Messiah with extraordinary powers. Why are they so surprised?

3: 23. The genealogy of Jesus contradicts totally that of Matthew 1:1.

4: 29. "They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff ." The Palestinian town of An Nasira, chosen by the Crusaders to correspond with Nazareth, is nevertheless situated in a valley.

6:13. " The next morning, Jesus called his followers to him. He chose 12 of them, whom he named "apostles." They were Simon (He named him Peter) and Andrew, Peter's brother; James and John, Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon (called the Zealot), Judas son of James and Judas Iscariot. This Judas was the one who became the traitor." This contradicts Matthew 10: 2.

19: 36. The crowd cheers Jesus, praises his prodigies and miracles, and then is in a hurry to see him crucified then to be killed: why such a reversal?

21: 8-9. Luke alludes to the defeat of Bar-Kokhba in 135! Yet, according to the Church, the Gospel of "Luke" dates from the 60s ...

23: 44. " Darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon."

The darkness has therefore struck all over our planet at the time of the death of Jesus ... Yet no observer of the time noticed it. It had to be as localized as a microclimate.

In short, as for the gospel according to John, the original foundation of Luke is previous to Mark and Matthew. The text again rendered, resembles them much, but it is not the same with the edifice itself. As for the layer of texts added to this initial content, here is what the Catholic exegete Alfred Loisy could write: "His preference for the Old Testament testifies to a reaction against those of the Gnostics who, like Marcion, repudiated both the Bible and the god or Demiurge of the Jews ... The materialization of the apparitions of the Risen Christ aims at a certain Docetism, of which people want to destroy the influence."

The Gnosticism fought by these additions inserted in the initial Luke is that of Marcion, but also that of the according to John. It is not impossible to find in Luke cases of open polemic against John. We will quote here only the resurrection of Lazarus.

It is very strange indeed that the most striking miracle of Jesus, the resurrection of a dead man after three days, is not mentioned by the synoptic gospels. When we read the current Luke's gospel closely, we see that this silence is voluntary. The present Luke knows Lazarus, but denies that Lazarus was resurrected. After the death of Lazarus, the rich man asks for Lazarus' reviving in order to convert the Jews.

" But Abraham said, 'They have the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets to read; let them learn from them!'

-No, Father Abraham! If someone came to them from the dead, they would believe and change their hearts and lives.

-No! If your brothers don't listen to Moses and the prophets, then they won't listen to someone who comes back from death" (Luke 16: 29-31).

Related to the Johannine narrative, the meaning of this passage is very clear. For John the miracle only creates faith, not the prophets. According to the present according to Luke, on the contrary, faith is based on Moses and the prophets. The present according to Luke deprives itself deliberately from the greatest miracle of Jesus, in order not to attenuate the argument he wishes to draw from the prophets and from the whole Old Testament.

It is in this anti-Johannine and anti-Marcionite movement that the invention of the history of Bar-Abbas is placed. It bears witness to the deep aversion that the more pagan than Jewish idea of the man Jesus, Son of God the Father, caused first. This aversion was to disappear. Jesus Son of God the Father and Jesus Messiah of Israel ended up to become confused. But the history of the brigand Barabbas is the witness of the time when this merger seemed impossible.

THE OFFICIAL GOSPEL OF ST MARK.

Date of global or general drafting : 66 - 67.

Church of origin: Alexandria.

The complete text of the Gospel according to Mark may have been censored or suppressed from its most controversial passages by the Puritan tendency of Christianity (Clement of Alexandria); In order to fight and / or recover the faithful of Carpocrates, but also of Cerinthus.

This gospel of Mark thus reworked was built in three layers: miracles, prayers, parables. Note: the author alludes to the defeat of Bar-Kokhba of 135, what proves that some passages of this gospel are perhaps later.

Final editor: a Greek-speaking man , but not an ethnic Greek, who was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, and committed mistakes as to the geography of Palestine. He drew his information from (oral and probably written) pre-established traditions about Jesus

Some extracts taken randomly.

6: 14; 6:17: With all these miracles, Jesus becomes famous, many crowds follow him, "King Herod heard about him." But then, if Jesus was so celebrated, why was there not one historian to speak of him, even briefly? Philo, a contemporary who lived a few miles away and who wrote fifty volumes to relate the history of the region, did not write a single line on our man! Strange, isn't it?

6: 30. Jesus feeds 5000 people.

8:1. Jesus multiplies the loaves in order to feed 4000 people. That being so ! His disciples are amazed! Why then? Some time earlier (Mark 6:30) Jesus had already multiplied the loaves to feed 5,000 people. In these conditions, his disciples should not be surprised overly ... Yet, they ask Jesus how he did!

9:1. "I tell you the truth. Some of you standing here will see the kingdom of God come with power before you die."

2000 years later, still nothing!

13:7-8. Mark alludes to the defeat of Bar-Kokhba in 135! Yet, according to the Church, the gospel of "Mark" dates from the 60s ... This passage at least had to be added.

16:19. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." This verse is in contradiction with Matthew 28:20. Eusebius admitted that it was missing in the first versions. The end of chapter 16 (verses 9-20) is in any case absent in the codex vaticanus and in the codex sinaiticus. This is a late addition dating from the 4th century, when Christianity finished working its texts. And it is crucial!

THE OFFICIAL GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

Date of global or general drafting: 80 - 85.

Church of origin: Antioch.

The parish team that composed the gospel known as "Matthew's gospel" took over Mark's text, but also used the source of logia called "q source" by the German exegetes.

It is generally accepted that the Gospel of Matthew was written around 80 - 85. It could have appeared in Syria (see 4: 24) in a cosmopolitan city like Antioch. According to Papias (bishop of Hierapolis in little Phrygia, circa 125), "Matthew put the sentences in an ordered arrangement in the Hebrew language, but each person interpreted them as best he could."

Therefore according to this testimony Matthew used kinds of collections of texts of the Old Testament applied to Christ (process called "midrash"). According to some, it would be better to speak about it of a Christian Rabbinical Christian School of Matthew; having put all his care to scrutinize the Old Testament in order to discover in it the announcements of Christ in order to become closer to the Judeo-Christians.

Last writer in any case a Greek-speaking man but not an ethnic Greek, probably a Judeo-Christian, who knew Aramaic or Hebrew, or both, but who was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.

An unknown teacher of the law, versed in the Scriptures, a meticulous writer who writes carefully, he has two great sources: the Gospel of Mark, almost in the state in which we now know it; and a compilation of words attributed to Jesus that the author of the Gospel of Luke also knew, in a related version. He also uses traditions that he is alone to relate. Using these traditions that he skillfully reworks, this man makes the Galilean utter words that, he believes, his Christ of the 80s would like to see expressed to his community.

As we have already the opportunity to say, but *repetere = ars docendi*, Matthew was inspired by a popular, perhaps oral, source, consisting mostly in folk traditions about Jesus (which could have had a historical core, of course, but henceforth undetectable). This material has been so well formatted that we can only detect its contents, not its original formulation. In the account of the passion, Matthew also added source material to what he took from Mark. Judas who will hang himself (27: 3-10), the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19), Pilate washing his hands with the blood of Jesus (27: 24-25); A poetic quatrain on the extraordinary events which followed the death of Jesus (27: 51 b - 53); and the account about the guard at the tomb (27: 62-66, 28: 2-4). As we already have had the opportunity to say, this material relating to birth and passion has as characteristics: a lively imagination (dreams, murder of children, innocent blood, suicide, conspiracy, lies); extraordinary celestial and terrestrial phenomena (angelic interventions, a star that moves westward and stops above Bethlehem, earthquakes, resurrection of the dead); an unusual dose of scriptural influence (as if the narratives had been composed on the basis of the Old Testament, which is the very definition of the Midrash, rather than simply commented upon by references to the Old Testament); and strong hostility towards the Jews who did not believe in Jesus, hostility to which corresponds a suffused with sympathy presentation with regard to certain "non-Jews" (the Magi, Pilate's wife). These characteristics reflect the imagination, interests, and prejudices of ordinary people, and are largely absent elsewhere in Matthew. Examples gleaned at random.

2:16. By learning the birth of the Messiah, Herod makes massacred children under two years of age. Now there has never been a massacre under Herod! Flavius Josephus, nor any historian of the time, have never heard of it, and Luke either, who is not miserly of details on the subject. By the way, how could John the Baptist, who is the same age as Jesus, survive, in this case? If Herod had killed children, in other words, applied the death penalty without following the strict Roman procedure, he would immediately have been summoned by the occupation authorities, who would have dismissed him and then exiled him ...

2:14. The journey of Joseph, Jesus and Mary in Egypt: a narrative which makes skeptical that the other gospels have never heard of, and which is in complete contradiction with the account of the presentation at the Temple of Luke 2:23. This legendary account is only a Midrash intended to correspond to a prophecy of the Old Testament: Hosea 11:1 "And out of Egypt I called my son."

2: 23. Joseph and Mary settle in Nazareth on their return from Egypt, in contradiction to Luke, for whom, in fact, they went from Nazareth to Bethlehem. "He went to a town called Nazareth and lived there. And so what God had said through the prophets came true: "He will be called a Nazarene." The passage is comic and demonstrates three things well...

One: the author understood nothing.

Two: the New Testament was built with the old one (Midrash)

Three: he confesses it.

The author makes Jesus be born at Nazareth (which does not yet exist at this time) to echo Judges 13: 5: "The boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb." This does not mean that he will live in a village called Nazareth! It simply means that he must be a Nazirite devoted to God (from "Nazir," holy, consecrated to God).

3: 13. Baptism of Jesus: why is Jesus baptized because he is the son of God? (The anniversary of the baptism of Christ, January 6, was quickly abolished by the Church).

9: 1-8. The account of the attributed to Matthew Gospel, in which the Messiah absolves the sins of the paralyzed and arouses the protests of the Pharisees, for whom only God or the Demiurge can act in this way; means clearly that the priest representing Christ has the power to absolve the faults. Such a power recognized to God alone (among the Reformists) or to his priests (as in Catholicism) implies a totalitarian system of perpetual guilt in which forgiveness increases the subjection of the guilty. This change (by addition or manipulation of the text) of an anecdote relating to Jesus' healing activity, answers perhaps to a triple polemical preoccupation.

This way of telling the event indeed...

- Rejects Judaism.

- Imposes the privilege of the priest.

- Warns whoever forgives sins without the official authorization of the nascent Church.

Official Christianity has always emphasized the power of the confessor who controls personally his flock and declares: "I absolve you."

9: 9 and 10: 2. "These are the names of the 12 apostles: Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. Judas is the one who turned against Jesus." This contradicts Luke 6:13.

10: 7. "The kingdom of heaven is near." We're still waiting ...

14: 25. Jesus walks on the water. See the legend of Buddha walking too on the waters.

14: 31. Jesus asks Peter to walk on the water. Same thing. Buddha asks his disciple Shariputra to walk on the waters.

19: 24. "....it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich, etc." An erroneous translation of the Hebrew (between "rope" and "camel") with the exception of a letter explains this strange comparison.

23: 9. "And do not call anyone on earth, 'Father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. And you should not be called 'Master.' You have only one Master, the Christ." Another prediction failed since the Pope (Papa or Holy Father) is the (infallible in dogma) leader of the Catholic Church.

24:1. "Jesus left the Temple and was walking away. But his followers came to show him the Temple's buildings. 2 Jesus asked, "Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth. Every stone will be thrown down to the ground. Not one stone will be left on another." Finally, a realized prophecy, and for good reason: the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 and the gospels finished after! Largely after, the time to insert in them a prophecy made "after the fact."

24: 14. "The Gospel will be preached in the whole world. Then the end will come." Today, still nothing!

24: 34. "All these things will happen while the people of this time are still living!" Another failed prediction!

26: 59. The sentence of Jesus Christ. At that time, the region was a colony in which Roman law was applied. And in the field of the death penalty, Pontius Pilate had absolutely no power to act as he was supposed to have done. Never a Roman magistrate would have permitted that a Roman execution was applied in order to accomplish a verdict given by a local court. The Sanhedrin summoning and the conviction of Jesus are historical enormities reflecting the ignorance of the writers of the Gospels. The Sanhedrin could sit validly only in the Temple, by day and outside the festivals and vigils of religious festivals. It was out of the question to stage a lawsuit at night on the eve of the Passover. The innumerable historical contradictions show that the narrative of the trial and the gospels are imaginary.

The willingness of the writers to blame the Jews for the death of Jesus is clear.

27:7. "They decided to use the money to buy the potter's field." Matthew wrote this to match the prophecy of Zechariah 11: 13 but unfortunately he obviously did not understand what this prophet meant: "to throw money to the potter" means in his language, "repel with disdain." This shows well that the New Testament has no historical reality and has often been built and thought to correspond to the Old Testament (process called Midrash).

27: 35. Jesus died crucified. Very well! The Roman crucifixion is an execution through which the convicted person is standing, bound to a horizontal beam supported by two forked piles (crux) and then, exhausted, dies by suffocation. It was only under Constantine in the fourth century that the Church would adopt the cross, as we know, it*. In case of death by crucifixion, the exhausted put to death bends his knees and then no longer holds his head and dies suffocated: the torture lasts several days and not three hours. But the authors of the Gospels have tried to make history coincide with the prophecies, what has engendered a lot of absurdities.

27: 57. The city of Arimathea never existed: its name was made for the purpose in hand , and constitutes perhaps a new "mistranslation" of the type Nazareth or Iscarioth.

* And anyway, before, the symbol of Christianity was rather the fish.

THE NON-SYNOPTIC AND SOMEWHAT ALWAYS KEEPING TO ITSELF BUT NEVERTHELESS OFFICIAL GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

Global or general composition date: 80 to 110.

(Papias has not heard of it.)

Church of origin: Christians close to the Valentinian Gnostics. Probably at Alexandria, in Egypt.

Remains deeply Jewish, even if it is a somewhat nonconformist Judaism, can be dated from the first years of the second century. It comes from a circle which has been excluded from the synagogue and hopes no longer to win a large number of members of this establishment (9: 22; 12: 42; 16: 2). Even if the Christian disciples are also Jews, in his eyes as in those of other evangelists, "the Jews" are, in his language, the adversaries of the Teacher, or in any case people unable to believe in him authentically. The group of Christian disciples, whom he never calls "the Church," is an enlargement of the original core. It is a community that has become aware of its independence from Judaism, while keeping the memory of its Jewish roots.

It is amusing to note that the "John's" gospel does not speak of the apostle John ... It bears very clear traces of rewriting. The corrections and retouching indeed will be numerous over the centuries. The earliest complete manuscript of it that we have dates from the 4th. The authors compile various legends or myths of the religions known at the time, notably the legend of Dionysus, which changes water into wine (see The Wedding at Cana). This gospel has, of course, a complicated history. It draws its information from very archaic sources that he shares partly with the other three Gospels. This can be verified, for example, in the account of the Passion, the most ancient of the evangelical narratives. But John too has a lot of personal data ... We may think that this Gospel was written between 80 and 110 for men and women assailed by many questions about salvation, and attracted, for some, by esoteric ways. The Gospel according to St. John is a Gnostic text, enriched belatedly with anecdotes about the man Jesus.

Final editor: a man who comes from a nonconformist Judaism and belongs to a theological background different from that of the other evangelists, perhaps that of the Hellenists in Palestine or Syria. Who is not necessarily a member of the group of the Twelve Apostles who, as such, does not play a part in this gospel, when this mentions other disciples of Jesus.

Who does not seem to be a member of the same social circle as the other disciples of Jesus (he was known by the high priest? See John, 18: 15-16). Who is probably a native of Jerusalem (historically, he is well informed about the traditions relating to Judea). Some extracts taken at random.

John 1: 1-2 is illegible in Greek and in the vernacular language.

This famous prologue may be written as follows in Hebrew runes according to Bernard Dubourg...

Bereshit hayeh haDabar

VehaDabar hayeh leAdonai

VeAdonai hayeh haDabar

Hou hayeh Bereshit leAdonai

etc.

2: 1 to 11. Water changed into wine: a legend plagiarized on the miracle that Dionysus performed annually on the island of Naxos.

5: 31. "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true! In total contradiction with 8: 13 which asserts the opposite.

11:1. Jesus Christ resurrects Lazarus: a legend directly copied from that of Horus who resurrects the mummy of Osiris?

Gaius of Rome tried to counter this Gospel by attributing it to Cerinthus (pseudo-Tertullian, 10).

This Gaius was so anti-Montanist indeed that he rejected pell-mell the Gospel and the Apocalypse of John. He considered that this fourth Gospel differed too much from the synoptic Gospels, and that the Revelation did not agree with the eschatology of the authentic Scriptures.

Notes of Peter DeLaCrau found on a sheet of paper by his heirs.

DIALOGUE WITH PROCLUS.

"Cerinthus also, by means of revelations which he pretends were written by a great apostle, brings before us marvelous things which he falsely claims were shown him by angels; and he says that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be set up on earth, and that the flesh dwelling in Jerusalem will again be subject to desires and pleasures. And being an enemy of the Scriptures of God, he asserts, with the purpose of deceiving men, that there is to be a period of a thousand years for marriage festivals (H. E. III 28: 2).

THE ALOGI (Epiphanius, Haer. II , Anacephalaeosis IV,51).

The arguments used against the Johannine writings by the Alogi group are so similar to those of Gaius that it is probable that they both belonged to the same movement.

"They say that they are not John's composition but Cerinthus', and have no right to a place in the church."

"They say that John's books do not agree with the other apostles."

"The Gospel issued in John's name lies," they say. "After 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' and a few other things, it says at once that there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee."

"These people say that the Gospel according to John is non-canonical because it did not mention these events and they do not see fit to accept it."

The official Christianity of the "Great" Church tolerated nevertheless its use, in order to better fight or recover the Gnostics of Valentinian and Cerinthian obedience.

In its original collection, this fourth gospel is violently hostile to Judaism and the Old Testament. Far from being confused with the Messiah of Israel, the Son declares categorically that he has nothing in common with him: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world " what was the function of the Messiah (3: 17). It denies the famous Last Judgment awaited by the apocalypses: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already (3:18).

If the Son has nothing in common with the Messiah of Israel, the Father has nothing in common with the God or Demon of Israel.

The Son says clearly to the Jews: "But He who sent Me is true. You do not know Him" (7:29). It is a totally new, unheard, alien to the world, God, whom the Son reveals: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son (monogenos) , which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him " (1:18). By this are denied all the theophanies mentioned in the Old Testament. Denied, the ascension to heaven of the prophet Elijah, and all the others: "No one has ever gone into heaven" (3:13). Denied, the mission of all the prophets of Israel: "All who have come before me are thieves and robbers" (10: 8).

The very anti-Judaic nature of this fourth Gospel is hidden today because, through interpolations and glosses, the ideas most opposed to the original spirit of the book settled in the final drafting. The duality of the drafting is nevertheless flagrant (it was emphasized by Schwartz and Wellhausen). Contrary to common opinion, the content of the Johannine Gospel is therefore previous to the synoptic gospels. As Rudolf Bultmann wrote: we must therefore "accept the fact that Johannine Christianity represents an older type of Christianity than the synoptics."

But if it is easy to see that the present whitewash of the fourth Gospel, the again rendered text, is later to the three synoptic gospels. But it is not the same with the building itself.

John differs from the synoptics in that it contains neither the baptism of Jesus nor the institution of the meal of commensality with God or the Demiurge (the Eucharist). It is easy to understand that in order to have Jesus establishing the two great Christian rituals, these two narratives were probably added to an original theme which did not include them. On the other hand, it would be difficult to suppose that they would have been cut off if they had been part of it. Again, the presumption of precedence campaigns for the ORIGINAL CONTENT of the gospel of John.

We are therefore led to imagine that the synoptics may have been written in reaction against some of the first tendencies of the Christianity at the time; The Gnostic tendencies, such as those of the original Johannine Gospel or the evangelion of Marcion, to mention only those, but there were others (Cerinthus et al.). R. Bultmann is not very far from this idea of the problem when he says of the synoptic tradition that perhaps it is to be understood perhaps as a phenomenon of Judaizing reaction.

WHAT IS THE OVERALL VALUE OF THE GOSPELS, ESPECIALLY THE FOURTH?

Preliminary question: what is the point of the Old Testament, of making everything coming from the Old Testament?

Answer: I'm an old AAP, but nonetheless an advocate of the defense of these Barbarians, so I'll start in the manner of the old druid in the forest around Marseilles, as portrayed by Lucian of Samosata. I shall begin with a quote from Christian-Joseph Guyonvarc'h and, perhaps more importantly, Françoise Le Roux, followed by a few extracts from the texts of the Egyptian coffins: a self-respecting Fenian cannot be a man of one book.

N.B. The Coffin Texts include funerary compositions giving indications about the afterlife and specifying what is necessary for the dead to live there, as well as theological and magical formulas (since the fourth and last Gospel is well dealing with the power of the word). The word generates an exchange of information and energy. Every word has an exoteric meaning, and a hidden, esoteric one. But pronouncing words correctly is essential to their power. The magic word is supposed to be effective provided you know the correct intonation and the right words.

In the *De Bello Gallico* VIII, 38, we read of a Carnute priest whom Caesar sent to the rack for having acted as a "war monger" (*concitator belli*) with the Romans. Caesar even went so far as to have him denounced and arrested by his own countrymen, in order to inflict a terrible ordeal on him.

The name appears twice, in the accusative *Gutuatum* and in the ablative *Gutuato*....

The theme *gutu-* is that of the name for word in Celtic (Irish *guth* "voice", closely related to the neuter **ghu-tô-n* which gave the name "God" in all Germanic languages, German *Gott*, English *God*, etc.).

Let's go a step further. Jean Haudry has written extensively on the triad thought, word and action. First localized in Iran, where it occupies a place of prime importance, this triad thought, speech and action is viewed by specialists as the Avestic triad par excellence. Yet Jean Haudry has definitively demonstrated that this triad is not only "Avestic", since it is by no means peculiar to Iran, and he provides examples of it in all ancient Indo-European literature.

Let's turn now to the sarcophagus texts presented by Laurent Coulon.

"The first point we'd like to make is the fundamental proximity that exists in ancient Egypt between the art of magical discourse, and in particular that which covers the conception and recitation of the formulas of the great funerary corpus, and the rhetorical art that would later be called - for want of a better term - secular.

In the documentation of the Old Kingdom, with a few exceptions, the powers of the word are the subject of technical discourse only in the context of the activities of the priest-reader, who plays an essential role in funeral rites. According to the texts we possess, this art of the priest-reader is either practiced in close correlation with the embalming rites that are previous the funeral, or accompanies it; or, finally, is practiced after the burial of the deceased... The characteristic of this word is to be creative, protective, and to possess an active principle. The reader-priest performs the rite through his formulas. To do this, he must follow a detailed ritual, using a text that he reads. But his art is more than just reciting or reading: it also involves a whole range of acting skills, including very precise gestures and staging..." (Laurent Coulon).

SO WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE KATA IOANNAN TELL US?

" In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

It was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through it, and without it was not any thing made that was made.

In it was life, and the life was the light of men".

An application of this principle to the case of Yehoshua Bar Yosef, known as the Nazorean, follows.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

...The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (Greek ALETHEIA).

And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known".

Exegesis suggests that this very beautiful text is the very elaborate summary of an in-depth thinking on what should be the quintessence of Christianity (high Christology), at least in the eyes of a certain number of Christian Christians (not to say Judeo-Christians) bordering on anti-Semitism, and Gnosticism, from the end of the first century CE, in this part of the world.

As an AAP, I can simply write in black and white that this is the sublimation or refinement of one of the basic principles of the most ancient magical thinking, that of the power of the word, well expressed in the first four lines of the prologue. The rest is simply the application of this principle to the case of Jesus the Nazarene.

The author or authors of the Fourth Gospel use the Greek term LOGOS.
According to Marcel Detienne, its various meanings can be summed up in two types of words.
The dialogue word: the later, secularized form of speech, complementary to action, entered into time, with its own autonomy extended to the dimensions of the social group and of the realm of reason....

But also, and above all, the magic-religious word: the most ancient, effective, timeless, inseparable from symbolic behaviours and values, the privilege of an exceptional type of man, and belonging to the realm of myth. The author(s) of the last Gospel (circa 100?) also use(s) the Greek term aletheia. Muse and Memory language, aletheia is associated in Homer with the "muthos", a variety of epos (spoken word), and with the mythical characters in the Iliad and Odyssey who do not deceive, who do not lie, who are true, real. Myth has its own truth that no one can dispute, no one can prove. The poet of the myth is a "master of truth" whose word, the Aletheia, the empirical concept, is not the agreement of the proposition and of its object, or the agreement of a judgment with other judgments; there is no "true" opposite "false", no excluded middle, no hypothetico-deductive or transcendental concept. It is the word of an exceptional man, endowed with religious power. Etymologically speaking, it opposes "Lethe" (oblivion) to give meaning.

Personified by the Greek goddess Aletheia, these words predate time, have no individualized author and do not call for any particular reference. They are not the manifestation of an individual will, thought or self. They coincide with the action they institute in a world of evolving forces and powers, transcending them.

Traces of this can be found before the 6th century B.C.E, the century of the emergence of so-called revealed religions, as opposed to mythical ones, and of the word dialogue of the Greek philosophy we've been talking about, in the person of the Hyperboreans Olenos and Abaris.

P.S. A little terminology now.

THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH CONCEPTION.

The Messiah or Christ awaited by the Jews of the first century CE, and announced by certain scriptures, was believed at the time to be a kind of superhero who would succeed in driving out Romans and restoring the (fantasized) greatness of the original David kingdom. A superhero but not a god, an exceptional man, in a way adopted by God but still uniquely human. Such was, and perhaps still is, the Jewish conception of the role of the messiah. The word "Judeo-Christianity" is used to describe it.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF THE MESSIAH (high Christology) as defined by the Council convened in Nicaea in 325 by the emperor Constantine and placed under the aegis of his labarum or labaron.

A profession of faith that is above all defined negatively in relation to Arianism.
Those who say: "There was a time when he was not..."

before he was born, he was not...
he was made like beings drawn from nothing...
he is of a different substance (hypostasis), of a different essence (ousia)....
he was created...
the Son of God is subject to change".
Are anathema...

Let's be intellectually honest: we may only speak of Christians in the full sense of the word (high Christology) to designate those believers who agree with this anti-Arian definition of the messiah's role: of the same substance as God, but also a true man.

Now, in that part of the world at that time, there were men and women or "neither" people (some galli, not necessarily Gallic galli) already mentally well-versed in this kind of mental exercise, and capable of subscribing to it if they weren't already doing so...but they weren't Jews....

They were followers of mystery cults such as that of Attis, or of the theios aner philosophy, which brings us back to the question of the magical power of the word in the Johannine School prologue.

The old AAP that I am will be forgiven for ending in the manner of the old druid in the forest around Marseilles (the Sainte-Baume?) portrayed by Lucian of Samosata, i.e. by evoking the cases of the Hyperboreans Abarix or Olénos, who are the very prototypes of the theoi andres or shamans that one might have come across in days gone by on the shores of the Black Sea.

The conclusion that imposes itself on us in the manner of a definition is therefore as follows.

High Christology, or Christianity in the full sense of the word, could only have developed in pagan rather than Jewish brains, in Asia Minor in Galatia * or even in the Antioch region to be precise, at the end of the first century C.E. Hence the name PAGANO-CHRISTIANITY. Previously, it was only Judeo-Christianity or low Christology. See Renan's study on this subject, published in 1881. The spirituality of John's Gospel deserves to be studied in this light, unlike that of the Old Testament. However, as with its pagan sources (Egyptian, Iranian, Gallo-Greek), it implies magical or creationist thinking that is incompatible with the great basic principle of the eternity of souls and of the universe ascribed by Strabo to our clients: "Aphthartous de legousi cae houtoe cae hoe alloe tas psychas cae ton cosmon".

It's up to you to do your own Quest for the Holy Grail in all this jumble.

Apart from the unsolvable problem of the emergence of the being from the nothingness, here are a few propositions that our philosophical and thoughtful Celtic paganism can assert without fear of error, for these maxims speak the language of the gods, so to speak (homophonon in Diodorus Siculus).

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Principle number 1. The divine one, the sacredness and the numinous one have never ceased to speak to man***.

Principle number 2. Truth is One

Principle number 3. Truth is one, but it is experienced and felt differently according to people, places and times.

Principle number 4. There is no such thing as a single truth revealed once and for all to an individual or a people in a precise place on a precise date (or thereabouts). We can be sure of that.

Principle number 5. God (or, more precisely, the monolatrous conception of God) is Mankind's greatest common divisor. We can be sure of that too.

Principle number 6. Truth is one, but error, on the other hand, is multiple, and so there are different levels of truth (panentheism pantheism henotheism atheism agnosticism....).

Principle number 7. Without lapsing into general relativism, we can also assert without fear of error (polytheism properly understood) that there is no civilization that has nothing to offer Mankind, no example to set, no lesson to inspire or suggest (positively speaking).

Principle number 8. Hell doesn't exist (so that's the good news that makes up for or redeems anything negative in this world).

Principle number 9. The most important thing is to feel good about yourself.

Principle number 10: The hell it is the other people, the racism it is the other people (that's the bad news, though).

To these 10 basic principles of philosophical and thoughtful Celtic paganism we can add the following principles, no, the following examples, or pieces of advice.

First example to ponder: Arrian. This Celtic law I follow with my fellows, because I declare no human undertaking to have a prosperous issue without the interposition of the gods...

Second example to ponder: Lucian of Samosata's parable of Ogmios, in which he says: "Speak in Greek language to the Greeks, in Chinese language to the Chinese, in German to the Germans and so on.

Modern translation: acculturation/incarnation.

Diogenes Laertius third example. Respect the gods, do nothing base and be true men.

Modern translation: open secularism, nobility of heart and courage.

Fourth example to ponder. It's better to channel the forces of human nature or other nature into engines that move in the right direction than to attack them head-on by blocking them....

Old man's advice, a memory of the passage in which Diodorus Siculus explains that the druids used criminals or those condemned to death for their sacrifices **** and the passage from the Irish Senchus Mor about how to dispense justice: [Inin tin] tud [i.e. nertad and] ngeindtlechta gnim olc mad indechur.....

I would have put recht aicnid rather than ngeindtlechta, but that's the way it is, some people just can't help personalizing everything.

Because the Celts didn't sacrifice innocent virgins, like Iphigenia in Aulis, but they practiced ritual executions of those condemned to death, like Yehoshua Bar Yosef and.....no? Isn't that good?

Like the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world then....? no, not good either!

Like "They think that unless the life of a man is offered for the life of a man, the mind of the immortal gods cannot be rendered propitious...".

Yes, but Jehovah isn't the same thing, he doesn't need to be appeased because he's not an elohim (sic) like the others!

Well, hell, like the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter in Aulis (sic) if you like.

AAP HESUNERTUS.

P.S. If we take out principles 9 and 10, which are a bit far-fetched, that makes 12, the sacred dodecahedron!

* The life of Saint Euthymius, written by Cyril of Scythopolis (today Bet Shean in Israel), also mentions a monk contemporary with the saint, i.e. living in the 6th century, named Procopius, who sometimes still spoke Galatian. This is paragraph LV (page 77 of Edouard Schwartz's edition, Kyrillos von Skythopolis, Leipzig, 1939).

The exact sentence is "His tongue was bound, he could no longer speak to us. If he was forced to do so, he spoke in the language of the Galatians".

** Humor!

*** It is besides a human characteristic. Animals have no gods, no religion and no fear of the afterlife.

**** They consider that the oblation of such as have been taken in theft, or in robbery, or any other offense, is more acceptable to the immortal gods.... They manifest a strange impiety also with respect to their sacrifices; for their criminals they keep prisoner for five years and then impale them [the Greek term is ambiguous and may bring to mind the simple exhibition of the bodies of the supplicated ones on a palisade or at the entrance to a temple nemeton] in honor of the gods, dedicating them together with many other offerings of first fruits and constructing pyres of great size [which contradicts the fact of having impaled them alive].

THE OFFICIALLY APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS .

That is to say, those which were the object of an official rejection on the part of Christianity, which had become a state religion; Including the about sixty other gospels that were not kept by the official Church and which were therefore called so by this dominant Christianity.

These writings were written by different communities, with varied sensitivities. What they report from the new Nazarene Joshua is often as credible * as some of the details being in the official Gospels; and it is probable that they contain words or speeches that are very well part of those attributed to Jesus by the initial rumor that began to circulate in Palestine about him; although not kept by the oral tradition which succeeded it. It is also very likely that they contain, like the other Gospels which have become official, some words added later, for very specific purposes.

Their influence on the incipient Christianity was nevertheless unquestionable. It is to them that we owe the ox and donkey in the crib, many details about Mary, the names of the Wise men, and so on.

* As credible ... or amazing! See, for example, Matthew 27: 51-53. Earthquakes, dead coming from tombs ...It was like reading the scenario of a very bad horror movie.

THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPEL OF JOHN (120 - 180).

The system presented in the Apocryphal gospel of John is close to that of the Barbelian or Valentinian Gnostics.

This text therefore presents the deity according to a traditional scheme in the Gnostics. Pleroma = Heaven. Eon = angel or demon. We shall therefore content ourselves here with repeating what we have already said of the subject, by studying the treatise of Irenaeus devoted to the question.

Previous to all times, there is in the invisible and uncreated heights a perfect Eon, an unmixed Being , and primary Principle, radically transcendent and ineffable. From this higher Being come eons or divine emanations functioning in pairs. What the Hindus call vyuha and the Muslims shirk (to condemn it).

The first eon come into existence, a spontaneous replica of the Principle by reflection in its own light, is called Barbelo. From this first couple emanate two other eons, forming a Tetrads. 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, Sophia (Achamoth in Hebrew), is at the origin of a relatively complex fall in this matter. This Sophia will have one day an almost incestuous relationship with the Father, which will give birth to a runt named Ialdabaoth, the first Archon, who then will be expelled from the Pleroma.

With the seven Archons with whom he surrounds himself, like himself come from ignorance, this Demiurge (identified with the God of the Old Testament) creates the psychic man, with a reflection of the Father in the water. But this psychic man will be unable to move. Christ (born from Barbelo during the constitution of the Pleroma, after this eon has intensely contemplated the Father) suggests then to Ialdabaoth to blow on the Man, what brings him to live: thus will be born the human of pneumatic type (from Pneuma which means soul).

Realizing that their creation surpasses them in knowledge, the Archons then throw Man in the depths of matter. There the Father intervenes, by giving to Man the "Life," which hides deep within him and informs him of the origin of his handicap, showing him thus the path of elevation. By way of reprisal, the Archons imprison the man in a body of matter and install him later in the Garden of Eden. The Apocryphal gospel of John then continues with a rereading of the fall of Adam and Eve.

THE ORIGINAL (OR SECRET) GOSPEL OF MARK (70-255).

Is known by a letter from Clement of Alexandria, found in the Monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem in 1958, by Morton Smith. His relations with the "official" Gospel according to Mark of today are controversial. This is....

-Either the original gospel of Mark in full (Clement of Alexandria's version), and let us not forget that certain teachings of Jesus were delivered only in small groups. Mark 4:11 confirmed by Matthew 13:10, and Luke 8: 9). In this case, the "canonical" gospel according to Mark would result from the suppression of certain passages.

-Or an increased version of the original gospel of Mark.

What is certain is that it was the gospel of reference of the Carpocratian Gnostics.

THE GOSPEL OF THE NAZOREANS (100 to 160).

Is known through Origen, Eusebius, Jerome.

Judeo-Christian. Perhaps a development of the Gospel of Matthew, translated from Greek into Aramaic or Syriac language.

THE GOSPEL OF THE EBIONITES (100-160).

The gospel of the Ebionites has disappeared, but there are traces of it in the pseudo-Clementine literature.

As well as in the state of quotations (very subjective, of course) in a certain number of Fathers of the Church (St Jerome, Origen, Epiphanius ...). Judeo-Christian. Presents us Jesus as a vegetarian.

THE GOSPEL OF THE HEBREWS (80-150).

Is known by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyril and Jerome.

Gospel probably written by and for Judeo-Christians faithful to the memory of James the brother of the Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS (80-150).

Is known by Clement of Alexandria, but also by quotations (critical of course) of Hippolytus and Epiphanius. A named Salome plays a large part in it, although this gospel preaches especially abstinence and sexual asceticism.

THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH (140-180).

Long reflection about Jesus, in Greek language, also found in Nag Hammadi in Egypt, in 1945.

Perhaps a text emanating from the Valentinian Christian current (named after his founder, the Gnostic philosopher Valentinus).

THE GOSPEL OF THE PAPYRUS EGERTON 2 (70-120).

These first four fragments from an older papyrus codex were discovered in 1934, among other items bought from an antiques dealer.

Their origin is unknown, but may be Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. A fifth fragment was found among the papyrus Cologne 255. They are part of an unknown gospel.

Their text is not exactly that of the four official Gospels we know today.

Other fragments of this type are also available.

The fragment 1224, discovered in 1897, dates perhaps from 50 to 150 of our era.

Here also, its text is not exactly that of the four Gospels we know.

Fragment 840, discovered in 1905.

An entire page, perhaps dating from 110 to 160, which is in keeping with the New Testament with regard to style and tone.

It is the account of an argument in the Temple between Christ and a Pharisee concerning the ritual purification, but which contains many details that are much controversial.

Note: the word savior is used primarily to speak of the new Joshua, which is therefore never explicitly referred to as Jesus Christ.

"He took them and brought them into the very place of purification, and was walking in the temple. And a certain Pharisee, a chief priest, whose name was Levi, met them and said to the Savior, Who gave thee leave to walk in this place of purification and to see these holy vessels, when you have not washed nor yet have thy disciples bathed their feet? But defiled you have walked in this temple, which is a pure place, wherein no other man walks except he has washed himself and changed his garments, neither does he venture to see these holy vessels.

And the Savior straightaway stood still with his disciples and answered him: Are you then, being here in the temple, clean? He said unto him, I am clean; for I washed in the pool of David, and having descended by one staircase I ascended by another, and I put on white and clean garments, and then I came and looked upon these holy vessels.

The Savior answered and said unto him, Woe you blind, who do not see. You have washed in these running waters wherein dogs and swine have been cast night and day, and hast cleansed and wiped the outside skin which also the harlots and flute girls anoint and wash and wipe and beautify for the lust of men; but within they are full of scorpions and all wickedness. But I and my disciples, who you say have not bathed, have been dipped in the waters of eternal life ..."

THE PROTEVANGELIUM OF JAMES (140 to 160?)

This is one of the first writings worked out by the current which will later give the Christianity as we know it today. Legends about the childhood of Jesus appear there. It is a composite work gathering on the central figure of Jesus several allegories or legends from Jewish circles, but having lost their primary meaning. The author knows nothing of Palestine. This gospel was attributed to James because, as the Lord's "brother," he was best placed to give credence to legends about his family. It is obvious that the author of this narrative struggles between the necessity of showing that the birth of Jesus is both real, not virtual, but also marvelous.

He must, indeed, show that Jesus was born like all men, but that he was also born supernaturally, only way to vouch his divine character.

We find told in it the birth of Mary, her wedding with Joseph, over whom a dove flies, the Annunciation, the birth of Jesus, the miraculous confirmation of her mother's virginity, the journey to Bethlehem, John the Baptist and King Herod .

THE GOSPEL OF PETER (140 to 160?)

This gospel was eliminated from the official list of writings to be used by Serapion, bishop of Antioch, around 190. We wonder why. Because there are elements that are obviously not historical? ? But the official Gospels are full of them. See, for example, the very bad "horror" movie of Matthew 27: 51-54, about the walking dead emerging from the graves opened by the earthquake and spreading terror in the city. What is the most improbable in the episode of the empty tomb? The cross which comes out and speaks to explain the resurrection? Or the non-human luminous creatures (some angels) as in the official canonical gospels?

It would be difficult to classify them on the Richter scale of improbability, both visions being equally non-historical, and falling more in rumors than in anything else. In any case, they are not evidence of an objective fact which could have been seen by a crowd or filmed if there had already existed cameras at that time; but of an internal conviction, or of a deeply rooted belief.

THE GOSPEL ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS (150).

We have already said a few words to introduce our study of the message of the Gospels, but in view of its importance it will not be useless to return somewhat to the subject.

This text is very close to what was to be the first collections of materials circulating about Jesus, and contains more than 100 logia (very exactly 114) being attributed to him.

In its today form therefore it consists of 114 logia (words) of Jesus, all introduced by the expression, "Jesus said ...". The Gospel according to Thomas is very difficult to date in fact, and would essentially reproduce "secret words of Jesus" handed over by an autonomous tradition, going back early enough in the first century. Its full text has been known by us only since the discovery of the Gnostic Library in Nag-Hammadi, and has raised controversy since its discovery.

Its contents, although remarkably suited to inspire Gnostic speculations, offer but few traces of authentic Gnosticism.

It is the complete collection of logia, of which previously discovered Greek fragments had offered only bits that were difficult to comprehend. The Gnostic influence is therefore not so obvious as that in this text.

Many of these logia are found in the most orthodox patristic literature of the first centuries. It is therefore the use made of them by the Gnostics, more than its content, which was responsible for the rejection of this text by the Church. The kingdom of God or of the Demiurge there is non-eschatological. More traditional, there is also in it a clear rejection of the Jewish practices of piety (fasting, prayer or circumcision).

It is now believed that it was written in Coptic language in the second century and that it has two different sources, one being incontestably Gnostic, but later.

Some of these logia (from the Greek logion, words ascribed to) are older than the equivalents that can be found in the four official Gospels. And are probably closer to what Jesus has really said (if he existed).

More than other works, this text deserves the name of gospel. Of course, it is a gospel different from our synoptic gospels; In particular references to the Passion are missing and this raises questions.

How is it possible to explain that a gospel worked out half a century after the others and a hundred years after Paul's letters, can completely disregard the time of the Passion, or the references to the crucified? This would mean that he had undergone, less than the official Gospels, the rereading of the Church. It would hand over an uncontrolled word in the raw state, while the other gospels would contain, mixed with the teachings of Jesus, the contributions of the Churches and the influences of the successive editors. Etc. Etc. (It is not to us Barbarian druids in the West to study more closely all these CHRISTIAN apocrypha!) It is to the exegetes, Christians, to do it, and by applying to them the same methods as to the canonical gospels: the sources, the different levels, and so on.) As for us, we have also other equally interesting mythologies to study (Irish mythology, certain Scandinavian texts of bardic origin, etc.).

THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS.

"Justin, First Apology, 35, 8-9. " And after He was crucified they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate."

As we have seen, much of the legend of the Grail as a cup used to collect the blood of Christ came from the apocryphal gospel known as "of Nicodemus" later renamed "Acts of Pilate."

It is therefore not without interest to look at the genesis of such a curious document.

On April 30, 311, one of the masters of the Roman Empire, the Caesar Galerius, signed an edict of Toleration in the town of Serdica (now Sofia in Bulgaria), intended to thwart the maneuvers deployed by his rival Constantine to seduce the Christians. Lactantius has handed over its text to us. But in the East Maximinus did not publish the Edict of Galerius. In order to fight this aberration, alas in the process of spreading, it imposes on the contrary in the schools of the whole Empire another, more plausible, version of the four gospels, but vainly, again, alas!

In short, as Justin 1) and Tertullian already mentioned some "Acts of Pilate" in the second century of our era; in order to put an end to the creeping Christianization of the minds, Maximinus' services went so far as to distribute a version of the Acts of Pilate relating more likely Jesus's trial.

To circumvent this attempt by Maximinus to counteract Christianity, some Christians then made circulate other Acts of Pilate, later renamed "Gospel of Nicodemus."

The Acts of Pilate, or Gospel of Nicodemus therefore, consist of two parts belatedly attached to each other. The whole was presumably written in the fourth century, or at least an ancient form from which the present one derives. The text which has come down to us, dated to the fifth century, would reproduce to a large extent the 4th-century version, but also uses very ancient traditions, since Justin and Tertullian already mention the Acts of Pilate in the second century as we already had the opportunity to see it.

Recensions are numerous, in Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopian, Latin, and Greek, languages. The apologetic intention is obvious: Pilate becomes the favored witness of the innocence and divinity of Jesus. The same role on the Jewish side with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea: all the characters of this gospel end up converting.

The second part, of apocalyptic nature, tells the story of two sons of Simeon, Jesus's descent into the underworld. It fills the curiosity of the Christians and develops the sober evocation of 1 Peter 3:18.

This part, composed at the end of the 4th century, uses a source from the second century.

We will follow for the first part, the older Greek recension (A). For the second, one of the two Latin recensions (B) that have come down to us.

MEMORIALS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DONE IN THE TIME OF PONTIUS PILATE

PROLOGUE.

I Ananias, the Protector, of praetorian rank, learned in the law, did from the divine scriptures recognize our Lord Jesus Christ and came near to him by faith and was accounted worthy of holy baptism: and I sought out the memorials that were made at that season in the time of our master Jesus Christ, which the Jews deposited with Pontius Pilate, and found the memorials in Hebrew (letters), and by the good pleasure of God I translated them into Greek language for the informing of all them that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ....

PART I.

The chief priests and scribes assembled in council, even Annas and Caiaphas and Somne and Dothaim and Gamaliel, Judas, Levi and Neptholim, Alexander and Jairus, etc. a certain man named Joseph, being a counselor, of the city of Arimathaea, who also himself looked for the kingdom of God this man went to Pilate 2) and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in a hewn sepulcher ...

PART II.

DESCENT OF JESUS TO HELL.

Joseph arose and said : "Truly and of right do ye marvel because ye have heard that Jesus hath been seen alive after death. Nevertheless it is more marvelous that he rose not alone from the dead, but did raise up alive many other dead out of their sepulchers, and they have been seen by many in Jerusalem. And now hearken unto me; for we all know the blessed Simeon.....

They made the seal of the cross, and forthwith they spoke both of them to the high priests, saying: "Give us each a volume of paper, and let us write that which we have seen and heard. And they gave them unto them, and each of them sat down and wrote, saying: "O Lord Jesus Christ, the life and resurrection of the dead, suffer us to speak of the mysteries of your majesty which you did perform in hell. Now when we were set together with all our fathers in the deep, in obscurity of darkness, on a sudden there came a golden heat of the sun and a purple and royal light shining upon us...And while all the saints were rejoicing, behold Satan the prince and chief of death said unto Hell: "Make yourself ready to receive Jesus who boasted himself that he is the Son of God, whereas he is a man that feared death, and said: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. And he has been much mine enemy, doing me great hurt, and many that I had made blind, lame, dumb, leprous, and possessed he hath healed with a word: and some whom I have brought unto you dead, them has he taken away from you...."

These be all things which the Lord bade us declare unto you: give praise and thanksgiving unto him, and repent that he may have mercy upon you.

Peace be unto you from the same Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Savior of us all. Amen.

And when they had finished writing all things in the several volumes of paper they arose; and Karinus gave that which he had written into the hands of Annas and Caiaphas and Gamaliel; likewise Leucius gave that which he had written into the hands of Nicodemus and Joseph. And suddenly they were transfigured and became white exceedingly and were no more seen.

Notes.

1) Justin, First Apology, 35, 8-9. " And after He was crucified they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate."

The text of this first version of the Acts of Pilate, of course, has not been preserved to us, what is too bad! It was perhaps contain many details of a nature to disturb the belief of the first members of the new sect. All that can be said is that an echo of these Acts of Pilate is certainly to be found in the evangelical account t of the trial and death of Jesus; the part of the Passion cycle which takes place without a Christian witness; and therefore raises the question of its narrative transmission in the Christian communities.

2) Pontius Pilate was born in 10 before our era and was prefect (procurator according to Flavius Josephus) of the Roman province of Judea in the 1st century (from 26 to 36); that is to say, according to the New Testament, at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. He was sent back to Rome and died around 39 in exile in Vienne, France, or Lucerne, Switzerland. An inscription found in Caesarea in 1961 and the texts of Flavius Josephus (War of the Jews, Book II, IX, 2-4) attest to his existence!

According to the Gospels (and we emphasize well ACCORDING TO THE GOSPELS), Jesus was brought before Pilate by the Jewish religious leaders so that he judges and sentences him. Indeed, the night before, he had been arrested in Gethsemane by the police of the high priest.

He is then been brought before the former high priest Annas, head of the priestly clan, and then before his son-in-law, the high priest Caiaphas, who summoned the Grand Council or Sanhedrin urgently. He was then subjected to a mock trial around a charge of blasphemy. But as the country was occupied by the Romans, another sentence is to be got, this time in the court of the prefect, Pontius Pilate, in order to obtain a real death sentence.

Jesus is thus presented to Pilate as a dangerous Galilean rebel, whose claims to royalty threaten the power of the Emperor Tiberius.

Having questioned him, Pontius Pilate sees no reason for condemnation. Believing, no doubt, that he had found a way to spare Jesus, he proposes to the crowd to release a prisoner on the occasion of the Passover, as custom has it. But, contrary to what he expected, the crowd shouts "Release Barabbas," the name of another defendant whose trial was investigated by Pilate at the same time, and presented by the Gospels as a rioter or a murderer.

Gospel according to Matthew (27:24).

Pilate saw that he could do nothing about this, and a riot was starting. So he took some water and washed his hands[a] in front of the crowd. Then he said, "I am not guilty of this man's death."

The texts of Flavius Josephus report that Pontius Pilate had already repressed two Jewish revolts in a bloody manner. Pilate therefore had some reasons for wanting to avoid a new "riot." His pathetic reflection "What is truth?" brings him rather strangely closer to humanists or skeptical philosophers. The character of Pontius Pilate is one of the central figures of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita," where he appears as a sad, deeply human man, overwhelmed by his office, and crucifying Jesus reluctantly. The Coptic Church commemorates Pontius Pilate as a saint. According to this tradition, he converted secretly to Christianity under the influence of his wife Claudia. They are both celebrated on June 25th. The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, honors only Claudia, judging Pilate unworthy of this title since he contented himself with having nothing to do with Jesus.

It must be said that this story is strange.

If you open the Annals of Tacitus, you will find that the books that cover the reign of Caligula and the first years of that of Claudius are missing. The text ends with the death of the old Tiberius (book VI, 37 of our era) to resume only with the murder of Messalina (Book XI, 47 of our era). This important gap is certainly not the result of chance! It is more than probable that Tacitus set forth in it some "truths" shocking for the Christian copyists of the Early Middle Ages. Among other things, the Latin historian spoke in it of Pontius Pilate and his condemnation by Caligula.

The Gospels giving little details about Pilate, legends arose around this key character of the dramatic episodes of the Passion. Eusebius of Caesarea (in *Historia Ecclesiae*), cites apocryphal accounts speaking of the misfortunes of Pilate during the reign of Caligula (37-41). Exiled in Gaul, he would eventually have committed suicide in the Rhone River in Vienne. A monument of the city (the tomb of Pilate) evokes besides this episode.

Notes on loose sheets found by the heirs to Peter DeLaCrau.

* Pontius Pilate and the case of the Samaritans. On the instigation of a man "who was not afraid to lie and who used all kinds of tricks to seduce the people," a crowd of Samaritans took up arms and took refuge on their sacred mountain, Mount Gerizim. Seeing that, the heart of the irascible Pontius Pilate skipped a beat ! He gathers his troops, rushes on the rioters, exterminates some of them, and scatters the rest. Thereupon the Council of the Jews (or some Samaritans, we don't know very well) went to Vitellius, the governor of Syria, to complain of such brutality. Vitellius listens attentively to this Judeo-Samaritan embassy, then, indignant, orders Pilate to rush to Rome to justify himself before the Emperor. The prefect hastened to obey, but when he reached Rome, Tiberius died and his successor Caligula sent him to rot in exile in Vienne, near Lyons.

Lucian J. Heldé, the brilliant animator of the Belgian website devoted to the Roman emperors, from whom we borrow all these details, is of a radically different opinion with regard to the causes of the

exile of Pilate. Because of Pilate's uncommon blunder, close to high treason, Herod Agrippa, a friend of the Emperor, had been stuck with another rival (Jesus); an additional contender supported, moreover, by a faction of enthusiasts (the first Christians) who were firmly convinced that their leader had escaped death through a divine intervention! And it is doubtless for this reason, not for an enigmatic repression in Samaria, that Pontius Pilate was exiled to Vienne. The following year (38 of our era) Herod Antipas, former Tetrarch of Galilee, joined Pilate on the banks of the Rhone. It is alleged that his wife Herodias (the same woman who had demanded the head of St. John the Baptist), jealous of the favor of his brother Herod Agrippa; had induced him to go to Rome and ask the Emperor to enlarge his estates and to confer upon him the royal title. Unfortunately for him! The Emperor had found that this Herodian prince was decidedly far too "insatiable." He had therefore dispossessed him from his tetrarchy of Galilee in favor of his friend Herod Agrippa, and had sent him to rot in Gaul with Pontius Pilate.

It is generally believed that this small circle of exiles (Pontius Pilate, Claudia Procula, Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias), the last non-Christian witnesses of the "Jesus Case"; disappeared (suicide, execution) during the year 39, after an enigmatic visit of the future emperor Claudius.

It is also said that if Mount Pilat, on the foothills of the Ardeche, has this name, it is because the former prefect of Judea, filled with remorse, would have killed himself by throwing himself in the Giers River... But all this remains very hypothetical and more likely falls within the mania that Frenchmen have, to claim to be the center of the world. Exit then the Acts of Pilate, an ancient French text written on the banks of the Rhone.

What is certain, on the other hand, is that Herod Antipas, the other protagonist of this imbroglio, ended his days in exile at Lugdunum Convenarum, literally "the hill of the god-or-demon Lug of the Convenae," important urban site of the Pyrenees. Known by the texts of Strabo, Flavius Josephus, St. Jerome, this Roman city was revealed from 1913 by various archeological excavations. And let us imagine that this Herod was the custodian of a formidable secret or of some Grail, later in the hands of the Cathars. Let's stop this very "purely French" delirium!

JUDAS'S GOSPEL (220-340).

The Gospel of Judas is a 26-page papyrus manuscript, written in dialectal Coptic, dating from the 3rd century or the 4th century (220-340 ??). It is part of a codex of about sixty sheets (between 62 and 66 according to sources) called "Codex Tchacos," also containing two apocryphal texts. The Epistle of Peter to Philip and the First Apocalypse of James, which are also found in the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi. This codex was probably discovered in 1978, in the sands of the Egyptian desert, near El Minya.

The existence of this gospel according to Judas is not a recent discovery, since this text was already known by the refutation of it that Irenaeus of Lyons had made in his treatise entitled "Against Heresies." This gospel is actually a Coptic translation of a Greek text still older. Irenaeus attributes it to the Gnostic sect of the Cainites.

The manuscript remained in a safe of the Citibank of Long Island for more than sixteen years, what deteriorated the state of conservation of it. It was then acquired by a Swiss foundation in 2001, the Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art, which restored it and had it translated. The originality of this text is that it challenges the received idea for almost 2000 years ... that Judas was a "traitor" regarding Jesus, to the point of becoming the "treason prototype" even outside the Church ... Our text affirms, on the contrary, that Judas did ... only obey Jesus who expected from him that he helps him to fulfill his destiny, that is to say to give up his flesh cover in order to find again his "divinity" ... And we must acknowledge that the Gospel of John (13: 27) ascribes to Jesus the words: "What you are about to do, do quickly" ... Of course, Judas is not the author of "his" gospel, a fortiori if, according to the canonical gospels, he committed suicide immediately afterwards. The text was only put under his "aegis," in accordance with the tradition of the time.

Epiphanius of Salamis, following Irenaeus, also asserts that this "gospel" was part of the writings of the Gnostic sect of the Cainites. He reacts to the apology that this writing makes of Judas, relying on the text of the canonical gospels, themselves based on a prophetic reading of the Old Testament. However, it should not be forgotten that Judas, according to all the canonical and apocryphal gospels, played a decisive role in the proceedings of the Crucifixion; and therefore, as regards the theological reflection, it is legitimate to ask the question of the sanction of his participation in this fundamental event of Christianity.

The text begins with these words: " The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week three days before he celebrated Passover."

The story begins by showing Jesus joining his disciples in preparation for the ceremony. Jesus laughs at their attitude, but they do not understand, except Judas who says to him: " "I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo." Seeing that Judas was ready to be initiated, Jesus took him separately. He teaches him the mysteries of the Realm and tells him that he will be cursed by the Christians. He then reveals to Judas secrets about the origin of the world.

A luminous and divine angel called Adamas came out of a luminous cloud, and in turn created myriads of angels. From this cloud came also an angel called Nebro, which means the rebel, and another named Saklas, who created Adam and Eve. Man must not offer sacrifices to Saklas.

The narrative concludes with a word from Jesus: " "You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." Lastly, Judas delivers Jesus to the high priests and receives from them the promised sum of money.

Editorial notes.

1) It goes without saying that the recent diffusion of this Gospel changes in no way our view about the way through which Christianity has spread. The Gospel of Judas is a gospel, like others we could say, and as such we may apply to it the same criticisms as those generally made to the four canonical gospels.

It is not an objective reporting contemporary of the facts, but a later reconstruction, developed by a particular religious sensitivity, as there were so many at the time of nascent Christianity. The Gospel of John is strongly marked by a certain Gnosticism, let us say that of Judas is even more so, but of another tendency.

2) History of Judas. According to the synoptic gospels, Judas Iscariot, last of the twelve Apostles, assumed the role of treasurer. He sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver to the high priests in Jerusalem. Jesus was in the gardens of Gethsemane. Judas points him to the guards by giving him a kiss (hence the expression "kiss of Judas" which today designates the kiss of a traitor). The priests then led Jesus before Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea. The New Testament makes Judas die shortly afterwards, but according to two different versions; the most frequently quoted version is that of the Gospel according to Matthew: " He threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself" (Matthew 27: 5).

The other version, Acts of the Apostles 1 (18), says: "With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled."

Criticism of the texts.

There is no city by the name of Karioth, so it is more likely that the adjective iscariot comes from the word sicarian (Latin sicarius, bearer of daggers), sicarians being another name of the zealots.

It is admitted in Catholic theology that Judas played an essential role in the process of redemption: without him, no crucifixion, and therefore no redemption for the sins of men. The problem, then, is to know what the sanction of his participation in this essential act was.

If he is now in hell, then it is he, not Jesus, who will have been the one who suffered most to ensure the redemption process (at least according to the traditional idea of " Hell"); what would be to plunge theologians in the biggest perplexity.

Nevertheless, as many theologians have also said, that the Scripture affirms the existence of hell is one thing. That there is somebody within is another one.

That being so, most Christian theologians consider today that it is not so much the betrayal of Judas that causes a problem, for it is forgivable; but his suicide which, in this particular case, marks a refusal of Forgiveness.

This theological problem was approached literally in a short story by Jorge Luis Borges. The writer imagines a Danish theologian of the nineteenth century whose thesis was that God had become man to infamy, Judas being in fact in this hypothesis the true son of God. This fiction of Borges is based on numerous theological arguments and counter-arguments, which all give a report for the symbolic complexity of the figure of Judas.

In this case, the character of Judas, who sells Jesus, would be inspired by that of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, who persuaded his brothers to sell Joseph rather than to kill him (Genesis 37: 26-27). The gematric value of Judah (YHWDH) is 30, hence the 30 pieces of silver. And if the body of Judas is buried in the "potter's field" (Matthew 27:7), it is because Genesis compares the Eternal YHWH to a potter fashioning the body of Adam from some dust.

AND FINALLY LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST, THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS.

This text must not be confused with the Epistle of Barnabas, which differs completely from it, or with the Acts of Barnabas.

Let us say immediately, which proves that the manipulation of texts or pious fraud is not a preserve of Christianity; the gospel of Barnabas is a pitiful fake * emanating from Muslim, or remained secretly Muslim (SPANISH MORISCOS?), circles.

This is obvious, hence the rather crude nature of this fake, on which John Toland was wrong not to insist enough in his Nazarenus, misled by the fact that he had in his hand only the Italian translation "J'en viens presentement a l'évangile des Turcs, qui est vraisemblablement le meme livre.....traduit en italien par quelque renegato" (in Italian language in the text).

The only thing worthy of being discussed therefore is the initial core that some scholars can trace back to Judeo-Christian circles of Syria-Palestine in the 6th century.

Prologue.

Translated from the Italian manuscript of 15th century (the Spanish text has a hundred chapters less).

Barnabas, apostle of Jesus the Nazarene, called Christ, to all them that dwell upon the earth desireth peace and consolation. Dearly beloved the great and wonderful God hath during these past days visited us by his prophet Jesus Christ in great mercy of teaching and miracles, by reason whereof many, being deceived of Satan, under presence of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine, calling Jesus son of God, repudiating the circumcision ordained of God for ever, and permitting every unclean meat: among whom also Paul hath been deceived, whereof I speak not without grief; for which cause I am writing that truth which I have seen and heard, in the intercourse that I have had with Jesus, in order that ye may be saved, and not be deceived of Satan and perish in the judgment of God.

Therefore beware of everyone that preaches unto you new doctrine contrary to that which I write, that ye may be saved eternally.

The great god be with you and guard you from Satan and from every evil. Amen.

39. Then said John: 'Well hast thou spoken, O master, but we lack know how man sinned through pride.'

Jesus answered: 'When God had expelled Satan, and the angel Gabriel had purified that mass of earth whereon Satan spat, God created everything that lives, both of the animals that fly and of them that walk and swim, and he adorned the world with all that it hath. One day Satan approached unto the gates of paradise, and, seeing the horses eating grass, he announced to them that if that mass of earth should receive a soul there would be for them grievous labor; and that therefore it would be to their advantage to trample that piece of earth in such wise that it should be no more good for anything. The horses aroused themselves and impetuously set themselves to run over that piece of earth which lay among lilies and roses. Whereupon God gave spirit to that unclean portion of earth upon which lay the spittle of Satan, which Gabriel had taken up from the mass; and raised up the dog, who, barking, filled the horses with fear, and they fled. Then God gave his soul to man, while all the holy angels sang: "Blessed be thy holy name, O God our Lord."

'Adam, having sprung up upon his feet, saw in the air a writing that shone like the sun, which said: "There is only one God, and Mohammed is the messenger of God." Whereupon Adam opened his mouth and said: "I thank thee, O Lord my God, that thou hast deigned to create me; but tell me, I pray you, what means the message of these words: "Mohammed is the messenger of God." Have there been other men before me?"

Then said God: "Be thou welcome, O my servant Adam, I tell thee that thou art the first man whom I have created. And he whom thou hast seen [mentioned] is thy son, who shall come into the world many years hence, and shall be my messenger, for whom I have created all things; who shall give light to the world when he comes; whose soul was set in a celestial splendor sixty thousand years before I made anything."

'Adam besought God, saying: "Lord, grant me this writing upon the nails of the fingers of my hands." Then God gave to the first man upon his thumbs that writing; upon the thumbnail of the right hand, it said: "There is only one God, and upon the thumbnail of the left it said: "Mohammed is the messenger

of God." Then with fatherly affection the first man kissed those words, and rubbed his eyes, and said: "Blessed be that day when thou shalt come to the world."
'Seeing the man alone, God said: "It is not well that he should remain alone." Wherefore he made him sleep, and took a rib from near his heart, filling the place with flesh. Of that rib made he Eve, and gave her to Adam for his wife. He set the twain of them as lords of Paradise, to whom he said: "Behold I give unto you every fruit to eat, except the apples and the corn," whereof he said: "Beware that in no wise ye eat of these fruits, for ye shall become unclean, insomuch that I shall not suffer you to remain here, but shall drive you forth, and ye shall suffer great miseries.

Chapter 221.

.....So there went all, saving twenty-five of the seventy-two disciples, who for fear had fled to Damascus. And as they all stood in prayer, at midday came Jesus with a great multitude of angels who were praising God: and the splendor of his face made them sore afraid, and they fell with their faces to the ground. But Jesus lifted them up, comforting them, and saying: 'Be not afraid, I am your master.'

And he reproved many who believed him to have died and risen again, saying: 'Do you then hold me and God for liars? For God hath granted to me to live almost unto the end of the world, even as I said unto you. Verily I say unto you, I died not, but Judas the traitor. Beware, for Satan will make every effort to deceive you, but be ye my witnesses in all Israel, and throughout the world, of all things that ye have heard and seen.'

And having thus spoken, he prayed God for the salvation of the faithful, and the conversion of sinners. And, his prayer ended, he embraced his mother, saying: 'Peace be unto thee, my mother, rest thou in God who created thee and me.' And having thus spoken, he turned to his disciples, saying: 'May God's grace and mercy be with you.'

Then before their eyes the four angels carried him up into heaven.

Chapter 222.

After Jesus had departed, the disciples scattered through the different parts of Israel and of the world, and the truth, hated of Satan, was persecuted, as it always is, by falsehood. For certain evil men, pretending to be disciples, preached that Jesus died and rose not again. Others preached that he really died, but rose again. Others preached, and yet preach, that Jesus is the Son of God, among whom is Paul deceived. But we, as much as I have written, that preach we to those who fear God, that they may be saved in the last day of God's Judgment. Amen.

* Crude because this text in its present state espouses exactly what many pious Muslims think of the person of Jesus Christ: it is only a prophet, he has not been crucified and the text even goes so far as to mention Muhammad in spite of the centuries of anachronism that it supposes.

PAGAN ONTOLOGY.

ONTOLOGY. Under this title, we will stick to the strictest definition of the term, i.e., to the study of the being as being.

And with this intention, through pure logic, we will start by saying some words of the nothingness. But beware, in what follows nothingness will be conceived as non-existence and not as emptiness or nothing. The word nothingness will simply refer to the state of that which is previous to the being, of that which is previous to existence. The body of a human being one year before his birth, for example. It does not exist in any way.

The paradoxical thought of the high-knowers of Antiquity imagined a kind of “nothingness through excess “ containing all and its opposite in a way, with especially time-related connotations, to which they allocated the function of absolute principle of the being.

The principle of nothingness such as it was conceived by the high-knowers of Antiquity is not a nothingness or a emptiness like in the case of Parmenides. It is a procreation energy, it is the cause of the self and of the principle of everything, it is the origin of everything which comes back it after having existed.

It is, unlike the nothingness of impossibility of Parmenides, a horizon beyond which nothing exists, a temporal origin, a movement of creative energy, working within the origins even of the being.

The work of art is another good example of this conception of the nothingness which should not be confused with the chaos like some Greek thinkers did.

The fact that the work of art does not exist does not mean that nothing exists or that it is a blank. Let us take the example of a picture: before being work of art, the canvas exists, the painting being used to create images and patterns exists, the brushes exist, the matter which will compose the future work exists. On the other hand, what does not exist, it is the finished work. The before-existence of the work of art stops when the creator artist authenticates his work as completed. The after-existence of the work of art begins when the work is destroyed (by a fire for example, in the case of the picture).

As we have had already the opportunity to say it, the doctrines of the Greek philosopher Parmenides is that the being cannot emerge from nothingness. Parmenides poses as primary truth the fact that what is, the being, is, that it is without negation (the non-being is not) and without change. Parmenides opposes to the being the doxa, the changing or confused opinion, which draws us aside us from the truth.

It was not there the point of view of the high-knowers of the druidiaction who admitted by principle the being may emerge only from the nothingness: this theology was a non-Parmenidian theology. The high-knowers of Antiquity never went as far in the negation of the world as certain Greek philosophers like Parmenides or Zeno of Elea, or as Buddhists of oldest School.

For the Eleatic ones indeed, everything is illusory and misleads us here below : our language, our symbols, and even our common sense.

The Gnostic sages of the West were never Parmenidian, they only tried to crack the mysteries of nature, while methodically organizing the synthesis of knowledge about Man and his background , up to that point isolated.

Just like Scotus Eriugena.

For the author of the Periphyseon about the divisions of nature indeed before appearing, and showing himself through his procreating act, God remained in his hideaway as a divine Nothingness or as a Non-being but only from a time point of view, because he remained invisible and unknowable in oneself. God reaches the Being only in his appearance and his manifestation, in which it is made visible and recognizable then. Because the birth of the world is anything else only an appearance and a spreading of God, i.e., a theophany. Every “creature” too becomes consequently a theophany, i.e., a manifestation or an appearance of the one who is in oneself the non-manifested or non-apparent God, the God hidden in the secrecy man cannot scan, of his transcendence/immanence. But this theogonic and theophanic process presupposes also a kind of inversion, through which the divine Nothing makes itself everything, since God at the same time asserts and denies himself in a ceaseless dialectical process. Divine Godness ranges thus from the negation of all the essences to the assertion of all the essences , while passing itself from the Non-being to the Being, or from the non-essentiality to the essentiality.

The Irish philosopher thus intended to emphasize that God himself is this Nothingness from which was caused or led to being everything which exists, of divine Goodness. Eriugena resorts here to a typically pagan dialectic (that of the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite) , in order to show that the

“creation ex nihilo “ is equivalent to a self-creation of the Principle, which ranges from the absolute negation of the Being to the absolute assertion of the Being ; from the non-manifestation to the manifestation. Because the creating process has to go from the absolute zero, i.e., from the divine Goodness which exceeds the Being.

Nothingness according to the high-knowers is not a Parmenidian nothing it is a kind of memory of everything which was, of everything which is no longer and, in the same way, it is the origin of what is not yet, of what will be. In other words, this ogham point (the letter ebad of the oghamic alphabet) is not, it has something to be, it is the “making to be“. Beyond the Being, as beyond the Super-Being, the source of the Being. This principle and source of the Being remains immanent and transcendent relatively to the Being, even higher. We may delimit it only by far, through negation, i.e., through apophatic theology. This principle of the principles we cannot name, nothing is similar to it, and it is neither body, neither individual, neither substance nor accident. It is beyond time.

It cannot live in a place or in a being, it is the object in druidechta of none of the attributes nor of any the qualifications we may allocate to any “being “. It is neither conditioned, nor caused. It is beyond the perception of the senses. Eyes do not see it, glance does not reach it, imaginations do not understand it. Absolute simplicity therefore... of this abyss.

It should be admitted that the only knowledge of the Nothingness that we can reach is that which has, from its existence even, the first Being immediately located below or after the Nothingness, to wit the higher Being. Only “God “can conceive the Nothingness.

The only possible indicator, at the same time veil and support of this Abyss is therefore the super-being, beyond the being; whose being is only a hypostasis (vyuha in Hinduism). Because the being is only a hypostasis of the Super-being.

But this knowledge is itself an unknowledge: the human intelligence must recognize that it will never be able to reach the essential bottom of this original “Nothingness “ evoked in veiled terms justly by the Western Gnostics. On this level, there is no sense to speak about the existence or the absence of a higher divine reality; because this principle of the principles is neither some being , whose we can confirm what it is, nor some non-being whose we can state it is not. At least in a way. Some Agnostic Schools of thought consider it is possible nevertheless to delimit it, although by far, per viam negationis as we saw higher.

“ Some say the Callaicans have no god, but the Celtiberians and their neighbors on the north offer sacrifices to a nameless god at the seasons of the full moon, by night, in front of the doors of their houses, and whole households dance in chorus and keep it up all night “ (Strabo, Geography III, 4,16).

Because this principle of the principles is that the even boldest thought cannot reach. It is the Mystery of mysteries. We can allocate it neither names, neither epithets, nor qualifications.

Some Schools of thought, rejecting the concept even which made the monolatry (I am that I am perhaps an epithet of the great Canaanite god El in the beginning) insisted on the fact that we cannot even in fact, to allocate to this unfathomable Abyss, the being or the non-being; the principle of the principles being super being.

What some Judeo-Islamic-Christians write in connection with the necessary Being at the origin of everything (the First Being or Bitos) is true, but on the condition of moving down a notch downstream. The metaphysics of this abyss rises to the level of the “to make it be“ previous to the being (the putting of the being into the imperative : ison son bissiet).

Beyond the One, there is indeed what unifies.

This assertion avoids the double trap of agnosticism or atheistic materialism (assimilation of the manifested with its manifestation). From where the dialectic of the double negativity. The original Abyss called ogham point is “non-being “and “not non-being “ “not-in-the-time “and “non not-in-the-time “...

Every negation relating to this “Nothingness “is true if it is at the same time denied itself. The truth of the principles is in the simultaneity of this double negation.

* Note: certain high-knowers called “ogham point “or “eabhadh“ according to a letter of the oghamic alphabet this principle of the principles, this abyss of the abysses, this “Nothingness “.

(JUDEO) CHRISTIAN ONTOLOGY.

"WHY IS THERE SOMETHING AND NOT NOTHING OR THE NOTHINGNESS?"

It is difficult to deal with the subject in Judeo-Christianity for a simple reason.

-The founding text, Genesis...

a) Mention a pre-existing raw material, the *tohu wa bohu*.

b) The name of the entity that uses this raw material to create the world...IS A PLURAL (the *elohim*).

-Nevertheless, theology reasons as if it were a creation "*ex nihilo*."

What is to be done?

Answer: we will do as if it were indeed creation, *ex nihilo*, because otherwise there is no longer any reason to speak of a creating god.

In what follows we will therefore deal with God not as the Buddhists but as the Judeo-Islamic Christians understand him (with attributes such as creation * fatherhood all-power omniscience, etc.), and not in the vaguest sense that there of cosmic or spiritual power different from mere matter.

It is true that everything depends on the definition given to things.

The answer to the question, "who is the first, the creation or the creator? Translated to the familiar level by the famous paradox of the egg and of the hen ("which came first, the egg or the chicken?") is paradoxical only in appearance, is paradoxical only according to the meaning given to these two words and particularly of the temporal dimension introduced into them.

Such a paradox disappears if we consider that the egg is only a chicken in progress or vice versa, in short if we replace the temporal dimension by the notion of simultaneity: creation and creator are the same thing, the two sides of the same coin, there is no creator except because there is a creation:

God is another name given to Creation, God creates himself by creating the world, God is the perpetual self-creation of the world etc.etc(see Hinduism, druidism, Ragnarok, etc.)

The hen egg that will be discussed here will therefore be that of the mass religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), that is to say at first...

-A small ethnic or tribal god (YHWH).

-Whose sovereignty was extended to the whole world after the return of their exile into Babylon of certain Jewish tribes

- Whose design was then partially revised and corrected by Greek philosophy (what complicated more the things).

Whereas, as we have had the opportunity to see it with our study of paganism, the high-knowers of antiquity in this type of philosophy or spirituality often resort to the notion of infinity to account for the existence of the world, in an attempt to answer the famous and basic question: "WHY IS THERE SOMETHING AND NOT NOTHING OR THE NOTHINGNESS?"

In the various previous pagan philosophies known, except as regards the initial passage from the nothingness to the being at the absolute beginning of everything (which makes a problem to each one); the prevailing design is, in fact, generally, that expressed by Strabo: "Not only the high-knowers but others as well say that men's souls, and also the universe, are indestructible, although both fire and water will at some time or other prevail over them" (Geography 4, 4).

We must not confuse nothingness and emptiness, which are two different notions.

The notion of emptiness is relative to the notion of space (the vacuum is within in a space) the notion of nothingness relates being or existence. Nothingness is not emptiness, and vice versa. The emptiness is the absence of matter in a definite space. Nothingness is an absence of existence, or more precisely and logically the stage preceding existence, a pre-existence.

There are only three possible affirmations about nothingness.

1) Nothingness doesn't exist, 2) nothingness is, 3) nothingness is something other than nothingness.

Answer 1: Nothingness does not exist.

Anaxagoras, 5th century before our era: "Nothing comes into being nor perishes, but is rather compounded or dissolved from things that are." In his *Elements of Chemistry* of 1789, Lavoisier speaks of matter in these terms: Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed, which is only a paraphrase of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher.

The first solution therefore holds that nothingness is absolutely not. Only being is. Such was also the position of Parmenides about 450 before our era.

Solution 2: Greek Neoplatonists such as Plotinus, Proclus or Damascius developed the idea of a "nothingness by excess" to which they attributed the function of absolute Principle of THE being. In some way the superessential nothingness of the pseudonym Dionysius the Areopagite taken over by the "druid" Eriugena. Moreover, for Plotinus, the negation of the being is the matter. Like Plato, he therefore admits a relative non-being. Matter is identified with evil, complete absence of good, reason, beauty. The non-being is not here, however, the total non-being, but only that which is other than the being ... "

Answer N ° 3: false problem, the nothingness is something distinct from the absolute non-being, from the total absence of being. Mere being and Mere nothing are in reality the same thing. The truth is therefore the becoming, either by passing from the nothing to the being, or by passing from the being to the nothing. RETURN TO SOLUTION No. 1.

To avoid the reasoning based on the regression ad infinitum that characterized many pagan religions, from the Atlantic to the Ganges, the mass religions that are post-exilic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have therefore postulated in a somewhat simplistic way the existence of a being which has in itself its reason for being (it does not need a cause external to it: it exists by itself, from all eternity, outside of time, without receiving something from anyone). The position of Christianity has at least the merit of being clear: the nothingness is the negation of the existence and God, absolute existence, is the negation of the nothingness. It is this being existing by itself (without receiving anything from another) that they call God.

AS AN EXPLANATORY FACTOR THE FIRST OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN THE JUDEO-MUSLIM-CHRISTIANISM or in beliefs of this kind is therefore existence: GOD EXISTS

And of this existence of God thus defined Christians see many proofs but if some thinkers have defended the existence of a *sensus divinitatis* (like Calvin) other thinkers have argued that belief in God is a delusion, a universal mistake of our cognitive faculties in the same way as the perception of the stick broken in the water (an optical phenomenon called refraction).

In the thirteenth century, the Franciscan philosopher Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, wrote in his commentaries on Aristotle (*Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum Libros*, 1217-1220): " In natural science, in moral science, and in metaphysics the best is that which needs no premises and the better that which needs the fewer, other circumstances being equal" (law of parsimony called Occam's razor).

It was besides a well-known principle of scholasticism, dating back very far because it is perhaps universal since it is also found at the other end of the Indo-European world in the writings of the Indian philosopher Madhva (1238-1317) in his *Vishnu Tattya-Nirmaya*. He writes indeed in verse 400: "dvidhAkalpane kalpanAgauravamiti" (to make two suppositions when one is enough is to err).

But as will be seen below, however, this criterion must be applied with great caution because it does not necessarily mean that the simplest hypothesis should always be preferred. We must not confuse, as believers do, simplicity and simplification, still less what is simple with what is simplistic. For every theological explanation is simplistic; it does not solve anything and does not allow any calculation, any prediction of a scientific type.

The first premise of the argument of the superfluity affirms that all natural phenomena can receive a scientific explanation and not that this has been already brought into the present state of science. It is therefore a philosophical attitude consisting of being confident in the explanatory power of science.

Scientific explanations have already been provided for phenomena of which men were formerly sure that they needed the existence of God, It is therefore probable that scientific explanations will be given in the future for phenomena whose explanation needs today the existence of God.

On the other hand, what value has a "stopgap God" who is postulated only to fill the gaps in science? To appeal to the divine one is all the less to provide an explanation that the very origin of the divine one is not explained (see the problem of the regression ad infinitum).

* He is the demiurge of this world in the Gnostic sense of this term.

WARNING. HOLY QURAN CHAPTER 9 VERSE 30.

"The Jews say: Ezra is the son of God, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of God. That is their saying with their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. God (Himself) fights against them. How yufakuna are they!

Semantic specifications.

Ezra. It is the current translators or Muslims who transcribe the Arabic name Uzayr, Esdras. There is no evidence that he is the secretary for Jewish affairs of the Persian empire mentioned in the book of the Bible bearing his name.

If this is the case, it must be remembered here that the Jews never made him a son of God. The Bible does not even make him a prophet. He is a pious Jew sent to Jerusalem in -458 with a first group of volunteers to reorganize the Jewish state with Jerusalem as its capital. Then he disappeared, to reappear in -448. on the occasion of a first reading of the new Jewish law (different from that of the Samaritans remained on the spot).

Only a few speculative Jewish currents make it a new Moses.

About the Arabic word "yufakuna" which essentializes or characterizes therefore Jews and Christians according to Surah 9 verse 30 in the Quran and which is often conveyed in translations as something like "Jews and Christians understand nothing."

They are

-beguiled

-perverted

-perverse

-deluded

-turned away

It is a derivative of the word afaka, at least according to the volume 1 of the book by Muhammad Mohar Ali entitled "Word for word translation of the Qur'an."

But the word yufakuna does not imply a simple ignorance, it rather suggests a misguided intelligence, or that one prevents from functioning normally.

And the "one" in question is to be taken in the strongest sense: it can be God as well as the devil.

Being an atheist, however, we will reject this hypothesis and we will opt for a more natural impediment.

"Jews and Christians are naturally unable to see, to know, to understand! "

At the philosophical level "Jews and Christians' faith...has nothing to do with Reason! "

More bluntly "Jews and Christians.....are morons."

In short in summary "Jews and Christians ... are persons with Down's syndrome." Or alienated.

PIECES OF EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE.

For some Christians, however, human reason is capable of coming to the certainty of the existence of God by its own forces (that is, independently of any process of Faith or Revelation).

Below are some examples of arguments.

First type of argument, the oldest: there was a revelation.
The sacred texts affirm the existence of God.
Now these texts are truthful because they are God's word.
Therefore God exists.

The second premise contains already the conclusion! The reasoning is a vicious circle, a serpent eating its own tail.

The argument is used by some Protestants (for whom the Bible is the higher authority) and by some Muslims (who refer to the Quran). It is less used by Catholics (who, while considering the Bible as the word of God, do not make it, unlike the Protestants, the first or only authority).

This argument is in fact a begging the question, the existence of God is proved by the existence of his word which already implies him. What remains to be proved, not only for atheists, is that these sacred texts are indeed the word of God. Of the only god presiding over men and universe.

There are besides many incompatible religions claiming to be based on the word of God. Either God has revealed himself a number of times and incoherently (what does not correspond to the attitude expected from a good and omniscient being) or some of these religions are false.

If we accept the latter scenario, man must use a criterion outside the aforementioned revelation to discern among the revealed religions which are true. These criteria may exist (Catholics invoke the miracles of Christ, the holiness of his life, the fulfillment of messianic prophecies, etc.), but this amounts to admitting that the claim (to a revelation) is not sufficient to prove the truth of a religion.

Second type of argument: there is something that exists (cosmos world universe, etc.).

1) Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence.

2) universe began to exist.

If 1) and 2) are true, then the universe has a cause for its existence.

Third type of argument: teleology.

The theory of the intelligent design is a resurgence discredited in the scientific community, for it passes inconsiderately from our ignorance of the real causes of something to the certainty of a divine purpose. This latter certainty therefore reflects above all the fact that we have no other plausible assumptions at our disposal.

The teleological argument is a reason why many Enlightenment philosophers have opted for a deist position (Toland and so on ...). This is the theory of the great architect of the universe. It is of the type "If there is a clock it is that there is a watchmaker."

John Calvin, in his Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536), repeatedly calls the Christian God "the Architect of the Universe," also referring to his works as "Architecture of the Universe," and in his commentary on Psalm 19 refers to the Christian God as the "Great Architect" or "Architect of the Universe".

This theory has been durably undermined by the phenomenon of the natural selection which explains the organization of the living without recourse to God (invalidation of the second premise).

The fourth type of argument in favor of the existence of a god thus defined is the use of morality.

If God does not exist, then UNIVERSAL moral values do not exist.

But the UNIVERSAL moral values exist.

Therefore God exists.

The UNIVERSALITY of moral values here is to be understood as moral values true at all times and in all places, apart from what human beings think of them.

According to William Lane Craig, for example, to say that the Shoah was objectively an evil is tantamount to saying that it was an evil even if the Nazis who implemented it thought it was a good and that it would always have been wrong even if the Nazis had won the Second World War and exterminated or washed the brains of all who thought otherwise.

Our view is that this proved even that God the father does not exist, but this argument is nevertheless an extreme case of authoritative opinion, because even in a democratic regime, the fact that an overwhelming majority of people support an opinion is not sufficient to prove its veracity. Many examples can be taken to support this, such as the universal belief in geocentrism (the Sun revolving around the Earth).

NB. The recent discoveries of the animal ethology have passably undermined this argument because they have proved THAT EVEN ANIMALS DO NOTHING BUT OBEY RULES.

Fifth type of arguments.

The very thought of God implies his existence.

The refutation of this type of argument is that the existence of a thing can be proved only from its observation and not from its definition.

For Kant, existence is not an intrinsic property; we may not legitimately say that existence belongs to the concept of God: it is to confuse the conceptual content and the existential predicate of a thing.

Thus, for Kant, the concept of God remains the same whether he exists or not: this "concept of God" proves nothing, and indicates only a possibility.

OTHER SOPHISM SUPPOSED TO PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

ARGUMENT OF PRAYER I.

- (1) When I pray and that this is realized, it is God who made it become realized.
- (2) When I pray and that this is not realized, it is because God has a better plan.
- (3) Therefore God exists!

ARGUMENT OF PRAYER II.

- (1) I wanted a sunny day, therefore I prayed God that it would not rain.
- (2) We had three storms.
- (3) It is therefore clear that God punished me for my selfish desires.
- (4) Therefore God exists!

ARGUMENT OF PERSONAL DISABILITY.

- (1) The Bible says that Jesus turned water into wine.
- (2) Do you can turn water into wine you?
- (3) No!
- (4) Therefore God exists.

ARGUMENT OF PAPAL AUTHORITY.

- (1) The Pope believes in God.
- (2) The Pope is infallible.
- (3) I am a Catholic.
- (4) Therefore God exists!

ARGUMENT BY THE INCOHERENCE OF THE BIBLE.

- (1) If the four Gospels had been invented by liars, then they would be perfect, without apparent fault or incoherence, to make us believe that it is the word of God.
- (2) But the four Gospels are incoherent, erroneous, and even ridiculous in many places.
- (3) Therefore the four Gospels are really words of eyewitnesses.

(4) Therefore Jesus Christ really existed!

Another set of arguments or reasoning.

God wanted to incarnate himself in the most miserable of creatures (a birth without comfort, a simple family of carpenters, a miserable end, etc.).

This was in no way the case of the Nazarene Jesus. His family was not the most wretched of the families that lived in this world at the time; Palestine was not the most uneducated of the regions of the globe (many people knew how to read and write) he was very healthy and countless Jewish Resistance fighters of the time had the same end .

Should the following reasoning be also placed in the same category?

The New Testament was composed or narrated by simple people, fishermen, illiterates (except St. Paul of course) therefore what is in it is true.

But can ignorance and lack of education really guarantee the "factual" veracity of the reported facts?

The Catholic Church since the encyclical *Æterni Patris* (1879) of Pope Leo XIII recognizes the validity of the *Quinque viae*, the 5 proofs of Thomas Aquinas considered as the reference author in this field.

These five proofs are...

- The idea of unmoved mover.
- Of first cause.
- Of contingency.
- The various perfection degrees of the being.
- The teleological argument.

The first three proofs are different forms of the argument of the first cause (cosmology). They resort to the argument of the regression ad infinitum and invoke God to put an end to it. The fifth argument is the idea that man and the universe have a goal, a purpose.

SMALL PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY.

AGNOSTICISM. Deism postulates a transcendent being - an indefinable "god" - who does not interact with the world, while remaining at a distance from all revealed and ritualized religion. Even if he can consider that religious truth is unknowable, deism takes position in favor of the existence of a supreme being.*

Agnosticism or thought of interrogation is an attitude of thought considering the truth of certain propositions concerning particularly the existence of God or of gods as inaccessible to human intelligence.

If the degree of skepticism varies according to the individual, the agnostics agree that there is no definitive proof in favor of the existence or non-existence of the divine one, and affirm the impossibility of deciding on what concerns its knowledge and also, sometimes, with regard to belief or non-belief.

If the agnostics refuse to decide on the existence of superior intelligence, on the other hand, they grant no transcendence and no sacred value to religions (prophet, messiah, sacred texts ...) and to their institutions (clergy, rituals and various dictates ...). Indeed, they see religions as mere social and cultural constructions whose primary function is to ensure cohesion and order in traditional human societies, for example through the threat of hell, the promise of heavenly paradise or again the notion of sin.

Some agnostics call themselves atheists, other theists while others say they are neither one nor the other. Agnostics agree that there is no definitive proof (enough for that a belief reaches the value of knowledge) in favor of the existence or non-existence of the divine.

A recurrent reproach against the agnostics is that their philosophy consists in remaining in indecisiveness, in the compromise of the space between, the soft pillow of doubt. By refusing to take a position on such a sensitive subject as the divine one, they would seek to be angry with no one. Besides most religions see in them it as a reserve of unbelievers to convert, while atheists consider them as stuck in an unfinished progression towards atheism, or even call it "weak atheism," like the rest of irreligions besides. This raillery against a posture stigmatized as hesitation, of course, simplifies the agnostic non-choice, which rather approximates to a wisdom form or prudence facing ignorance.

Agnosticism is, in the beginning, opposed to religions, in the sense that it doubts the existence of their Gods, before even doubting their non-existence. He goes therefore, at first, in the same sense as atheism. However, from the moment when atheism asserts the non-existence of god (s) agnosticism cannot follow it until this point, in the absence of sufficient evidence. Conversely, it cannot follow the various forms of deism which affirm the existence of a supreme being, of an indefinable god, in the sense that no person nor religious movement can claim to be the exclusive depositary of his will; for they too assert it without proof. In both cases, there is no certainty that there is not yet or it will never be an admitted and scientifically established fact that would allow to decide on the question. As for the reasoning expressed by both parties, they are useless because they are powerless to prove something.

Nevertheless it is not a religious indifference for agnosticism admits despite everything the impact that the existence of a deity might have, would it be only in terms of eschatology (hereafter and eternity are perhaps at stake). Depending on the levels of skepticism, the agnostic persons remain more or less attentive to the occurrence of every new element in the debate. Concretely, at least in the DPA, there are not really agnostics who personally value the two hypotheses equally. We will speak of atheistic agnostic for those who lean in favor of the inexistence of god (s) and of theist agnostics for those who lean in favor of their existence.

Our agnosticism being such ("To you alone it is given the gods and celestial powers to know or not to know etc.etc." Lucan Pharsalia) that we do not reject for all that the famous motto of Euclid of Megara: "What has been affirmed without proof can be denied without proof." The problem is to know whether the fact that there is no reason to believe that an entity exists is enough to justify the assertion that it does not exist.

Said otherwise: "It is impossible to know whether one or more gods exist whether this question is approached scientifically or not. The truth about this is outside the scientific, rational, physical and material laws that govern this present universe and all the "alleged" proofs advanced by man are insufficient. The existence of God cannot be demonstrated.

The Definitive In Principle Agnosticism or DPA is based on certain phenomena and paradoxes that science or logic is at present incapable of explaining, but above all on the idea that Mankind living on planet Earth is only a small part of the universe, and even so small that it will never be able to comprehend it totally and to prove the existence or not of god (s). The more we realize the complexity of the world in which we live, the more the Creator (s) we assume to be the cause of it are to be complex and powerful compared to us, and less then it becomes probable that Mankind enjoys a particular divine attention (and even less therefore an individual). The notion of proof of the existence of God therefore becomes completely ridiculous: even if a believer argues miracles described in his sacred texts (and even if a prophet demonstrates it), it will be still possible to object him that it as an unknown technology or magic that does not necessarily have a link with a deity. Vanity therefore of the Man, believing himself capable of answering the question of the existence of god (s). The question of the existence of god (s) is extra-rational and therefore cannot be studied rationally, even, it cannot be discussed. Faith has nothing to do with Intelligence! Converting to Islam for example is not a proof of intelligence!

In practice, the high-knowers of the DPA tend to view religions and their testimonies with the same skepticism as other more scientific evidence; their convictions being open to the appearance of all evidence proving or confirming the existence of God. On the other hand, if the high-knowers of the DPA share the same indecision as to the existence of such a superior being, they tend to reject any sacred character of religions (clergy, sacred books, miracles put forth in the liturgy ...) completely and definitively. And this because they consider these institutions to be purely social constructions, but also because for them the universe is so immense, so complex, and our capacities of perception and understanding so limited, that to suppose a divine intervention in the form of a theophany messiah or prophet is a postulate, which should by itself remind us of the humanly constructed and not divinely obvious nature of every religion. The question of the existence of superior intelligence, of the transcendent nature or not of religions and of human religious institutions, is to be clearly distinguished in the agnostic debate.

The very philosophical idea of agnosticism implies that an agnostic cannot feel "animosity" with regard to a believer. The agnostic may, however, be "critical," about certain religious precepts and about the actions of the faithful who claim "the fulfillment of the divine will." But most agnostics are totally indifferent. Agnosticism, then, is not antitheist. Conversely, any attempt to do proselytism towards them is badly welcomed because no one may claim to prove the existence of God (in the present state of knowledge of man or forever, according to individuals). But the attitude of an agnostic depends especially on the "degree of skepticism" of his position. A high-knower of DPA will tend to be rather tolerant and understanding, if he "understands" the arguments of believers, and admits more or less the possibility of their position. While, on the other hand, a supporter of the DPA will tend towards a more critical attitude, if he considers the arguments of the believers as totally unfounded and unacceptable, and therefore shows at best some indifference, if not, sometimes, some contempt. Most radical besides demands a certain restriction on the public activity of religions because they feel that they should not be allowed to convey cosmogonic theories that are unfounded by presenting them as "absolute truth." Agnosticism is therefore often attached to the concept of secularism; and, without being anti-religious, it often admits that its conviction as being more or less colored with anticlericalism.

In reality, it is necessary to know that the opposition between believers and agnostics relates more to the question of the intervention of God in human affairs than with his existence. Most religions claim to

hold their knowledge from revelations made by their god, what makes it a "sacred knowledge," out of the reach of scientific analysis.

However, an agnostic man first takes into account the information provided by the sciences (that is, the knowledge demonstrated or proved) and, despite the difficulty for it to study the religious field (by virtue of the principle of non-encroachment of the duties) science brings, every day, important reliable information on the nature of our environment and teaches us to put in perspective the place of man in the universe. The observed gap tends to become so big that it discredits the hypothesis of the interference of gods in human affairs, and therefore also most of the revelations boasted by religions. It is conceivable that the god (s) of religions can be entities of a superhuman nature, some natural or cosmic forces, but it is unlikely that they have created the universe and, moreover, mankind in the way described in the Writings of the mass religions, which almost always refer to the creation "ex nihilo" of the spiritual then material world and, on the other hand, to limited and localized interventions of their god (s) to punish or save certain men.

There is indeed a problem of disproportion in the relations god (s) / men as described by mass religions. Consequently, agnosticism tends to consider monolatrous religions as social and cultural constructions, which would have above all the function of making possible a certain social cohesion. In the Semitic languages the word religion comes from a stem "din" meaning law (the law of Moses, the Law of Muhammad), whereas in other civilizations it is in fact unknown (dharma does not mean religion in Indian culture ... but a lot of different things in fact).

Agnosticism thus adopts an attitude of "perfect neutrality" towards religions, at least as long as they respect the fundamental rights of the human person. Gnostic men do not attach importance to the various religious rites. Religious festivals such as Easter, Christmas, Yom Kippur, or Eid al-Adha are simply perceived as traditional festivals. In the same way, an agnostic can go inside the religious buildings if he sees it fitting, for example, to contemplate its architecture, or for reasons of social convention. There is no prohibition or doctrine related to being agnostic, since agnosticism follows, by definition, no "absolute precepts." Agnosticism is not necessarily incompatible with atheism or theism even if some agnostics refuse to decide.

ATHEISM. Atheism considers that there is no god, or at least no reason to suppose that there is one.

THEISM. Theistic religions. These religions are the first targeted by the thought of agnosticism. It is their conceptions of God that agnosticism first studied and from which it constructed its thought. Nevertheless, it will be noticed that the controversies have almost always remained confined to Christianity. The theistic reasoning is regarded as peculiar to the West by certain authors, and Buddhism does not admit or contradict it: the 14th Dalai Lama advises Catholics, for example "Study Buddhism if you wish, but keep your Religion ."

ANTITHEISM. Antitheism is an active opposition to theism.

APATHEISM. Apatheism considers that the question of the existence or non-existence of divinities has no interest or practical utility. An example is the famous answer of the mathematician Pierre Laplace questioned by Napoleon on the absence of God in his system: "Sir, I had no need of that hypothesis".....

* Again all depends on what is meant by "god" or "God" with a capital letter. Cosmic force (s) inherent in the universe as in the case of pantheism or Force having created the universe (cf. the panentheism of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause in *Vorlesungen über das System der Philosophie*, 1828).

CONCLUSION.

Let us point out once again that science and existence or not of God are independent and unconnected things. Science can explain how one believes, it can study the phenomenon of belief but it is not interested in the existence of God. His existence and the proof of his existence or not are not in the field of intelligence or science but fall within the field of faith and theology. God is not within the scope of analytic science. That is why besides to convert has never been a proof of intelligence but a question of faith.

Come at this point in our brief account of the Christian religion, let us remind of the Thesis of Ludwig Feuerbach.

This thesis, set out in the *Essence of Christianity*, starts from the idea that God is a creation of the human mind, what is obvious. According to Feuerbach, the singularity of human qualities that are obviously exceptional compared to the rest of the known world - consciousness, intelligence, creativity, freedom - leads spontaneously human groups to attribute them to a superior power that would be behind them: "What man calls Absolute Being, his god, is his own being." Feuerbach calls this transfer alienation, to signify that men attribute to an external and transcendent being qualities of their own. This thesis has had an important influence on the thought of Karl Marx, who in his *Theses on Feuerbach* expands the concept of alienation peculiar to Christianity to the whole of the social relations of production, through labor and goods, by extending and surpassing Feuerbach's materialism by what will become historical materialism.

A very old opinion presents the religions as instruments of political power. On the one hand, power uses existing religions, but on the other it changes them according to its needs or invents them. Thus among the Romans Numa, the successor of Romulus, was regarded as the founder of their religion, and the critical minds thought even that he had invented it as an instrument for governing the people. Moses and others have been assigned a similar role. This kind of thesis is very widespread in intellectual circles or in the media of our modern societies, especially when it comes to Islam.

In fact, the structure of the brain would also program us to believe: this is what demonstrated in 2001 an experiment conducted with eight Tibetan monks immersed in a state of meditation resulting in a sensation of symbiosis. It has been observed that the more profound the meditation seemed to be, the most slowed was the activity of the superior parietal cortex. Now it happens that one of the functions of this cerebral zone makes it possible to distinguish one's body from the environment and to find his bearings in space. Hence the emergence, in the studied monks, of change of the perception and of the sensation of merging with the Universe.

In May 2008 the team of the professor Nicholas Epley found that thinking about God activates the medial prefrontal cortex, a brain area known to accommodate "self-conscious." This zone is activated when you speak of yourself, express your opinion or develops your analyzes, but remains silent when you evoke the others. In the brain of believers, the same areas are activated when they think of God or of themselves. Believers therefore create God in their image.

Prudence and reason require us to postulate only the existence of what is necessary to explain the world (the principle of Occam's razor that Lucan already attributed to the Gnostics of the West: "To you alone it is given the gods and celestial powers to know or not to know" (*Pharsalia*)).

To take over the expression of Thomas Aquinas, "There is no need to suppose God's existence" does not imply that God does not exist. This argument only suggests that the suspension of one's judgment on the existence of God would be the most reasonable position. Only the evidence of the non-existence of God can make atheism reasonable, and not the absence of evidence in favor of theism. The absence of evidence of the existence of extraterrestrial intelligences does not justify that we reject

this possibility. In the absence of evidence for or against the most reasonable is not to believe anything about extraterrestrial intelligences. Therefore it is the same thing with God.

With this nuance.

It is impossible that a god like that described in the Old Testament can exist (too many anthropomorphisms contradictions of paradoxes).

The belief in a god thus defined indeed raises many problems.

God is omniscient (he knows everything) and omnipotent (he can do everything). Now, is he capable of creating a stone so heavy that he cannot lift it? If he is, then he is all powerful on the one hand (creation of the stone) but on the other, he cannot lift it and therefore he is not omnipotent. Other paradoxes arise from the contradiction between these two attributes: can God do, for example, that something that he knows being to happen, does not happen? These various paradoxes have been widely discussed in the Middle Ages.

With regard to the god of Abraham Isaac and Jacob therefore, the strictest atheism imposes itself *.

On the other hand, with another definition (vaguer, more flexible) assimilating God to a Great Spirit, a Cosmic Force, a Law of the Worlds (tokad = fate in Celtic language) agnosticism might suffice.

* The five or six million Jewish civilians of the Shoah by bullets or by gas or died following an infinity of ill-treatment during the 1940s in Eastern Europe, besides the fact they constitute a spot that will eternally stain the lost honor of the German National Socialism, constitute for us, on the other hand, a modern vision of hell. And could almost constitute a proof of the existence of the Devil, as absolute evil.

REMINDER ABOUT THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

All the religions in this world have a history, they have not come out fully armed from the skull of Jupiter, have not been revealed by God (nor by the Devil besides) but have evolved, have not always been as they seem to be today.

All religions, therefore, have a history, even if all or almost all affirm the opposite, their more or less implicit reasoning is: "True religion" (our own) has always existed! "

Even if the most subtle (subtle being much to say) admit that there have been phases of oblivion that necessitated that envoys or messengers of God remind of it (Arabic rasul or nabi).

Even if some seem to admit that in new situations God was to inspire adapted answers. This is noticeably the case of Islam but also of Christianity with its "Holy Spirit."

The first notions referred to as "god" were rather limited. Basically, they were at least superhuman beings, half-angels half-devils, not at all eternal perhaps but immortal and subject to a universal cosmic law (a supreme god?) generally designated by terms belonging to the family of the words fate or destiny and not endowed with a sex nor a gender like humans.

In Germanic languages the word god comes from a root meaning "call, invocation" (the gods are the beings who are invoked).

In the Latin languages the word god implies the notion of light (the gods are luminous beings).

Such a conception of the very relativistic meaning of the word "god" (the celestial beings that are invoked) implied that there was more than one god in the universe, even if one of them could be preferred over the others.

Monotheism was then unknown, then existed only, at the worst, Henotheism, or Monolatry. That is to say, religious conditioning or reflexes of the kind: "There are several gods or demons, but mine is (check the appropriate box).

- The strongest.

- The one I need.

- The one I must worship.

Let us repeat it once again, monotheism is not original, what is original is (check the appropriate box)

- The atheism (of animal).

- The animism (of the primitive hunter-gatherer).

- The pantheism.

- The panentheism (there is a universal cosmic great mother goddess).

- The polytheism (of Neolithic societies).

- The henotheism

Editor's note. In this type of monotheism, the uniqueness is more about worship (Arabic Tawhid Al-Uluhiyya) than about existence, it concerns more worship (Arabic Tawhid Al-Asma wa-s-sifat) than ontology. It is the ultimate Judeo-Islamic-Christian notion of "jealous god."

" I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. A person may sin against me and hate me. I will punish his children, even his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. 6 But I will be very kind to thousands who love me and obey my commands. " (Exodus 20: 5). In other words, the notion of religion not designed as a spirituality to be shared but as a "din": A LAW.

Then came the idea that above all these gods reigned like a king, a higher king.

All religions that have passed the stage of animism or pantheism have come to this kind of stage conclusion.

But a hierarchized in the manner of human society polytheism does not yet constitute what mass religions understand under the name "monotheism."

That there exists perhaps not a hierarchy of gods in the universe, but one, is a conclusion that was reached only after several centuries or millennia of reflection by some believers. We have said reflection of certain believers and not revelation to this or that particular human being.

And yet this conclusion was structured in two very different types of spirituality.

First type of spirituality, still badly detached from polytheism, or henotheism, the monotheism of exclusive or Akhenatenian type (named after the famous pharaoh inventor of the first monotheism in history).

Second, more elaborate, type of spirituality, the monotheism of inclusive type.

This is the type of religious sensitivity magnificently expressed by the famous dialogue of the Bhagavad Gita 9, 23-29. "Those who are devotees of other gods and who worship them with faith actually worship only me, O son of Kunti, but they do so in a wrong way because I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices. If one offers me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I accept it. I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto me in devotion is a friend, is in me, and I am also a friend to him."

Also expressed by the notion of Tawhid Ar-Rububiyya (unity of lordship) of Sufi thinkers (Sufi and not Sunni or Shiite).

The concept of God, as opposed to contrary to polytheism, reduced to the unity of type Tawhid Ar-Rububiyya has very different religious and metaphysical aspects, what makes it particularly difficult to define.

There are therefore two types of theology; the Cataphatic or positive theology which risks giving to God thus defined certain attributes (creator, all powerful, etc.); the Apophatic or negative theology. Example: "This supreme being if he exists cannot be the god of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob." "All that-the attributes given to God"- are "bullshit" (sic).

Some authors indeed think that God is so great that he escapes any attempt at definition by human words.

Thus the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite could write "In the former discourse, our contemplations descended from the highest to the lowest, embracing an ever-widening number of conceptions, which increased at each stage of the descent; but in the present discourse we mount upwards from below to that which is the highest, and, according to the degree of transcendence, so our speech is restrained until, the entire ascent being accomplished, we become wholly voiceless, inasmuch as we are absorbed in Him who is totally ineffable" (mystical theology).

And the "druid" John Scotus Eriugena after him: "We do not know what God is. God himself does not know what he is because he is not anything. Literally God is not, because He transcends Being."

As we have seen, the advocates of the cataphatic or positive approach nevertheless think that we may recognize positive attributes or qualities to this higher being.

The word God thus defined, according to them, designates then a being or supreme force directing universe; it is according to the beliefs, either a person, or a philosophical, or religious, concept. God is the superior being, single, transcendent, universal, creator of all things, endowed with absolute perfection.

-For sages of high-knowers type or philosophers like Eriugena it is the principle of explanation and unity of the universe.

- For the believers it is, after the original sin, the salvation of the Man which is revealed in the proceedings of his history.

The real existence of a supreme being and the resulting political, philosophical, scientific, social and psychological implications, have been the subject of many debates, with monotheistic believers calling for faith rather than reason, while it is contested on the philosophical and religious grounds by freethinkers, agnostics, atheists or other believers without God like Buddhists.

We will therefore leave it up to the believers (or not) the care to define (or not) what this supreme being is, about whom do not stop talking, and we will now come to what characterizes the majority of Christians: Trinitarianism.

ARCHEOLOGY OF THE GOD OF CHRISTIANS.

Valentinus (c. 100-160) is the author of the first Christian speculations on the notion of Trinity, but he will be considered heretical by the future Orthodox Catholics Reformists.

The starting point of his reflection is the following paradox.

"How could an omnipotent and omnipresent God create a world such that he is obliged to destroy it in order to save a small group of chosen ones? ».

For a scholar like Valentinus the answer is obvious and it can be summed up in two words: our world was not created by this God but by another one, the demiurge.

The idea of triad is very present among Platonists - noticeably through the influence of the Chaldean Oracles. It then gave the three hypostases of the Alexandrian Trinity: absolute unity begets intelligence, intelligence in turn begets the soul, and all three constitute a single God.

Valentinus accepts this doctrine but as for the universal soul which contains all particular souls at the same time distinct and united Valentinus points out that it constitutes a great spiritual human organism which he calls man and Assembly or Church.

Hence the following three plans by somewhat refining.

First plane: the silence, the abyss.

Second plane: intelligence, truth, Logos.

Third plane: man, Church, Christ, the Holy Spirit.

Now, Valentin will attribute to each of these hypostases or principal eons eternal qualities or perfections, which he will call secondary eons.

And then it'll get so complicated that we'll stick to this triad for now.

In this system Lucifer or Satan becomes in Gnostic terminology the chief of the Archons and he is the Demiurge or the great God of the physical world.

But human souls and nature, subject to the influence of the Archons and the fatal laws, sigh after their freeing.

On the notion of Trinity in Valentinus read the Introduction to the theology of the 2nd and 3rd centuries (2 volumes) by the Father Antonio Orbe, professor of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome.

As we have had the opportunity to see, the god of most Christians is composed of three distinct persons. The Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Theodotus (excerpt preserved in Clement of Alexandria)

80 He whom the Mother generates is led into death and into the world, but he whom Christ regenerates is transferred to life into the Ogdoad. And they: die to the world but live to God, that death may be loosed by death and corruption by resurrection. For he who has been sealed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit is beyond the threats of every other power and by the three Names has been released from the whole triad of corruption.

We shall return to this notion, which is quite rightly known as constituting the mystery of the holy Trinity, and which characterizes them. Meanwhile some reminders about the archeology of religious ideas.

GOD'S SEX. And why not in this case an anthropomorphism speaking of mother or brother God? The question is so relevant that there are also passages in the Bible (rare, it is true) where God is compared to a mother.

In Isaiah God is compared with:

- A woman in labor (42: 14).
- A mother who cannot forget the child she nourishes (49:15).
- A mother who comforts her children (66:13).

Other possible metaphors Job 38: 8,29.

But Job is not Hebrew, and the book of Job is quite equivocal (it is perhaps of Sumerian origin). Verse 8 is not very conclusive because it speaks of the sons of God who applaud and verse 29 also.

But even by adding to this skeletal list some other equally unclear poetic images, IT DOESN'T REMAIN LESS THE CRUDE FACT THAT THEY ARE NOT THESE FEW PASSAGES THERE IN THE BIBLE THAT DETERMINED IN THE JUDEO ISLAMIC CHRISTIANS THE FIRST OF THE DESIGNATIONS OF THEIR DESIGN OF GOD IN THE TRINITY OR THEIR CREED: OUR FATHER.

Christians, like the majority of French intellectuals or journalists, have a narrow, narrow, narrow, mind, and it is necessary not to ask them too much.

As regards the revelation of God to men, they have one reference, one anchor point, and know only one book, one people one god one region in the world: the Middle East and the god of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob. In that they are incurable and are more ethnocentric or racist than the philosophers in the etymological sense of the Greek term.

-GOD THE FATHER.

"Man created God in his image."

The German high-knower Feuerbach showed well that in every aspect God corresponds to some feature or need of human nature. "In the consciousness of the infinite, the conscious subject has for his object the infinity of his own nature."

Thus God is nothing else than the Man : he is, so to speak, the outward projection of a human's inward nature.

The qualities that are attributed to him are themselves divine thus making God divine, and showing that humans understand and apply meanings of divinity to God and not the reverse.

"Man created God in his image".....The fact is that many religions give or have also given to their higher God the title and attribute of Father. For example, Jupiter or Zeus, and Judaism also occasionally spoke of its god El or Yahweh * as a father, because of his creation, of the orders he gives to his people or of the protection that he is supposed to grant his people

The masculine characteristics are therefore often used to talk about God in the Bible as well as in the different monolatrous traditions. When these Scriptures speak of God, they use the masculine pronoun "He."

The hero of the initiatory novel known as Gospel, more precisely, affirms on several occasions a universal fatherhood of his God: all men have this God for their father, even if they revolt against him, he is the father of the "Good "as of the "bad " persons. This fatherhood is so true according to this great Nazarene rabbi that only God deserves the name of Father whence the famous prayer bearing that name.

His fatherhood is nevertheless mentioned only five times in the Gospel according to Mark.

The Gospel according to Luke refers to the fatherhood of God only during the childhood and the Passion of Christ, even though the anthropomorphism of the fatherhood is taken up again in the parable of the prodigal son.

In the Gospel according to Matthew and in the letters of St. Paul, this anthropomorphism also appears, but it is the writings of John (Letters of John, and the Gospel according to John) that emphasize most this metaphor.

God's fatherhood is mentioned more than 16 times in both letters. In the Gospel according to John, the Fatherhood there is described as a true adoption that involves the Christians, through Jesus, in a new birth opening the way to God.

The representation of God in art at the beginning prohibited in the Judaism will gradually develop in Christianity through painting and sculpture representing God under different aspects: that of light, or in the form of an old man usually having a white beard. These different representations have their origins in texts of the Old or New Testament and will be taken over by Hollywood.

Among the Christians, these representations of God were besides the object of a very serious crisis during the eighth and ninth centuries. Their prohibition led to massive destruction of icons and to the persecution of their faithful or partisans, the iconodules and the iconoclasm therefore will characterize part of the Protestant Reformation.

The anthropomorphism of the fatherhood of God in the Bible is considered in three main aspects.

First of all, that of the (pro) creation, as in the book of Genesis.

Then that of the "lawgiver."

The last paternal anthropomorphism attributed to God in the Bible is finally that of the protection given especially by El or Yahweh to his people.

Exodus 4, 22 : "Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. So I said to you, "Let My son go that he may serve Me but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn and so on..."

Another mark of the presence of this idea, with the duality El/Yah besides, appears in certain names of person: Abiyah (God is my father) is mentioned in the patriarchal family of Benjamin during the Exodus. In the same way, Eliab (God is my father) is the name given to a chief of the tribe of Zebulun (Book of Numbers). Abiel (son of God) is the name of the grandfather of Saul and Abner. Joab (God is his father) is the name of David's nephew (-1030 before our era).

God is also compared to a Father in six passages of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Jubilees 1:28 "All will know that I am the God of Israel, father of all Jacob's children, and king on Mt. Zion for all the ages of eternity. Then Zion and Jerusalem will be holy."

* This is especially true of El; the god of the North (Israel), Yahweh, being a little special.

WHENCE, SECONDLY THE SON. He was truly a man, and as a man then lived an atrocious physical death. His body nevertheless rose from the dead and then the aforementioned divine person returned to its original state. At least such is the certainty of convinced and believing Christians

Pagan religions, unlike Judaism, were very sensitive to this idea. In Hinduism, for example, an avatar is the embodiment (in the form of an animal, a human, etc.) of a god, come to earth to re-establish the dharma and save the worlds from the cosmic disorder engendered by the enemies of the gods (the demons). Generally, the avatars in question are those of the god Vishnu. Buddhism also uses this word: the Dalai Lama is considered as an avatar of Avalokiteshvara.

The word has its origin in India (it comes from the Sanskrit avatara) and means "divine descent, incarnation." A little bit like the Quran for Muslims. It is therefore a very widespread idea outside the Jewish world, because for the high-knowers there was no epistemological break between the divine and the human, but a continuum.

The Christological controversies which troubled Christianity in the fifth century concerned the nature of this Incarnation of the Word, "who took flesh from the Virgin Mary": was the person of Jesus Christ unique, in two natures (divine and human), or were there in him two distinct "persons," the man Jesus, on the one hand, the divine Word on the other, or even did that deity manifested himself once become an adult, at the moment of his Baptism by John?

Certain Christian currents of the first centuries considered that the incarnation of the Word had taken place only at the time of his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan, that is to say that the body of Jesus would have been adopted by God at this moment. The councils of the Imperial Church first condemned and opposed this conception, called adoptionism at various synods, but it was only in the twelfth century that it was definitely considered heretical.

Non-Trinitarian concepts vary according to the point of view concerning the pre-existence of Christ. Non-Trinitarian churches use the word "incarnation" less often, and more often the expression of John 1:14 "the Word became flesh." For groups that support Socinian theology, and who deny the pre-existence of Christ, for example, the Christadelphians, consider that the expression "The Word became flesh," only indicates that the "word of God" became man. Christ is the incarnation of an idea, not of a being that already existed in another form.

For Jehovah's Witnesses, and other groups that accept the existence of Christ before His birth, their idea of the Incarnation is more or less the same as in orthodox belief.

The Orthodox Church, deeply attached to the notion of the God-Man, Christ, confesses that through Incarnation Christ has taken a human nature fully, by making himself equal to men while preserving his divine nature (He is totally God and totally man), and this so that man may be saved entirely and, through the grace of Christ, be deified.

In the Trinitarian Christianity, the concept of incarnation is therefore considered a mystery. The "Incarnation" is the fact, for God, of having become incarnated into a man, Jesus, in a time (origin of the Christian era) and a place (Palestine, specifically Bethlehem) given.

The Christian tradition of the Council of Chalcedon sees him as the perfect and without confusion, union of the divine nature of the Person of the Word and of the human nature from the Virgin Mary. Jesus is defined as a true man endowed with a human will and the true Word of God whose divine will is common with that of God the Father.

This notion or "mystery" can be found in the Catholic Church, which sees in the Incarnation the fact that the Son of God has assumed a human nature in order to accomplish in it the salvation of men. The Augsburg confession specifies in 1530: "Also they teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did assume the human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men."

The devotion of the Sacred Heart in the Catholic Church expresses this faith in the Incarnation of the Word become flesh in a heart of flesh, a human and divine heart at the same time. Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, Christ embodied in Nazareth in Judea and crucified in Jerusalem, is present as Word, near God, at the beginning of all things during the creation, and will be so at the end of time during the Parousia to judge living and dead at the Resurrection of the flesh (Credo).

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Let us now turn to the true peculiarity of Christianity, because apart from Druidism (Auentia Awen Labarum), no other religion in the world has exalted to such an extent human inspiration.

Indeed, in the Christian writings there are two superhuman entities called the one Paraclete the other Holy Spirit. Unless, of course, it is a single person.

Paraclete. This word of Greek origin, which means "the one who is called for help" or "the one who intercedes," meant "advocate," "defender," "intercessor." Perhaps to convey the Hebrew Menahem.

-John 14: 16-17. "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another parakletos. He will give you this parakletos be with you forever."

-John 14: 25-26. " I have told you all these things while I am with you. But the parakletos; the holy spirit, will teach you everything. He will cause you to remember all the things I told you . "

-John 15: 26-27. " I will send you the parakletos from the Father."

-John 16: 7-11. "But I tell you the truth. It is better for you that I go away. When I go away, I will send the parakletos to you. If I do not go away, then the parakletos will not come. When the parakletos comes, he will prove to the people of the world the truth about sin, about being right with God, and about judgment. He will prove to them about sin, because they don't believe in me. He will prove to them that I am right with God, because I am going to the Father. You will not see me anymore".

-John 16: 13-14. "But when the parakletos comes, the spirit of truth, he will lead you into all truth. He will not speak his own words. He will speak only what he hears and will tell you what is to come."

In the fifth century, the Latin translation by Jerome introduces, for these five occurrences, the neologism *paracletus*, which in certain translations is simply conveyed by *paraclete*, *paraqlita* in the Peshittta (Syriac translation of the Bible).

Other occurrences in the New Testament.

The verbal form *paraklethesontai* is used in Matthew 5: 4 in the sermon on the mountain: " Those who are sad now are happy. The parakletos will comfort them! "

In the first Epistle of John 2: 1, the word is applied to Jesus and the Vulgate as well as all the versions derived from it give parakletos the meaning of "advocate": " If anyone does sin, we have Jesus Christ to help us. He is the Righteous One. He defends us before God the Father."

Among the Gnostics, Paraclete is the name of one of Valentinus' eons.

Around 173 Montanus affirmed to be the vocal organ of the paraclete. According to him, the Paraclete was therefore different from the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles (Acts 2: 2-4) on the Pentecost Day.

In the line of the Gospel of Barnabas (announcement of Muhammad in a Christian text therefore earlier = prophecy) the word "paraclete" was the subject of two "linguistic misappropriations." Some Muslims have transcribed the Greek word parakletos by the word "periklutos," changing the original meaning of advocate to that of "praised one," "glorious," Ahmad in Arabic, become one of Muhammad's names.

However, this term is never mentioned in the Greek Bible manuscripts, and an association of these terms would amount to treating an Indo-European language (Greek) as a Semitic language in which consonants will prevail and in which the vowels would be variable.

The second linguistic misappropriation uses the Syriac word *mnahmana* in an adaptation of the Gospel of John, and as early as the eighth century this term was associated by Ibn Ishaq with Muhammad. The root of this word, *nhm*, however, has only two letters in common and in a different order with that of Muhammad . This interpretation was not very widespread in the Middle East because of the number of Syriac speakers able to denounce confusion but is spread in Northafrica.

Some pious Muslims think that the thus announced by the gospels paraclete wasMuhammad.

In the Christianity, which will succeed Montanism, on the other hand, the paraclete will be equated with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost Day.

" Suddenly a noise came from heaven. It sounded like a strong wind blowing. This noise filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw something that looked like flames of fire. The flames were separated and stood over each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak different languages" (Acts 2: 2-4).

Holy spirit.

In the Bible there are a number of passages that literally contain the idea Holy Spirit. The word that designates the Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Bible is the feminine noun, *ruah*, which very concretely means the breath or the wind. It is the same thing in ancient Greek (*pneuma*) and in Latin (*spiritus*).

The Holy Spirit is therefore for the Christians, the Spirit of God, who push the prophets into acting, and more generally not only the believers but also all human beings.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit can be called in different ways (Spirit of God, etc.). It is also represented by different symbols: the dove (Mk 1:10), the storm, the flames of fire (Acts 2: 2-3).

The divinity of this spirit was proclaimed in 381 at the first council of Constantinople.

The creed of Nicaea-Constantinople specifies therefore, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets."

Such is the faith of the Orthodox Church.

The Niceno –Constantinopolitan Creed, as set forth in these councils, affirmed with regard to the Holy Spirit: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life."

A modification was made by Charlemagne, who adds that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, "and from the Son": "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. It proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, he receives even adoration and glory; He spoke by the prophets. "

This idea of the nature of the Holy Spirit was one of the causes of the Great Schism of 1054 (Filioque controversy).

Orthodox Christians consider this addition contrary to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church, which adopted this change, declares to see in it only the development of a non-explicit element in the faith of the Fathers. This point is one of the major obstacles in the reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

In the catechism of the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit is presented as the interpreter of the Holy Scriptures and the Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for an interpretation of Scripture in conformity with the Spirit which inspired it:

- to pay great attention to the content and unity of the whole Scripture,
- Then read Scripture in the living tradition of the whole Church,
- To be attentive to the cohesion of the faith truths between them and in the global project of the Revelation.

What makes possible about everything. The worst as the best. The simplest, if not the most reasonable, would have been not to remain a prisoner of a series of particular writings. In the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, Pope Leo XIII will again affirm nevertheless in 1893 the doctrine of inspiration by the Holy Spirit of the Bible:

Therefore the Holy Spirit inspired particularly a certain number of men, generally belonging to the Hebrew or Jewish people (this point is contested by other religious currents), hence the exceptional and fundamental nature of its history, it is necessary to study carefully, and especially the prophecies. For like Judaism, from which he springs, Christianity, too, believes in the possibility of knowing the future. At his risk and danger. This generation shall not pass till all these things be done (the end of time) ... throne of King David, house of Jacob." Jesus promised the establishment of the "Kingdom of Heaven." The coming of this era of peace after total purification was imminent. It was necessary to wait for it from one moment to the next (Matthew 10: 7, Mark 9: 1, Luke 21: 25-33, etc.) 2000 years later, you still waitThe event is not fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven has not happened either during the lifetime of Jesus or that of his apostles.

It is true that various Irish texts, on the other hand, offer to our sagacity cases of successful predictions. From the point of view that is our, all this is, of course, deprived of value. But all these predictions are attributed to the high-knowers who, of course, cannot be mistaken, and this re-use by Celtic Christianity is, in itself, remarkable.

"A. Tailcenn (baldhead) will come over the raging sea with his perforated garment, his crook-headed staff, with his sacrifice table at the east end of his house, and all his people will answer, 'Amen, Amen.'"

So much for St. Patrick.

And now the turn of St. Columba (Irish Colum Cille) according to Finn, the supreme leader of the Fianna himself, what is well worth, or almost, a druid.

"Finn Mac Cumhaill predicted him the time he let loose his famous dog Bran off after the deer at the river of Senglenn in the territory that is known today as Glencolumbkille. However, the hound wouldn't pursue the deer while coming into the valley. This astonished everyone, as the dog had never before let its quarry go free. Then Finn had recourse to his wisdom and, speaking through the spirit of prophecy although he didn't have the faith, he said: 'A boy will be born in the land to the north and Colum Cille will be his name. He will be the tenth generation after Cormac grandson of Conn and he will be filled with the graces of the God who is One and Three at the same time- that is, has been and will be. He will have many monasteries and churches in Ireland and Scotland, and he will bless the land here from this stream, it will be an asylum to all who go there for evermore. It is in his honor that Bran had mercy on the deer and declined to pursue it across the river.'

In another passage of the same text (Betha ColaimChille/Life of Columcille) , similar adventure is attributed to other characters.

"The druids (high-knowers) of Conall Gulban, son of Niall of the Nine Host-ages, did thus foretell the coming of Columcille before his birth. On a day that Conall was hunting and chasing at Gartán, his hounds did neither hurt nor harm to the game, and not this only, but they played and gamboled with it. And this thing seemed a marvel to Conall, he understanding that it was sore against nature. And he asked his druids what the meaning thereof was. "We wit well," they say. "A child shall be born of your kin in this place where thou now art, and he shall be of the third generation from thee; and Columcille shall be his name, and filled shall he be of the graces of the one God of all Power and Creator of the Elements. And he shall bless this place and be asylum and sanctuary to everyone that shall need to come hither. It is to honor that child, and the sanctuary he shall ordain in this land, that your hounds, Conall, have granted mercy to that game in the place where he shall be born ."

They are, of course, as in the Bible, post eventum, therefore "false" prophecies. Is it indeed possible to predict the future? We strongly doubt this.

MODALISM OR SABELLIANISM?

HOW UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

Nevertheless, the Christians claim to believe in one.....god .

SECTION TWO THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHAPTER ONE I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

ARTICLE I

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH."

Paragraph 2. The Father

I. "IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

232. Christians are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Before receiving the sacrament, they respond to a three-part question when asked to confess the Father, the Son and the Spirit: "I do." "The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity."

233 Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their names, for there is only one God, the Almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.

234. The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith."

The essential characteristic of most Christian churches, with the exception of the Judeo-Christians, is therefore, as to their idea of God: TRINITARISM. To this idea were opposed the Modalist ideas (God appears Trinitarian only in the modes of his action), Tritheistic (three gods) and Subordinationist (the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father, are subordinate to him and do not possess his full divine nature).

In order not to insult the intelligence of my readers, I shall begin here below by treating the Modalist or Sabellianist version of this concept, which is the only one that I consider myself capable of making clear.

But the problem is that the Christian intellectuals following different problems of understanding between Greeks and Latins concerning the translation of the words persons or hypostases *, homoousios or consubstantial (The Holy Spirit went on strike or was broken down on that day) have clearly rejected such an idea of God (of the Monadic God) by declaring it heretical and have often preferred to speak of it to resort to the notion of mystery, that is, ultimately to the Famous Credo quia absurdum charged with all intellectual resignations.

WHAT IS MODALISM THEREFORE?

Modalism (or Sabellianism) is a modern term which, in the context of ancient Christianity, designates a form - perhaps the most advanced - of Monarchian Unitarianism, taught by Sabellius, a Libyan-born person who settled in Rome at the beginning of the third century.

Modalism consists in recognizing in God three different modes or aspects of the divine being, rather than three hypostases or distinct persons (vyuha in Hinduism) conventionally called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to it the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are only different "modes" "modalities" or "aspects" of the Monadic Divine Being, in its relations with us men, rather than three "hypostases" or persons distinct in themselves.*

For Modalism, therefore, the three entities in question are not beings in themselves, but modes or modalities of the divine being in its relation to men (vyuha): as a creator, it is called the Father; as a redeemer, he is called the Son; as a sanctifier, he is called Spirit.

This first Trinitarianism was taken over by Sabellius in Rome at the beginning of the third century we have said. Hippolytus of Rome knew him personally and mentioned his name and his doctrine in his "Philosophumena." The thought of Sabellius was essentially spread in Cyrenaica, which led Demetrius, the patriarch of Alexandria, to write letters to refute it. It will be condemned at a council in Rome in 262.

It will be nevertheless, the Montanist Tertullian who will be the main opponent of Modalism, that he called Patripassianism, according to the Latin words patris (Father) and passus (for passion/suffering), because Modalism, according to him, implies that it is the Father who suffered on the Cross and not the Son. The complications and splitting hairs began.

Modalism remains in reality little known: the only sources on this ancient idea of the Trinity come from its adversaries. Instead of using the term person to speak of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the single monadic divine essence of the Trinity, Modalism intended to make them three modes of the Monad (of the Single Divine Being).

Traditional Trinitarian theology, which defines the majority of Christians today, places more emphasis on the persons (Greek prosopon) and their relations among themselves, which constitute them.

In the 4th century, the supporters of the Nicene orthodoxy (like Eustathius of Antioch or Marcellus of Ancyra) will be nevertheless accused of Sabellianism by their Arian opponents.

I remind my readers that, out of respect for them, I have especially spoken, in what is previous about the Holy Trinity, of Modalism or Sabellianism, for as regards the mystery itself of the holy Trinity I am incapable of explaining it.

The word "person" is part of Trinitarian theology at least since the Montanist Tertullian. It was introduced because of the Monarchianist negation of any true distinction in the original divine monad. The direct opponent of Tertullian, Praxeas, maintained indeed that one could not believe in a single God, except by professing that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the same person, what rather paradoxical consequences had. At least according to Tertullian, because Praxeas is perhaps a fictitious personage, and this useless polemic is not very clear (Praxeas would have played a decisive role in the rejection of Montanism by future Catholicism ? He would be Pope Calixtus I according to Hageman?)

For the sake of his controversy Tertullian therefore expressed the distinction between the Father, the Son and the Spirit by the use of the Latin word "person." God is one from the point of view of the essence, and three from the point of view of the persons. Unfortunately, the context of Tertullian's use of the Latin word "person" was not entirely clear, and his position was further complicated by the fact that the theologians of the Eastern Church did not have an exact Greek equivalent, because prosopon does not mean absolutely the same in their language.

The fact is that neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine of the Trinity appear in the New Testament; Jesus and his disciples did not intend to contradict the Shema of the Old Testament ("Hear, Israel! The LORD is One"). The early Christians, however, had to face the consequences of the coming of Christ and of the presumed presence of the power of God among them (the Holy Spirit who came at Pentecost).

But the importance of the person of Christ among the early Christians, as well as his role, posed 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.

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 ("a 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 fatal to this doctrine of pagan origin, and which constituted the core of Christianity, which radically differentiated it from Judaism.

The anti-Arian party, led during the first council by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, and then by his successor, Athanasius, was also possibly motivated by less fundamentally religious and less honorable preoccupations **, but these intellectual anguishes are particularly obvious in Athanasius. If Christ was only a very high creature, or a kind of inferior divinity (god, but not absolute God), then worshipping him would have been a totally illegitimate act from the point of view of the Judaism of the Old Testament.

This is why the word *homoousios* ("of the same essence"), incorporated by the council in the final communique, was so important. It was not only a theological dogma that it made possible to safeguard, but the very heart of present-day Christianity.

The great absent in all this was the Holy Spirit.

The problem is that the Greek word *homoousios* had already been used by Sabellius and thus seemed to give arguments to Monarchianism.

The Council of Antioch (265/266), in condemning Paul of Samosata, had besides explicitly rejected the word *homoousion*, claiming that to attribute this title to God would amount to describing him as single and undifferentiated monad, both Father and Son for himself.

Now, according to the theologians of Nicaea, the distinction between the Father and the Son was, on the contrary, an essential aspect of the idea of *Homoousion*.

To further blur the trails, let us note that the Greek word *hypostasis* was the exact etymological equivalent of the Latin *substantia*, but that Greek orthodoxy spoke of three *hypostases* * whereas Latins spoke of a single substance.

Emperor Constantine, who had just united under his sole power the whole of the Roman world, summoned to Nicaea, in 325, a general council in order to define this divinity of the Son. Under the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers, the expression which ultimately won confessed, nevertheless, that God was one from the point of view of the *ousia*, and three from the point of view of *hypostasis*. But the resulting Nicene Creed nevertheless sowed confusion because, by anathematizing striking the Arian formula (another *Hypostasis* or *ousia*), it used *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonyms. Yes, really, the great absent in this debate was the Holy Spirit.

It is therefore not surprising that theologians have always complained of the imperfection of the word "person" to distinguish the point of view that God is three from the point of view that he is one.

Many have shared the celebrated lament of Augustine (On the Trinity, book VII, chapter VI).

WHY WE DO NOT IN THE TRINITY SPEAK OF ONE PERSON, AND THREE ESSENCES.

11. But lest I should seem to favor ourselves [the Latins], let us make this further inquiry. Although they [the Greeks] also, if they pleased, as they call three substances *treis upostaseis*, so might call three persons "*tria prosopa*," yet they preferred that word which, perhaps, was more in accordance with the usage of their language. For the case is the same with the word *persons* also; for to God it is not one thing to be, another to be a person, but it is absolutely the same thing. For if to be is said in respect to Himself, but person relatively; in this way, we should say three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; just as we speak of three friends, or three relations, or three neighbors, in that they are so mutually, not that each one of them is so in respect to himself. Wherefore any one of these is the friend of the other two, or the relation, or the neighbor, because these names have a relative signification. What then? Are we to call the Father the person of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, or the Son the person of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit the person of the Father and of the Son? But neither is the word *person* commonly so used in any case; nor in this Trinity, when we

speaking of the person of the Father, do we mean anything else than the substance of the Father. Wherefore, as the substance of the Father is the Father Himself, not as He is the Father, but as He is, so also the person of the Father is not anything else than the Father Himself; for He is called a person in respect to Himself, not in respect to the Son, or the Holy Spirit: just as He is called in respect to Himself both God and great, and good, and just, and anything else of the kind; and just as to Him to be is the same as to be God, or as to be great, or as to be good, so it is the same thing to Him to be, as to be a person. Why, therefore, do we not call these three together one person, as one essence and one God, but say three persons, while we do not say three Gods or three essences; unless it be because we wish some one word to serve for that meaning whereby the Trinity is understood that we might not be altogether silent, when asked, what three, while we confessed that they are three? " Let us leave aside the question of the original meaning of the Latin word *persona* and the reasons for its use; the question that concerns us is: What kind of distinction does this show us?

Karl Barth shared Rahner's concern, saying that the idea of a triple individuality is hardly possible without tritheism. But the situation is not as clear as Rahner and Barth suggest. In the New Testament, we can hardly not recognize that the distinctions within the divinity are analogous to those which exist between human individuals. The Father, the Son and the Spirit act not only together one with another, but one towards another. Each one has his self-awareness, and each one has his single and distinct role. In any case it is the impression given by the New Testament, and particularly the synoptic gospels.

However, if we admit that there is a true personal distinction between the Father and the Son, can we say that this filiation is eternal? As Waterland points out, pre-Nicene authors are more reserved than their successors when they speak of the original and eternal generation.**

It is the rise of Arianism that has brought this issue to the forefront; indeed, more than the filiation of Christ, it is his eternal pre-existence that has been called into question. For Arianism, the very fact of being a son meant to have come into existence after the Father; Arius deduced that Christ was a creature made in time, and from nothing: "There was a time when he was not ."

Against this, the creed of Nicaea emphasized that the Son was begotten, not made, that he was begotten of the very essence of the Father, that he alone is begotten and that he was begotten from time immemorial.

After Nicaea, the idea of eternal filiation became the official doctrine of the Church, and it is very present in the writings of Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine.

Waterland proposed that eternal filiation should not be a point of disagreement, provided the eternal divinity is guaranteed.

He may be right; yet the questions raised by the eternal filiation are far from negligible.

The strength of a text like John 3:16 stems from Christ's unique relationship with the Father. He did not become the Son of God when He was given, but He was given as the Son of God. It is his son whom God sent (Gal 4: 4). He became the victim of a sin offering as the Son of God (1 John 2.2).

Without eternal filiation, it becomes more difficult to understand and defend the homoousion. For the Nicene Fathers, they were corollaries of one another. Christ shared the nature of the Father because He was the Son of the Father, and He was the Son of the Father because He shared His nature. Athanasius, for example, bound precisely filiation and consubstantiality.

It will be to Christianity to give its potential of contempt of the human reason by proposing a definition of faith which shows to what extent Christianity has constituted an intellectual disaster for mankind, a leap backwards, a huge backsliding (like Islam six centuries later, moreover), as regards his understanding of the things or of the world. "Credo quia absurdum" (a Latin expression borrowed by St. Augustine from the Montanist Tertullian and meaning "I believe because it is absurd"). Implied I can only agree with this by making an act of faith, for they are mysteries that escape the comprehension by simple reason). Nothing in Christianity encourages the critical spirit or even common sense, beginning with its astounding pretension to be the true Israel. What matters is to believe and submit to the Church.

Present state of the mystery of the Holy Trinity for Christians therefore.

Credo (quia absurdum).

Three errors are to be avoided: Tritheism (three totally distinct beings), which would be contrary to the strict Hebrew monotheism claimed by Christianity, the Subordinationism (the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father, are subordinate to Him and do not possess his divine nature) and the Modalism (three apparent modes of one being) incompatible with the existence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as distinct persons. For Modalism indeed God is an original monad.

a) The Divine Being consists of a single indivisible essence (ousia, essentia).

b) In this one divine Being, there are three persons or individual existences: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

c) The whole essence of God belongs to each of the three persons.

d) The existence and the way of doing of the three persons of the Divine Being are marked by a precise and defined order.

e) The three persons are distinguished by personal attributes.

f) The Church confesses that the Trinity is a mystery that man cannot understand.

* Vyūha in Hinduism.

** These personal rivalries of the bishops of the time, together with the inadequacies of the Greek language, well expressed by its famous paradoxes (of Zeno), ended by plunging Christian theology into the stalemate of its present design of the Trinity. Let us nevertheless have the indulgence of the Sufi thinkers and let admit that the Trinitarian Christians are not (subjectively speaking) tritheistic, polytheistic, therefore some kuffar; since they have sincerely wished for centuries to be monotheistic; and let pray the gods that the Sunnites or Shiites do like Sufis in this field.

CONCLUSION.

Christian orthodoxy took at least five centuries to be established as a whole confused and uncertain in its expression.

St. Paul is the first to have begun to dogmatize a theology that is often obscure.

He once declared, with a remnant of his disdain anti "non-Jewish of origin" : "Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1: 22).

These were mainly in the beginning problems of semantics, due to the imperfections of the Greek or Latin languages, which are not mathematical languages or even more rational languages like Esperanto. A good dose of philosophy would have been sufficient , but on the contrary, they were aggravated by their hubris and their rejection of the other (their pretension to be the true or new Israel) their conditioned reflex in the Pavlov way with regard to the Jewish writings which is called the Old Testament. These were mainly problems of semantics, due to the imperfections of the Greek or Latin languages, which are not mathematical languages or even artificial languages like Esperanto. A good dose of philosophy would have sufficed, but on the contrary, they were aggravated by their hubris and their rejection of the other (their pretension to be the true or new Israel) their conditioned reflex to the Pavlov with regard to the Jewish writings it is agreed to call the Old Testament.

Its own revealed texts to consist of a series of testimonies, which are considered as reflecting the doctrine of the supposed son of God or of the Demiurge, destined to promote the salvation of mankind.

Now a truth which claims to be revealed lacks the coherence required from the moment when it reveals its historical genesis. If the dogma is intangible, it cannot have a history by definition. Hence the necessity for it to mask the laborious side of this long genesis, by the invention of an artificially straight line, going from its founder to today, and defining by contrast as heretics all those who did not fully agree with it.

The first and second centuries were marked within Christianity itself by the controversy between gnosis (knowledge) and pistis (faith).

As Christianity spreads among the popular classes, it will lose its original elitism and will increasingly appeal to pistis (faith) and less and less to gnosis (knowledge). Faith, for these Christians, will no longer be a mode of superior knowledge as among the Gnostics, but only a form of confidence or obedience.

From Constantine, in the fourth century, the people will be carefully kept in ignorance. The story of Jesus Christ becomes a dogma that we cannot even consider calling into question.

The dogma is only a series of answers attributed to the divine will, but which in fact proceed from tactical options to which the temporal power of official Christianity had to resolve.

Drawing from the Gnostic collection, Platonism and Aristotelianism (see St. Thomas Aquinas) , Christian theology was built up according to the polemics in which the survival and power of nascent Christianity were at stake.

Although philosophy was presented until the eighteenth century as the servant of theology, it was a little the reverse that happened. Christian theology becomes complicated, falls into the haziest speculations, and regurgitates in some way the Greek rationality from which it has been inspired by wishing to extricate itself from the contradictions connected with its origin.

The paradox of Christian theology is that it rose from a philosophy which, eroding it from inside will end in emptying it from its content to leave it as a goatskin filled with the sonorous inanity of its speculations.

In short, the Jewish-Christian mythological background having lost all credibility, the Greek philosophy, which made the message pass, also appeared in all its disappointing nudity. Christianity remains a threat for the Reason and the free expression of ideas, as John saw it very clearly John Toland, who shouts, in short, to the Christian theologians, in this way. What people do not understand is the gibberish of your Schools of Theologywhen others are but prayed to explain their terms, which commonly signify nothing, or what they must be ashamed to own that would never be thought in an error, they are uneasy, as an extravagant merchant to examine his accounts; and 'tis well if they can refrain their passions. Not only a few men, but oftentimes whole societies, whilst they consider things but very superficially, set such a value upon certain sounds, as if they were the real essence of all Religion. To question or reject any of these, though never so false and inconvenient, is dangerous heterodoxy: and yet, as I hinted now, they either signify nothing, or have been invented by some leading men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own ignorance.

What is unpardonable, the holy Scripture is put to the torture to countenance this scholastic jargon, and all the metaphysical chimeras of its authors. A distrust of your own Reason, a blind veneration for those that lived before you, and a firm resolution of adhering to all the expositions of your party, will do anything.

Believe only, as a sure foundation for all your allegories, that the words of scripture, though never so equivocal and ambiguous without the context, may signify everywhere whatever they can signify: and, if this be not enough, believe that every Truth is a true sense of every passage of scripture; that is, that anything may be made of everything: and you'll not only find all the New Testament in the Old, and all the Old in the New; but, I promise you, there's no explanation, though never so violent, though never so contradictory or perplexed, but you may as easily establish as admit. On that account, even what Jesus meant is not enough if we understand well.

(Summary of John Toland's thesis on this subject and published in his famous pamphlet about the mysteries of Christianity.)

For many centuries, therefore, the papacy will prohibit any translation of the Bible into vulgar languages; in order not to allow it to be read by the common people of the basic Christians, in the case they should have access to a copy of the aforementioned book. This type of translation will even be still blacklisted in 1745.

The Church is the interpreter of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church has rarely defined (has it ever done?) what a text meant for the person who wrote it.

The present position of the Church about her pastoral duties is besides the following one.

What matters is not what the author of the evangelical (or biblical) text in question meant, but what his text means, and that Church alone may decide it; for the Holy Spirit continued to act after the death of Jesus, and he guides the Church in what she has to do.

This interpretation of the Church consists essentially, for the Catholics, not to rediscover the original meaning of this or that passage, at the time when it was written; but to draw from it her teaching for the life of the Christian community in the course of time. On essential questions, she maintains that the spirit, which inspired the Old and New Testaments, will not allow the entire community of believers to err in the field of faith or morals. This, at least, is the opinion of Raymond E. Brown on the matter.

OVERCONCLUSION.

Christian theology has for every discourse on God or the Demiurge, except the Trinity, the childish anthropomorphisms which abound in the Bible. Does not the Torah tell us that Yahweh was walking in his garden in the cool of the evening (Gen. 3: 8)? Do not the gospels show us Jesus going in a boat, climbing a mountain, drinking, eating, preaching?

The question that immediately comes to mind in this case is: from where do god-or-demons like Zeus, Yahweh, or Christ, come, when they appear on earth in human form? From the Heaven, of course.

The descent of a deity into this world, in the deep of the Cosmos, in order to deliver certain souls /minds, is a very ancient religious conception. Ishtar descended into Hades to save Tammuz and Orpheus went into it to free Eurydice. It was the same with Demeter for Persephone, Dionysus for Ariadne and Semele, Heracles for Cerberus, Theseus, or Admetus. In ancient India, Ravana saved the damned as Yudhistira, Vishnu, and Buddha had to do. In late Judaism (Bereshit Rabba), the luminous Messiah presents himself at the gates of Hell (Gehenna) and frees the prisoners from the darkness of the death.

Had not the Greeks also believed that Zeus had descended onto Earth, had shared the bed of Alcmena, and that the famous Hercules was born from this union?

There are many instances of the virginal birth of a god-or-demon in ancient mythologies. That of Attis, for example. References to Jesus as the son of God or of the Demiurge are essentially of a poetic order and should not be taken literally.

But if it is possible that Jesus was born with the help of a divine father (like Cuchulainn and many other heroes of pagan mythology), it is impossible for him to be born WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF A HUMAN FATHER.

The descent onto the earth of a pure spirit is a Gnostic idea that the anti-gnostic Justin (the first to mention about 150 the mother of Christ), Irenaeus and the Montanists, will change into an in vivo fertilization or parthenogenesis; better understood apparently by the worshipers of god-or-demons as Attis, Lug, Tuireann, Cybele.....than by the Jews.

The worship of Attis was supplanted at the end of the 2nd century by the first massive expansion of Christianity, that of the New Prophecy that Montanus had spread, and of which Tertullian was the last defender; But a number of its concepts, such as the notion of Eucharist (the name given by the Montanists to the meal of commensality "devogdonion" between men and god-or-demons) passed into Catholicism.

The official Gospels of Christianity historicize elements as fantastic as the fecundation of the Virgin by an angel; but also the descent of the spirit in the form of a dove over the new Joshua; the ascent of the Messiah from his tomb at the end of three days, the flames of fire at Pentecost, and so on. The reality is that Christian theology has established in dogma an old mythological content, Hellenized by the teams who composed the official Gospels, and that we must now study as we study Babylonian or Greek, or druidic, mythology.

There are other challenges to common sense in this religion. For example, the Trinity. The Christian Trinity is not heaven-sent, it results from Gnostic speculations and then in the 4th century from the reflection of the Church of Rome and Alexandria against the churches controlled by Arius, even from the weight of the pagan symbolism in Western Europe. The triad, which transcends dualism, is indeed frequently attested in archaic beliefs and thoughts (the belisama Brigindo or Brigantia is for example, for the Irish high-knowers of the druidiaction –druidech- a triple goddess- or-demoness, of fairy if it is preferred).

The Indian Trimurti is probably also not without links with the Christian Trinity; Hindu philosophical conceptions were known by the Greek world at the beginning of our era. The city of Alexandria welcomed an Indian community and Greek testimonies on the cult of Vishnu in the second century of our era (including that of Heliodorus, son of Dion, ambassador of the Indo-Greek king Antialcidas). God the father, the procreator, is to be compared to Shiva, the god-or-demon being substituted for his organ of creation, the lingam. Vishnu is God the son, descending on earth in the form of an avatar. There are a number of similarities or resemblances between Krishna or the other avatars, and Christ; as we find some of them besides with some Greek heroes (Krishna and Achilles die in the same way, an arrow in the heel). These similarities between Jesus and Krishna have been studied by authors such as Gerald Massey (1828-1907) Kersey Graves (1813-1883) and others but the overview remains still to be authenticated.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, does not seem to have succeeded better than Brahma in regard to devotion even if.

In 1553 the Spanish doctor named Michael Servetus was burned alive in Geneva by Calvinist Reformists for his personal interpretation of this dogma.

Catholics and Reformists or Orthodox will never cease to set themselves up as custodians of these intangible and immutable truths, going so far as to endorse the worst scientific aberrations of the Bible. The execution of Giordano Bruno; whom the Church will sentence to stake after seven years of torture, and who wishes to approach Christian mythology as equal to the Greek, Roman, or druidic mythologies, as well as the condemnation of Galileo, or Darwin; are the dramatic illustration of that.

One of the last victims of the law against blasphemy and profanation in France was the young knight of La Barre, who when he was nineteen years old, was beheaded and then burned at Abbeville in 1766; for having mocked a procession of the Blessed Sacrament and having damaged a crucifix with his sword (according to the accusation). So true it is that the sacred cannot tolerate, under penalty of losing its characteristic that man refuses to kneel before the deity it claims to represent. In 1942, in Spain, General Franco made a man accused of having broken a statue of the Virgin and having trampled hosts (a crime equated with a rape or a murder) executed (by the garrote).

In India this crime is punished with three years in prison. In Pakistan, procedures rarely go so far, the accused being mostly murdered before, including inside prisons.

These laws are, of course, related to anti-racism. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom and the Muslim topic "No constraint in the field of Religion"; has himself declared that prohibitions against acts of defamation or blasphemy are used abusively for the purpose of banning the right to criticize or discuss religions and matters relating to it. In many cases, this accusation of blasphemy becomes the tool of extremists who censure non-obscurantist intellectual minorities ... (Editor's Note: The same result is now got in the courts or in the media of countries like France with the accusation of racism, anti-Semitism, or Islamophobia.)

It was still John Toland (decidedly) who best understood the phenomenon. There is nothing that men make a greater noise about, in our time especially, than what they generally profess least of all to understand. The Divines, whose peculiar province it is to explain them to others, almost unanimously own their ignorance concerning them. They gravely tell us, we must adore what we cannot comprehend: And yet some of them press their dubious comments upon the rest of mankind with more assurance and heat than could be tolerably justified, though we should grant them to be absolutely infallible. The worst of it is they are not all of a mind.

THE QUESTION OF THE METAPHYSICAL EVIL *.

Among the problems this opinion (the existence of the evil) has aroused at all times, two have a particular importance: the question of what it is and why it exists. Some metaphysics do not have this problem nevertheless because they are not dualistic but monistic, and do not distinguish a good that would be opposed to an evil.

Monism is a metaphysical concept. It is a doctrine advocating the thesis that everything that exists - the universe, the cosmos, the world - is essentially a single whole, and therefore formed of a single substance. Monism is opposed to all dualist philosophies, which separate materialistic or physical world and psychic or spiritual world.

Monism postulates that there is only one reality, therefore one substance. We can distinguish several apparent variants of it according to the nature of this single substance. Two great monistic schools appear essentially, one materialistic, the other spiritualist, according to whether the universal substance is matter or spirit.

But these distinctions, relatively valid at the phenomenal level, do not long resist the philosophical analysis, for if there is only one substance, it's no big deal what name or attributes are given to it since by definition, it exists only itself and it unites in its uniqueness therefore all the names and all the existing attributes.

In essence, on the Metaphysical level, monism is at first radically opposed to all dualisms (such as Platonism or monotheisms), which, all, suppose the existence of a world of ideas facing a material world, both being of different and separate natures.

Monism is also opposed to all philosophical schools built on the intrinsic multiplicity of reality. We may then speak of restricted monism when the unity is limited to the substance only, and of generalized monism to affirm the absolute non-duality of all that exists.

The great theoretician of the non-dualism is the Indian Adi Shankara (ninth century) who has constructed a whole logic (in the sense of the logicians) which refutes the principle of the excluded middle and which also rejects any use of the exclusive OR. With him there is never any "either... or" but always "and...and ."

Monism is the base of most spiritual and religious traditions in the Far East but Buddhism claims to be neither monist nor dualistic nor pluralistic. Unity does not obliterate multiplicity, difference does not obliterate identity; everything (including the Absolute) has for characteristic the emptiness (Sunyata), but each phenomenon is thus, as it is, that is to say, Tathata, "thusness, suchness."

THE DUALISM.

By dualism is meant the religious and philosophical doctrines which oppose two co-eternal and antagonistic principles, that of Good and that of Evil. Is dualistic any religion in which a Principle of evil, distinct and autonomous, exists since always and jointly with a principle of good.

This definition corresponds to what the historians of religions call "absolute dualism" since there were two principles at the outset.

This implies a value judgment (good / bad) and a hierarchical polarization of reality at all levels: cosmological, anthropological, ethical, etc.

Nevertheless, within this dualistic thought, there can be a mitigated tendency which historians of religions call "mitigated dualism" or "monarchian dualism" because it states that the principle of evil is a principle secondary in relation to the principle of good, and that it will be eventually defeated (case of Zoroastrianism, for example). What thus brings it closer to Monism.

Editor's note. Dualism is generally defined as an opposition between spirit and matter, soul / body, eternal world / world of the ephemeral one, etc. and postulates therefore the coexistence of two eternal and unbegotten principles at the origin of the creation of good (the "Soul, the spiritual world) and evil (the body, the material world).

Its most well-known expression comes from Zoroaster. Of these two principles which have been imagined as twins and which are born in thought, the one represents the good and the other the evil. Between these two, the sage chooses the good and ignores the evil. And when, from the beginning, these two principles met, they created life and non-life.

But the interpretations diverge, since the mention of the supreme God Ahura Mazda seems to indicate a monotheism, and that of the twins (Spirit of the good Spenta Mainyu, spirit of evil Angra Mainyu) a dualism. According to Martin Haug (*Essays on the Sacred Language*, 1862), Zoroaster has a monotheistic theology (Ahura Mazda) and a dualistic philosophy (good and evil, inherent in God as in man).

* That we distinguish carefully from the phenomenon of suffering old age and death; even from the simple moral dilemmas falling within casuistry, caused by the lack of empathy characteristic of the human species, by psychopaths and other sociopaths, in spite of the universal golden rule stipulating: "Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you" (according to Isocrates). For there is another equally universal rule in the human species, and especially in politics, that of the "double standard." It is never the same thing.

THE VARIOUS ANSWERS.

As we could see it, the question of the existence of evil in a created world is generally a real challenge for the CREATIONIST Monotheistic or Manichean theologians.

THE ESSENIAN ANSWER.

The contents of the manuscripts. The library of Qumran was assembled and composed by a religious group breaking with the official worship of Yahweh that took place in the Temple of Jerusalem. The group was probably formed around the end of the Maccabean revolt (mid-second century before common era). It is probable that the group was composed mainly of priests who were in conflict with the Asmonaeon dynasty who had just taken up the office of high priest. It is also probable that the group attempted some rapprochement with the new high priesthood but, failing this attempt, withdrew into the Judean desert in order to follow and apply the Mosaic Law according to their convictions. The exodus of the group to the site of Qumran could have been led by the Teacher of Righteousness, an important leader of the initial group.

The writings of Qumran present a unique Jewish theology that evolved progressively according deepening gap between the community, on the one hand, and the Temple of Jerusalem, the Romans, the godless, and ultimately the world outside the sect. The study of these writings makes it possible to recount the evolution of certain religious themes and to notice the appearance of certain very original ideas. These sectarian manuscripts also help modern researchers get a more accurate picture of the very diverse religious landscape that existed in pre-rabbinic Judaism in the Second Temple era.

Essenian theology is marked by a strong dualism. Mankind is divided into two groups: the Good Sons of Light and the Evil Sons of Darkness. Each of these groups is led by a supernatural angelic figure: the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness. Some manuscripts even assert that this division exists within each human who has in it a certain number of parts of light and part of darkness. This terminology that opposes light to darkness and the Prince of Light to the Angel of Darkness strongly recalls the Persian dualism of Mazdeism where the good god Ahura Mazda is opposed to the wicked god Angra-Mainyu. It is quite probable that the community of Qumran was influenced by this Persian religion (prior to the Second Temple and which still exists today) since the Jewish people have been in contact with the Persian world for several centuries. It is important to note, however, that the Qumran community would not have adopted the Persian dualism, but rather would have adapted it to their Jewish tradition without changing its foundations. We note, for example, that the two angelic leaders (or spirits) are not equal and that the Angel of Darkness is not especially opposed to Yahweh. Yahweh remains the only God. He created the two spirits in the mystery of his wisdom. He loves good spirit and hates the other.

Essenian theology is also highly eschatological. The Qumran community was waiting and preparing for the end of time. This apocalyptic event is described in the War Scroll (1QM) as a gigantic battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. This war would definitely end the reign of the Angel of Darkness and restore the righteous of Israel in the glory of Yahweh. Modern scholars are, however, divided as regards the belief, of the community of Qumran, in the resurrection of the dead. Essenian theology is also marked by a certain determinism. God created the universe according to his precise plans. He also divided mankind into two clans according to the mysteries of his knowledge. He anticipated the temporary reign of the Angel of Darkness and foresaw the proceedings of the events of the end times

Qumran's manuscripts provide us with much more information about the community of Qumran and its theology: sharing of goods, community meals, emphasis on ritual and food purity, pre-eminence of a solar calendar, various forms of messianism, attachment to the observance of the Mosaic Law ... Readers wishing to know more can refer to the book by Lawrence H. Schiffman in 1994 with the title *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls and Judaism*.

THE MANICHEAN ANSWER.

Manichaeism having become a common, very common, noun, today, it is important to point out that originally it was something a little more subtle or spectacular than what the hubristic caricatures from the media-politician circle made of it. Manichean thought had an important influence on Christianity, Islam and even Taoism. Most of the traces of this religion are fragmentary and come to us from its adversaries, but the discovery of manuscripts in the beginning of the 19th century in China and Egypt made it possible to increase our knowledge of this twin brother of Christianity.

Mani was born in the year 216 of our era in northern Babylonia, on the left bank of the Tigris, not far from present-day Baghdad. When he was four years old, he joined his father who converted to Elcesaitic Baptism. This Christian sect, Baptist, which subsists until the 10th century in the region, will therefore raise and supervise young Mani for twenty years. It is distinguished by a strict observance of the lifestyle prescribed by the Torah and by its very strict rules of life. When he was 13 years old, Mani has his first revelations by an angel who has the appearance of his twin. He then began to contest the Baptist religion until he left the community at the age of 24 to preach his own religion.

Mani presents himself as a new prophet, successor to Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus. He thus speaks the whole of the known world and seeks to deliver a universal message. He immediately began to preach the new religion towards the East, to India, where he discovered Buddhism, incorporating certain beliefs of it in his own spirituality. There are no notable conversions within the Buddhist populations, but rather within the Christian communities created by the Apostle Thomas in the region. Returning to Ctesiphon, capital of the Sassanid empire, two years later, he was received at the court of the king of Shabuhar 1st, who authorized him to preach throughout his empire. He then accompanied the king during his campaign against the armies of the Emperor Valerian in 255, during which he founded several communities. On his return, he elaborates the rules of his new church and sent missionaries, including his father and brother, to Iraq, Egypt, India and the Arabian Peninsula. As for Mani, he keeps on traveling, creating new communities or visiting communities already created, while attracting a growing number of disciples.

But in 273, King Vahram succeeds his father. Very influenced by the clergy of the empire, he forbade Manichaeism, in order to re-establish the Zoroastrian religion as the sole religion of the empire. He reproaches Mani for having converted several vassals of the king and for continuing his journeys of conversion. Refusing to submit, Mani is summoned to the court in 277, he is then chained and dies at the end of an agony of several days.

Through his Baptist experience, Mani rejects the Jewish Bible forever. Instead, he was inspired by the New Testament and the life of the Apostle Thomas. According to Mani, Jesus was credited with demonstrating the falsity of Jewish law, he is not really dead and Mani succeeds him to announce the final revelation to the world.

According to Manichaean theology, the world of light and the world of darkness clash. A single God resides in the world of light, he is light, force and wisdom. The time is divided into three parts. The initial moment is the era when darkness and light are separated, they mix during the median moment, and will separate again at the later moment. These moments are described at length in the Manichaean literature as a series of confrontations between the forces of light and darkness. This very rich mythology stages sacred characters like the primordial man, Jesus, the twelve virgins of light, etc. The human being is the result of the confrontation between light and darkness. For the Manichaeans, the soul is light and the body is darkness. The Manichean must therefore seek to favor the mind and forget the body, creating a certain separation between both. The aim is therefore to restore the initial division between good and evil. If the believer manages to reach this state, he will emerge from the cycle of reincarnation and his soul will rejoin the kingdom of light.

During the 4th century, Manichaeism spread throughout the Roman world, especially in Egypt, where it settles permanently, in North Africa, and as far as Constantinople and Rome. The Manichaean literature is then largely translated into Coptic, Greek and Latin. Faced with such success, the emperors Diocletian, Valentinian I and Theodosius I, issued edicts of prohibition and persecutions against the Manichaeans. Many of them were then arrested, executed or exiled outside the empire. St. Augustine follows the teachings of Mani as a free auditor between 373 and 387, the date on which he is baptized. From then on, he would oppose the Manichaeans by multiplying public debates. His writings, retracing the whole of these debates, bring us a good knowledge of Manichaeism. The persecutions continued until the sixth century, with the emperor Justinian. As a result of this repression, Manichaeism disappeared rapidly from Europe.

After the fall of the Sassanid Empire in 637, the Arabs control Iran where they initially tolerate the Manicheans. The cohabitation between Muslims and Manicheans will be longer in Baghdad where is their supreme papacy. This coexistence will influence nascent Islam on several points. The prohibition to represent the divine image existed among the Manichaeans, as well as three of the five pillars of Islam (alms, fasting and prayer). But in 782, following the decision of the Abbasid caliph Abdullah al-Mahdi to persecute them, Manichaeism quickly collapsed in the region. Samarkand became the central city of Manichaeism, replacing Ctesiphon.

At the same time, the Manichaeans turned to China. They translate and adapt texts and mythology to Chinese Buddhism, notably by leaving a great place for Buddha. In 694, a Manichaean dignitary is signaled in the court of China. Nowadays, a few groups still claim to be in line with the Manichaean Church. Mani has become an important symbolic figure of contemporary Iranian culture.

Manichaeism is therefore an Iranian offshoot of Gnosis, which supposes a mixture of Zurvanism and Mazdeism. For the Manichaeans as for the Gnostics in general, the creation is the consequence of a fall; but, as in Mazdeism, God has an adversary equal to him and independent of him: Ahriman; and well, God is the god of Zurvanism. Zurvan sends Ormuzd, the Primordial Man, to fight Ahriman. This struggle results in a mixture of good and evil, of light and darkness: this mixture is the world; and also the imprisonment of light, which is to be released from its envelope of darkness by the practice of rigorous asceticism and thanks to the intervention of various saviors, among whom Jesus. At the end of time, light and darkness will be restored to their respective purity.

THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER.

The fact that St. Augustine first began by being a Manichaean bishop proves that Manichaeism and official Christianity have much in common.

The Gospels oppose indeed:

- Jesus and the devil: "The devil said to him," If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread, "(Luke 4: 3).
- Earthly Kingdom and Heavenly Kingdom: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John, 18:36).
- Body and spirit: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).
- Letter and Spirit: "You judge according to the flesh" (John, 8:15).
- The blessed and the cursed: "He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.... They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25: 32-46).

In ancient Christianity therefore there are many dualist tendencies, which will ultimately be eliminated by official Christianity.

Among the early Christians the Greek word demon, which is neutral at the outset, means only spirit or genie (so there can be good demons) take gradually among clergymen, the meaning of fallen angel, spirit of evil or devil. The book of Enoch, apocryphal text of the second century, deals, for example, with this myth of fallen angels. Demons are mainly spirits made by God to be angels, but have turned away from their Creator.

The book of Enoch is part of the canon of the Old Testament of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but it is rejected by the Jews and is not included in the Bible known as the Septuagint. It was officially dismissed from the canonical books of future Catholic Orthodox or Reformist around 364 at the Council of Laodicea (canon 60), and has since been considered apocryphal by other Christian churches. He was known in the West, at least indirectly, for his influence on the calendar passages in the Hiberno-Latin texts, such as the Altus prosator, is to be found again. The composition of the various books stretches over a period from before the third century before our era to the first century of our era. Concerning the Book of Watchers, research is divided between the third century before our era and a still earlier dating, in the 4th century before our era, even at the beginning of this century. Parts of the book were probably composed in Hebrew, others in Aramaic.....

Thus, have we come to distinguish among the creatures of the other world, the guardian angels [Editor's note - we prefer the word "guiding" less prisonlike] or protective spirits and the fallen angels, become by their own revolt, enemies of God and of the Men that they want to lead in their fall ...

Originally, this doctrine was marked by the Mazdean speculations and more particularly the influence of the Gathas ("Songs") with their non-ontological and non-absolute but monarchian dualism. The Gathas sketch the theory of the two antagonistic forces of cosmic origin, symbolizing order and disorder.

Indo-Iranian polytheism comprises a latent monotheism; but the struggle between a hegemonic god and hordes of demons assumes an unconscious dualism.

Hellenistic Judaism mentions this dualism by speaking of the way of truth or of the Lord opposed to that of destruction or iniquity (Solomon's Wisdom 5: 6-7). Judaism in Palestine inherited it: the Rule of the community of the Essenes expounds the instruction on the two spirits.

In man struggle the spirit of good and that of evil. Man participates in an unequal part of both. This evil disposition is not sin in itself but propensity to sin. That is why we can attribute to God its presence in man.

Philo will add to the moral dualism of the Essenes a cosmic dualism which he borrowed not from Jewish tradition but from Hellenistic culture imbued with Platonic references.

In each soul, at her birth, there are two powers that infiltrate, one saving and the other destroying. If the saving power is victorious and prevails over, the other will be too weak to be noticed. And if the destroying power prevails, you can get only little or no benefit from the saving power.

This text clearly reminds of the two Essenian inclinations in the form of opposing spirits, but Philo add in it a cosmological component.

Jewish apocalyptic literature is imbued with these ideas. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs present moral applications of this doctrine and affirm that these evil inclinations are connected with the forces of evil: two minds take care of man, the spirit of truth and the spirit of lies. The Enochian literature will take over the image of the two paths.

The fourth book of Ezra, Jewish apocalypse of the first century, will discuss the positions of the Testaments: why did God allow a bad disposition to be present in the heart of man? Why were we not given a heart that understands only good? The origin of the propensity to evil cannot be attributed to God. This apocryphal text is the witness of a development of the doctrine within Judaism.

The New Testament does not preserve traces of this doctrine of the two spirits, except Paul, who in Romans 7, under the influence of rabbinical tradition, expounds the moral struggle between the flesh and the spirit by speaking of the two inclinations that fight in man. The Christian novelty in the appropriation of the doctrine of the two spirits is due to the fact that this mixture of the two inclinations does not depend on the nature of things, but is the result of an accident, namely the Fall. In Christianity and Judaism, the first crime is committed by Cain on Abel, but the introduction of evil is previous with the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The Christian writings of the first centuries have handed over this doctrine of the two ways. The Epistle of Barnabas attributes the two ways two different angels. The Shepherd of Hermas describes in depth the doctrine of the two spirits by taking over the demonology expounded by Essenian Judaism. The novelty of the Shepherd in the change of the initial doctrine into spiritual psychology: the discernment between good and evil spirits; the incompatibility between them; the power of the spirit of righteousness and the weakness of the angel of evil.

The Christian tradition, in unceasing development, will move away therefore from the doctrine of the two spirits which marked the writings of the first Fathers. In Clementine Homilies, God has two hands: the right is Christ and the left Satan. This teaching can be compared with the rabbinical conceptions of the two powers of God, with the right hand representing grace and the right hand representing justice. Christianity, like Judaism, does not grant autonomy to the evil principle. It is either the result the consequence of a bad combination in the mixture of the primordial elements or the result of an accident (the fall of the angels).

THE DEMONOLOGY.

In many cultures, beings intermediate between the Supreme Being and the men, benevolent or wicked, endowed with a certain form of intelligence, coming from places or people, are still supposed to influence the minds of human beings or the places they haunt.

They are called Suras or Devas, Asuras, Daityas or Danavas among the Hindus, Izeds or Amschaspands among the faithful of the worship of Zoroaster, Cacodemons or Agathodemons among the Greeks, Lares and Larvae in the Roman religion, angels or devils or jinns in Islamic land. In the ancient world, there was therefore an abundance of spirits and genies, more or less beneficial or evil that men tried to capture and conciliate. The Babylonian religion personalized these various beings; it exercised them to free people and places by magic or medical rites. Such was particularly the case of hairy satyrs.

After their exile and their acculturation to the great Babylonian civilization, the Jews returned to Jerusalem will imagine the fallen angels as being the auxiliaries of a mysterious unnamed entity called by default Satan or Lucifer.

Both names are besides mistakes of translation.

Lucifer (Latin light bearer), of the name he has before his fall, is very powerful, intelligent, handsome, hubristic, seductive, cunning, rebellious to every law, deceitful and wicked. He is the "Prince of this world" as Jesus calls it. It is originally a king of Babylon of the 8th or 7th century before our era, whose ascent and fall are described by Isaiah. (14:2-14). To do this Isaiah used an image borrowed from a Canaanite myth that alludes to the god Sahar, the "Dawn."

"How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God.'"

And Satan is only an adjective taken from a Hebrew verb meaning "to attack." It is the accuser or the great adversary of the people of God. At this stage, Satan is not yet clearly the Spirit of Evil. He comes to propose his challenge, by worming himself among the "sons of God" (the angels?) received by Yahweh. But the text does not tell us whether he is also a son of God or even an angel. His profile remains blurred. What is clear is that the tempter is subordinate to God, his Creator; but that he is well a deviant Spirit, since he seeks at all costs the loss and fall of the righteous, blessed by God ...

This tempter is described in the form of serpent that sneaks in, insinuating, treacherous and redoubtable. At the origin of mankind, he seduces Eve by saying to her: "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The serpent added: "It is false that you will die. But God knows that the day you eat it, your eyes will open and you will be like gods" (Genesis 3:15)

We find him clearly in this role in the book of Zechariah (3: 1-2). "Then the Lord showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him..."

In the book of Job (1: 6) this adversary challenges God: let him tempt Job, friend - and servant- of God, and this holy man will not stand the test. But Job's fidelity will be stronger than all disasters, sufferings and ordeals. He will be finally rewarded (Editor's note. Too bad for the demonstration that Job is a pagan !)

Whether it is called Satan or Lucifer, this mysterious entity will be identified with absolute evil, with the leader of the Spirits of Darkness, hostile to Man and God. And, against these mysterious opponents, rites of protection, such as lustrations, are performed.

The idea of a final salvation of Satan goes back to Origen; but it is held heretical and condemned by the Council of Constantinople II, for Satan was not rejected by God: on the contrary, he was separated from him. God cannot forgive those who do not ask for forgiveness. The first free commitment of the will of Satan is definitive, his sin is irreversible.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, the fall of the angels.

391 Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil." The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing,"

392 Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels. This "fall" consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: "You will be like God." The devil "has sinned from the beginning"; he is "a liar and the father of lies."

393 It is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. "There is no repentance for the angels after their fall *, just as there is no repentance for men after death."

394 Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning," who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his father. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God.

395 The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him."

Demonology is a word designating the study of devils or the beliefs related to devils, that is to say, from the Christian point of view TO THESE FALLEN ANGELS.

Until the end of the thirteenth century, there was little interest in demons. The Treatise on Evil of St. Thomas Aquinas in 1272 recalls that the devil is a heretic, witchcraft a crime of heresy. Theologians will then look at the entities of evil.

Biblical demons respond to a well-defined hierarchy similar to that of the military. A passage from the Bible (Mark 5: 9) mentions a man possessed by a host of demons.

The most common symbols of demons are the horns or the crown for the power, the goat's head , wings for the extent of their authority, the snake for the deceit (according to the Bible, Eve was deceived by a serpent), and the dragon.

Some demons offer their services to humans to place them under their domination.

Below are some of the best known demons: Asmodeus, Belial, Azazel, Apollyon, Beelzebub, Astaroth. But there are others, since the new religion has evidently equated to demons the gods of other worship (what a tolerance!)

*Our brothers in humanity of the Jabal Sinjar in Iraq (the Kurdish-speaking Yezidis), who practice a curiously syncretistic religion associating Jewish, Christian, Muslim and pagan elements, don't agree and believe in his reinstatement: he extinguished the hell with his tears.

BIBLICAL ONOMASTICS.

Below are some names of "demons" of the Old or New Testament.

-Abaddon. The name Abaddon comes from a Hebrew word, meaning "destruction" or "abyss." The corresponding Greek name is Apollyon (the destroyer). This noun is used as a proper name to designate the destroying angel of the bottomless pit in the Revelation of St. John.

-Apollyon (from the Greek verb *apollumi* meaning to destroy, one of the possible etymologies of Apollo) - see Abaddon.

-Asmodeus. The name Asmodeus would come from the distortion of the name of an Avestan demon, Aesma-daeva, literally wrath demon that could also mean in Hebrew "killer." He is mentioned in the book of Tobit III.8, driven out of the body of Sarah by the archangel Raphael. Conveyed into Latin by Asmodeus.

-Azazel. Azazel is an enigmatic word found in the Tanakh as well as in some apocryphal texts. He would refer to an ancient demon that the ancient Canaanites believed to inhabit desert. It would mean "God made strong" by using the root "azaz" in the third person of the singular, and "El" meaning "God."

-Baal - title referring to several ancient Phoenician gods considered as demons in the Old Testament. 90 occurrences.

-Belial. Belial as for him is mentioned for the first time among the angels mentioned by the (Ethiopic version) Book of Enoch. Although the passages concerned are not important, Belial is nevertheless presented as one of the leaders of the angels who rebelled against God. In the apocalyptic work The Ascension of Isaiah, which contains a mixture of Jewish and proto-Christian elements, the entities Beliar (equivalent to Belial) and Samael are two different demons. But what is said of Samael in one passage is recounted of Beliar in another one. This passage dates from the Amoraic period, before the generalization of Satan's name in Judaism. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, dualistic apocryphal writing compiling texts written over a period extending from the 2nd century before our era to the first century of our era presents Belial not as a demon but as the opponent of God. Belial later will appear in the Bible in many verses (for instance 2 Samuel 22: 5, 2 Chronicles 13:7, 2 Corinthians 6: 15, where he is placed on the same level as Christ) but, the expression son of Belial being sometimes translated by the word scoundrel, the entity designated by this name therefore cannot bodily be implicated in the real or imaginary facts mentioned in the verses in question.

-Belphegor. Belphegor is an ancient deity revered on Mount Pe'or, inspired by the god Baal Phegor mentioned in the Old Testament. The Hebrews led by Moses halt before their arrival in the land of Canaan, and let them be drawn into debauchery by Moabite women (Numbers 25: 1-3). In the Christian demonology, Belphegor is the demon who seduces his victims by inspiring them ingenious discoveries and inventions designed to enrich them. He often takes a young woman's body. Rashi having explained, moreover, that it was defecated before him, some scholars identified him with Crepitus, the god of flatulence, or Priapus, the obscene god.

-Beelzebub or Baal-zebub. God of the Semitic world presumably venerated at Akron. In predominantly biblical and subsequent to Old Testament text, sources, Beelzebub is a demon, one of the crowned princes of Hell. The Philistines would also have worshipped him. Different hypotheses exist as to the origin and meaning of the second part of the name, Zebub. For the theologian James Ellul, Baal-Zebul, the chief of the princes, would have become by racist pun Baal-Zebub, the lord of the manure flies.

-Leviathan. The term Leviathan (from the Hebrew *liwjatan*) comes from the Phoenician mythology which makes it the monster of initial chaos. It is also a sea monster evoked in the Bible, in the Psalms (74:14 and 104:26), the book of Isaiah (27: 1), and the book of Job (3: 8, 40:25; 41: 1). Same symbolism as that of the ram-headed serpent of the Celts.

- Lilit. The word "Lilit" is a hapax in the Hebrew Bible. The only reference to Lilit is in the book of Isaiah (34:14). In this prophecy about the end of the kingdom of Edom, the territory of Edom is described as a desolate land. It is inhabited by wild beasts and by Lilit. The meaning of Lilit in this passage is not clear. The first Greek translations of the Bible have conveyed it in different ways. The Septuagint conveys it by an onocentaur (half-man half-ass). This written form may refer to the figure of the goddess Lamashtu who can be represented sitting on a donkey. Aquila simply transcribes Lilit and Symmachus uses the name Lamia which is that of a demoness of Greek mythology.

-Lucifer. The name Lucifer will be introduced into the Bible in the fourth century in the Latin version, the Vulgate, to translate the Hebrew word helem in the expression helem ben sahar "brilliant (star) son of the dawn" Isaiah (14:12-14) but in the context of the oracle of Isaiah, it was a question of describing the ascent and fall of a tyrant, probably the fall of a Babylonian ruler (8th / 7th century before our era).

- Shedim. Shedim is the Hebrew word for demons and also designates a supernatural creature in Jewish folklore. The word shedim appears only twice (always plural) in the Tanakh, at Psalm 106:37 and Deuteronomy (32:17). It was possibly a loan word from Akkadian in which the word shedu designated a protective and benevolent spirit but both times the term appears in the Tanakh, it is on the occasion of child or animal sacrifice.

-Serim. Kind of hairy demons. Some bibles translate as "satyrs" (Leviticus 17: 7).

PAGAN ONOMASTICS.

Every religion obviously treats the gods of others as evil entities to be avoided or fought. The Biblical monolatry will even set in the stone of its laws that fervent religious intolerance taken over by Islam today. EXAMPLE AMIDST MANY OTHERS OF THESE IMPIOUS LAWS: "Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces"(Exodus 23: 24).

This was therefore true with the Old Testament (see the cases of the baals Belphegor Beelzebub, etc.). This was even truer with the Christianity that followed and until the wars of religion which bloodied Europe from the 16th to the 18th century (last massacre, that of the Calvinist partisans in France in 1702). Epona, Apollo or Abellio, Jupiter or Zeus, Taranis, Lugh, Thor, Mercury, Venus, Freya, the belisama Brigind, etc. may be regarded as "Christian" demons. The Christian monolatry tackling the whole earth, their army is therefore innumerable. For if certain sycophants of Christianity like Tertullian make the gods of paganism simple human beings at the origin (an euhemeristic reasoning that nothing prevents from applying to Jesus Christ) others like Minucius Felix make well them nonhuman creatures.

"These impure spirits, therefore--the demons--as is shown by the Magi, by the philosophers, and by Plato, consecrated under statues and images, lurk there, and by their afflatus attain the authority as of a present deity; while, in the meantime, they are breathed into the prophets, while they dwell in the shrines, while sometimes they animate the fibers of the entrails, control the flights of birds, direct the lots, are the cause of oracles involved in many falsehoods. For they are both deceived, and they deceive; inasmuch as they are both ignorant of the simple truth, and for their own ruin they do not confess that which they know. Thus they weigh men downwards from heaven, and call them away from the true God to material things: they disturb the life, render all men unquiet; creeping also secretly into human bodies, with subtlety, as being spirits, they feign diseases, alarm the minds, wrench about the limbs; that they may constrain men to worship them, being gorged with the fumes of altars or the sacrifices of cattle, that, by remitting what they had bound, they may seem to have cured it. These raging maniacs also, whom you see rush about in public, are, moreover, themselves prophets without a temple; thus they rage, thus they rave, thus they are whirled around. In them also there is a like instigation of the demon, but there is a dissimilar occasion for their madness. From the same causes also arise those things which were spoken of a little time ago by you that Jupiter demanded the restoration of his games in a dream, that the Castors appeared with horses, and that a small ship was following the leading of the matron's girdle. A great many, even some of your own people, know all those things that the demons themselves confess concerning themselves, as often as they are driven by us from bodies by the torments of our words and by the fires of our prayers. Saturn himself, and Serapis, and Jupiter, and whatever demons you worship, overcome by pain, speak out what they are; and assuredly they do not lie to their own discredit, especially when any of you are standing by. Since they themselves are the witnesses that they are demons, believe them when they confess the truth of themselves; for when abjured by the only and true God, unwillingly the wretched beings shudder in their bodies, and either at once leap forth, or vanish by degrees, as the faith of the sufferer assists or the grace of the healer inspires. Thus they fly from Christians when near at hand, whom at a distance they harassed by your means in their assemblies. And thus, introduced into the minds of the ignorant, they secretly sow there a hatred of us by means of fear. For it is natural both to hate one whom you fear, and to injure one whom you have feared, if you can. Thus they take possession of the minds and obstruct the hearts that men may begin to hate us before they know us; lest, if known, they should either imitate us, or not be able to condemn us (Minucius Felix, Octavius chapter 26).

According to a Cistercian abbot of the thirteenth century, the demons are counted by hundreds of billions. In 1467, Alfonso de Spina counts 133,306,668 of them. In the sixteenth century, John Wier recorded only 44,435,556 of them, divided into 666 legions commanded by 66 princes. Other demonologist scholars dispute these figures. Each demon has his own characteristics. Some have a name taken from their ways of appearing (Beelzebub the lord of the flies, etc.).

Ancient and medieval Christianity presents them as invisible, but some clergymen and Saints are supposed to have seen them (Rodulfus Glaber), or to have struggled with them (the parish priest of Ars). And the temptation will always be large for men of using the power of these demons: the Enchanter Merlin, Robert the Devil, Tannhauser and Faust will even make alliances with them.....

This was the point of view of the historian of revealed religions. Below the delirium of a racist * Christian ideologist on the subject.

* Who takes only the Bible (and some excerpts from carefully chosen Greek philosophers) as the only cultural universe for his reasoning. Who deliberately dismisses other peoples and civilizations from his fields of research (China, Japan, India, Australia, and so on).

THE MONOMANIACAL DELIRIUM OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE SUBJECT.

QUESTION 44. OF THE FIRST CAUSE OF ALL THINGS.

(1) Whether God is the efficient cause of all beings? (2) Whether primary matter is created by God, or is an independent coordinate principle with Him? (3) Whether God is the exemplar cause of beings, or whether there are other exemplar causes ? (4) Whether He is the final cause of things?

First Article. Whether it is necessary that every being be created by God ?

Objection 1. It would seem that it is not necessary that every being be created by God....it is possible that some beings should not be created by God.

I answer that it must be said that every being in any way existing is from God....

Second Article. Whether primary matter is created by God?

Objection 1. It would seem that primary matter is not created by God. For whatever is made is composed of a subject and of something else (Aristotle). But primary matter has no subject. Therefore primary matter cannot have been made by God.

I answer that, the ancient philosophers gradually, and as it were step by step, advanced to the knowledge of truth.

At first being of grosser mind, they failed to realize that any beings existed except sensible bodies....

Third Article, whether the exemplar cause is anything beside GOD?

I answer that, God is the first exemplar cause of all things. In proof whereof we must consider that if for the production of anything an exemplar is necessary, it is in Order that the effect may receive a determinate form.

QUESTION 45. THE MODE OF EMANATION OF THINGS FROM THE FIRST PRINCIPLE.

(1) What is creation ? (2) Whether God can create anything? (3) Whether creation is anything in the very nature of things ? (4) To what things it belongs to be created? (5) Whether it belongs to God alone to create? (6) Whether creation is common to the whole Trinity, or proper to anyone Person ? (7) Whether any trace of the Trinity is to be found in created things? (8) Whether the work of creation is mingled with the works of nature and of the will ?

First Article. Whether to create is to make something from NOTHING ?

Second Article. Whether God can create anything?

Objection 1. It would seem that God cannot create anything, because, according to Aristotle , the ancient philosophers considered it as a commonly received axiom that nothing is made from nothing.

I answer that, not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all

things were created by God, as appears from what has been said . For when anyone makes one thing from another, this latter thing from which he makes is presupposed to his action, and is not produced by his action; thus the craftsman works from natural things, as wood or brass, which are caused not by the action of art, but by the action of nature. So also nature itself causes natural things as regards their form, but presupposes matter. If therefore God did only act from something presupposed, it would follow that the thing presupposed would not be caused by Him. Now it has been shown above that nothing can be, unless it is from God, Who is the universal cause of all being. Hence it is necessary to say that God brings things into being from nothing.

QUESTION 46. OF THE BEGINNING OF THE DURATION OF CREATURES.

(1) Whether creatures always existed? (2) Whether that they began to exist is an article of Faith ? (3) How God is said to have created heaven and earth in the beginning?

First Article, whether the universe of creatures always EXISTED ?

Objection 1. It would seem that the universe of creatures, called the world, had no beginning, but existed from eternity. For everything which begins to exist is.....

I answer that, Nothing except God can be eternal. And this statement is far from impossible to uphold: for it has been shown above (I:19:4) that the will of God is the cause of things. Therefore things are necessary, according as it is necessary for God to will them, since...

Second Article, whether it is an article of faith that the world began ?

I answer that, by faith alone do we hold, and by no demonstration can it be proved, that the world did not always exist, as was said above of the mystery of the Trinity (I:3 I answer that, by faith alone do we hold, and by no demonstration can it be proved, that the world did not always exist, as was said above of the mystery of the Trinity....

Third Article, whether the creation of things was in the beginning OF TIME?

Objections .

Answer.

Replies.

1. Things are said to be created in the beginning of time, not as if the beginning of time were a measure of creation, but because together with time heaven and earth were created.

QUESTION 50. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ANGELS ABSOLUTELY CONSIDERED.

1. Is there any entirely spiritual creature, altogether incorporeal? 2. Supposing that an angel is such, is it composed of matter and form? 3. How many are there? 4. Their difference from each other. 5. Their immortality or incorruptibility

Article 1. Whether an angel is altogether incorporeal?

I answer that, there must be some incorporeal creatures. For what is principally intended by God in creatures is good, and this consists in assimilation to God Himself. And the perfect assimilation of an effect to a cause is accomplished when the effect imitates the cause according to that whereby the cause produces the effect; as heat makes heat. Now, God produces the creature by His intellect and will (I:14:8; I:19:4). Hence the perfection of the universe requires that there should be intellectual creatures. Now intelligence cannot be the action of a body, nor of any corporeal faculty; for every body is limited to "here" and "now." Hence the perfection of the universe requires the existence of an incorporeal creature. The ancients, however, not properly realizing the force of intelligence, and failing to make a proper distinction between sense and intellect, thought that nothing existed in the world but what could be apprehended by sense and imagination. And because bodies alone fall under imagination, they supposed that no being existed except bodies, as the philosopher observes. Thence came the error of the Sadducees, who said there was no spirit. But the very fact that intellect is above sense is a reasonable proof that there are some incorporeal things comprehensible by the intellect alone.

Article 2. Whether an angel is composed of matter and form?

.....Dionysius says : "The first creatures are understood to be as immaterial as they are incorporeal."

Article 3. Whether the angels exist in any great number?

Article 4. Whether the angels differ in species?

I answer that, some have said that all spiritual substances, even souls, are of one species. Others, again, that all the angels are of the one species, but not souls; while others allege that all the angels of one hierarchy, or even of one order, are of one species.

Article 5. Whether the angels are incorruptible?

I answer that, it must necessarily be maintained that the angels are incorruptible of their own nature.

The reason for this is that nothing is corrupted except by its form being separated from the matter.

Hence, since an angel is a subsisting form, as is clear from what was said above, it is impossible for its substance to be corruptible.

QUESTION 51. THE ANGELS IN COMPARISON WITH BODIES

1. Do angels have bodies naturally united to them? 2. Do they assume bodies? 3. Do they exercise functions of life in the bodies assumed?

Article 1. Whether the angels have bodies naturally united to them?

Article 2. Whether angels assume bodies?

I answer that, some have maintained that the angels never assume bodies, but that all that we read in Scripture of apparitions of angels happened in prophetic vision--that is, according to imagination. But

this is contrary to the intent of Scripture; for whatever is beheld in imaginary vision is only in the beholder's imagination, and consequently is not seen by everybody. Yet Divine Scripture from time to time introduces angels so apparent as to be seen commonly by all; just as the angels who appeared to Abraham were seen by him and by his whole family, by Lot, and by the citizens of Sodom; in like manner the angel who appeared to Tobias was seen by all present. From all this it is clearly shown that such apparitions were beheld by bodily vision, whereby the object seen exists outside the person beholding it, and can accordingly be seen by all. Now by such a vision only a body can be beheld. Consequently, since the angels are not bodies, nor have they bodies naturally united with them, as is clear from what has been said, it follows that they sometimes assume bodies.

Article 3. Whether the angels exercise functions of life in the bodies assumed?

5. Eating is a purely animal function. Hence the Lord after His Resurrection ate with His disciples in proof of having resumed life (Luke 24). Now when angels appeared in their assumed bodies they ate, and Abraham offered them food, after having previously adored them as God (Genesis 18). Therefore the angels exercise functions of life in assumed bodies.

6. To beget offspring is a vital act. But this has befallen the angels in their assumed bodies; for it is related: "After the sons of God went into the daughters of men, and they brought forth children, these are the mighty men of old, men of renown" (Genesis 6:4). Consequently the angels exercised vital functions in their assumed bodies.

On the contrary, the bodies assumed by angels have no life, as was stated in the previous article (Reply to Objection 3). Therefore they cannot exercise functions of life through assumed bodies.

I answer that, some functions of living subjects have something in common with other operations; just as speech, which is the function of a living creature, agrees with other sounds of inanimate things, in so far as it is sound; and walking agrees with other movements, in so far as it is movement.

Consequently vital functions can be performed in assumed bodies by the angels, as to that which is common in such operations; but not as to that which is special to living subjects; because, according to Aristotle, "that which has the faculty has the action." Hence nothing can have a function of life except what life has, which is the potential principle of such action.

Reply to Objection 5. Properly speaking, the angels cannot be said to eat, because eating involves the taking of food convertible into the substance of the eater. Although after the Resurrection food was not converted into the substance of Christ's body, but resolved into pre-existing matter; nevertheless Christ had a body of such a true nature that food could be changed into it; hence it was a true eating. But the food taken by angels was neither changed into the assumed body, nor was the body of such a nature that food could be changed into it; consequently, it was not a true eating, but figurative of spiritual eating. This is what the angel said to Tobias: "When I was with you, I seemed indeed to eat and to drink but I use an invisible meat and drink" (Tobit 12:19). Abraham offered them food, deeming them to be men, in whom, nevertheless, he worshipped God, as God is wont to be in the prophets, as Augustine says.

Reply to Objection 6. As Augustine says: "Many persons affirm that they have had the experience, or have heard from such as have experienced it, that the Satyrs and Fauns, whom the common folk call incubi, have often presented themselves before women, and have sought and procured intercourse with them. Hence it is folly to deny it. But God's holy angels could not fall in such fashion before the deluge. Hence by the sons of God are to be understood the sons of Seth, who were good; while by the daughters of men, the Scripture designates those who sprang from the race of Cain. Nor is it to be wondered at that giants should be born of them; for they were not all giants albeit there were many more before than after the deluge." Still if some are occasionally begotten from demons, it is not from the seed of such demons, nor from their assumed bodies, but from the seed of men taken for the purpose; as when the demon assumes first the form of a woman, and afterwards of a man; just as they take the seed of other things for other generating purposes, as Augustine says, so that the person born is not the child of a demon, but of a man.

QUESTION 52. THE ANGELS IN RELATION TO PLACE.

1. Is the angel in a place? 2. Can he be in several places at once? 3. Can several angels be in the same place?

Article 1. Whether an angel is in a place?

Article 2. Whether an angel can be in several places at once?

Article 3. Whether several angels can be at the same time in the same place?

QUESTION 53. THE LOCAL MOVEMENT OF THE ANGELS.

1. Can an angel be moved locally? 2. In passing from place to place, does he pass through intervening space? 3. Is the angel's movement in time or instantaneous?

QUESTION 54. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANGELS.

1. Is the angel's understanding his substance? 2. Is his being his understanding? 3. Is his substance his power of intelligence? 4. Is there in the angels an active and a passive intellect? 5. Is there in them any other power of knowledge besides the intellect?

QUESTION 55. THE MEDIUM OF THE ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE.

1. Do the angels know everything by their substance, or by some species? 2. If by species, is it by connatural species, or is it by such as they have derived from things? 3. Do the higher angels know by more universal species than the lower angels?

QUESTION 56. THE ANGEL'S KNOWLEDGE OF IMMATERIAL THINGS.

1. Does an angel know himself? 2. Does one angel know another? 3. Does the angel know God by his own natural principle?

QUESTION 57. THE ANGEL'S KNOWLEDGE OF MATERIAL THINGS.

1. Do the angels know the natures of material things? 2. Do they know single things? 3. Do they know the future? 4. Do they know secret thoughts? 5. Do they know all mysteries of grace?

Article 3. Whether angels know the future.

I answer that, the future can be known in two ways.

First, it can be known in its cause. And thus, future events which proceed necessarily from their causes, are known with sure knowledge; as that the sun will rise tomorrow. But events which proceed from their causes in the majority of cases are not known for certain, but conjecturally; thus the doctor knows beforehand the health of the patient. This manner of knowing future events exists in the angels, and by so much the more than it does in us, as they understand the causes of things both more universally and more perfectly; thus doctors who penetrate more deeply into the causes of an ailment can pronounce a surer verdict on the future issue thereof. But events which proceed from their causes in the minority of cases are quite unknown; such as casual and chance events.

In another way future events are known in themselves. To know the future in this way belongs to God alone; and not merely to know those events which happen of necessity, or in the majority of cases, but even casual and chance events; for God sees all things in His eternity, which, being simple, is present to all time, and embraces all time. And therefore God's one glance is cast over all things which happen in all time as present before Him; and He beholds all things as they are in themselves, as was said before when dealing with God's knowledge. But the mind of an angel, and every created intellect, fall far short of God's eternity; hence the future as it is in itself cannot be known by any created intellect.

Article 4. Whether angels know secret thoughts?

QUESTION 58. THE MODE OF ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE.

1. Is the angel's intellect sometimes in potentiality, and sometimes in act? 2. Can the angel understand many things at the same time? 3. Is the angel's knowledge discursive? 4. Does he understand by composing and dividing? 5. Can there be error in the angel's intellect? 6. Can his knowledge be styled as morning and evening? 7. Are the morning and evening knowledge the same, or do they differ?

QUESTION 59. THE WILL OF THE ANGELS.

1. Is there will in the angels? 2. Is the will of the angel his nature, or his intellect? 3. Is there free will in the angels? 4. Is there an irascible and a concupiscible appetite in them?

Article 1. Whether there is will in the angels?

I answer that, we must necessarily place a will in the angels. In evidence thereof, it must be borne in mind that, since all things flow fromAccordingly, since the angels by their intellect know the universal aspect of goodness, it is manifest that there is a will in them.

Article 3. Whether there is free will in the angels?

I answer that..... It is therefore manifest that just as there is intellect, so is there free will in the angels, and in a higher degree of perfection than in man.

Article 4. Whether there is an irascible and a concupiscible appetite in the angels?

Reply to Objection 1. Fury and concupiscence are metaphorically said to be in the demons, as anger is sometimes attributed to God;--on account of the resemblance in the effect.

QUESTION 61. THE PRODUCTION OF THE ANGELS IN THE ORDER OF NATURAL BEING.

1. Does the angel have a cause of his existence? 2. Has he existed from eternity? 3. Was he created before corporeal creatures? 4. Were the angels created in the empyrean heaven?

Article 2. Whether the angel was produced by God from eternity?

I answer that, God alone, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is from eternity. Catholic Faith holds this without doubt; and everything to the contrary must be rejected as heretical. For God so produced creatures that He made them "from nothing"; that is, after they had not been.

Article 3. Whether the angels were created before the corporeal world?

I answer that, there is a twofold opinion on this point to be found in the writings of the Fathers. The more probable one holds that the angels were created at the same time as corporeal creatures. For the angels are part of the universe: they do not constitute a universe of themselves; but both they and corporeal natures unite in constituting one universe. This stands in evidence from the relationship of creature to creature; because the mutual relationship of creatures makes up the good of the universe. But no part is perfect if separate from the whole. Consequently it is improbable that God, Whose "works are perfect," as it is said Deuteronomy 32:4, should have created the angelic creature before other creatures. At the same time the contrary is not to be deemed erroneous; especially on account of the opinion of Gregory Nazianzen, "whose authority in Christian doctrine is of such weight that no one has ever raised objection to his teaching, as is also the case with the doctrine of Athanasius," as Jerome says.

Reply to Objection 1. Jerome is speaking according to the teaching of the Greek Fathers; all of whom hold the creation of the angels to have taken place previously to that of the corporeal world.

Article 4. Whether the angels were created in the empyrean heaven?

I answer that, as was observed, the universe is made up of corporeal and spiritual creatures. Consequently spiritual creatures were so created as to bear some relationship to the corporeal creature, and to rule over every corporeal creature. Hence it was fitting for the angels to be created in the highest corporeal place, as presiding over all corporeal nature; whether it be styled the empyrean heaven, or whatever else it be called. So Isidore says that the highest heaven is the heaven of the angels, explaining the passage of Deuteronomy 10:14: "Behold heaven is the Lord's thy God, and the heaven of heaven."

QUESTION 62. THE PERFECTION OF THE ANGELS IN THE ORDER OF GRACE AND OF GLORY.

1. Were the angels created in beatitude? 2. Did they need grace in order to turn to God? 3. Were they created in grace? 4. Did they merit their beatitude? 5. Did they at once enter into beatitude after merit? 6. Did they receive grace and glory according to their natural capacities? 7. After entering glory, did their natural love and knowledge remain? 8. Could they have sinned afterwards? 9. After entering into glory, could they advance farther?

Article 4. Whether an angel merits his beatitude?

I answer that, Perfect beatitude is natural only to God, because existence and beatitude are one and the same thing in Him. Beatitude, however, is not of the nature of the creature, but is its end. Now everything attains its last end by its operation..... Consequently it is better to say that the angel had grace ere he was admitted to beatitude, and that by such grace he merited beatitude.

Article 5. Whether the angel obtained beatitude immediately after one act of merit?

I answer that, the angel was beatified instantly after the first act of charity, whereby he merited beatitude.

Article 6. Whether the angels receive grace and glory according to the degree of their natural gifts?

I answer that, it is reasonable to suppose that gifts of graces and perfection of beatitude were bestowed on the angels according to the degree of their natural gifts. The reason for this can be drawn from two sources.

First of all, on the part of God, Who, in the order of His wisdom, established various degrees in the angelic nature. Now as the angelic nature was made by God for attaining grace and beatitude, so likewise the grades of the angelic nature seem to be ordained for the various degrees of grace and glory; just as when, for example, the builder chisels the stones for building a house, from the fact that he prepares some more artistically and more fittingly than others, it is clear that he is setting them apart for the more ornate part of the house. So it seems that God destined those angels for greater gifts of grace and fuller beatitude, whom He made of a higher nature.

Secondly, the same is evident on the part of the angel. The angel is not a compound of different natures, so that the inclination of the one thwarts or retards the tendency of the other; as happens in man, in whom the movement of his intellective part is either retarded or thwarted by the inclination of his sensitive part. But when there is nothing to retard or thwart it, nature is moved with its whole energy. So it is reasonable to suppose that the angels who had a higher nature were turned to God more mightily and efficaciously. The same thing happens in men, since greater grace and glory are bestowed according to the greater earnestness of their turning to God. Hence it appears that the angels who had the greater natural powers, had the more grace and glory.

Article 7. Whether natural knowledge and love remain in the beatified angels?

I answer that, natural knowledge and love remain in the angels. For as principles of operations are mutually related, so are the operations themselves. Now it is manifest that nature is to beatitude as first to second; because beatitude is superadded to nature.

Article 8. Whether a beatified angel can sin?

I answer that, the beatified angels cannot sin. The reason for this is, because their beatitude consists in seeing God through His essence. Now, God's essence is the very essence of goodness. Consequently the angel beholding God is disposed towards God in the same way as anyone else not seeing God is to the common form of goodness. Now it is impossible for any man either to will or to do anything except aiming at what is good; or for him to wish to turn away from good precisely as such. Therefore the beatified angel can neither will nor act, except as aiming towards God. Now whoever wills or acts in this manner cannot sin. Consequently the beatified angel cannot sin.

Article 9. Whether the beatified angels advance in beatitude?

I answer that....Therefore every rational creature is so led by God to the end of its beatitude that from God's predestination it is brought even to a determinate degree of beatitude. Consequently, when that degree is once secured, it cannot pass to a higher degree.

QUESTION 63. THE MALICE OF THE ANGELS WITH REGARD TO SIN.

1.Can there be evil of fault in the angels?2. What kind of sins can be in them?3. What did the angel seek in sinning?4. Supposing that some became evil by a sin of their own choosing, are any of them naturally evil? 5. Supposing that it is not so, could any one of them become evil in the first instant of his creation by an act of his own will?6. Supposing that he did not, was there any interval between his creation and fall?7. Was the highest of them who fell, absolutely the highest among the angels?8. Was the sin of the foremost angel the cause of the others sinning?9. Did as many sins as remained steadfast?

Article 1. Whether the evil of fault can be in the angels?

I answer that, an angel or any other rational creature considered in his own nature, can sin.

Article 2. Whether only the sin of hubris and envy can exist in an angel?

I answer that, Sin can exist in a subject in two ways: first of all by actual guilt, and secondly by affection. As to guilt, all sins are in the demons; since by leading men to sin, they incur the guilt of all sins. But as to affection only those sins can be in the demons which can belong to a spiritual nature. Now a spiritual nature cannot be affected by such pleasures as appertain to bodies, but only by such as are in keeping with spiritual things; because nothing is affected except with regard to something

which is in some way suited to its nature. But there can be no sin when anyone is incited to good of the spiritual order; unless in such affection the rule of the superior be not kept. Such is precisely the sin of hubris--not to be subject to a superior when subjection is due. Consequently the first sin of the angel can be none other than hubris.

Yet, as a consequence, it was possible for envy also to be in them, since for the appetite to tend to the desire of something involves on its part resistance to anything contrary. Now the envious man repines over the good possessed by another, inasmuch as he deems his neighbor's good to be a hindrance to his own. But another's good could not be deemed a hindrance to the good coveted by the wicked angel, except inasmuch as he coveted a singular excellence, which would cease to be singular because of the excellence of some other. So, after the sin of hubris, there followed the evil of envy in the sinning angel, whereby he grieved over man's good, and also over the Divine excellence, according as against the devil's will God makes use of man for the Divine glory.

Article 3. Whether the angel desired to be as God?

I answer that, without doubt the angel sinned by seeking to be as God. But this can be understood in two ways: first, by equality; secondly, by likeness. He could not seek to be as God in the first way; because by natural knowledge he knew that this was impossible.....

To desire to be as God according to likeness can happen in two ways. In one way, as to that likeness whereby everything is made to be likened unto God. And so, if anyone desire in this way to be godlike, he commits no sin; provided that he desires such likeness in proper order, that is to say, that he may obtain it of God. But he would sin were he to desire to be like unto God even in the right way, as of his own, and not of God's power. In another way one may desire to be like unto God in some respect which is not natural to one; as if one were to desire to create heaven and earth, which is proper to God; in which desire there would be sin. It was in this way that the devil desired to be as God. Not that he desired to resemble God by being subject to no one else absolutely; for so he would be desiring his own 'not-being'; since no creature can exist except by holding its existence under God. But he desired resemblance with God in this respect--by desiring, as his last end of beatitude, something which he could attain by the virtue of his own nature, turning his appetite away from supernatural beatitude, which is attained by God's grace.

Article 4. Whether any fallen angels are naturally wicked?

I answer that, everything which exists, so far as it exists and has a particular nature, tends naturally towards some good; since it comes from a good principle; because the effect always reverts to its principle. Now a particular good may happen to have some evil connected with it; thus fire has this evil connected with it that it consumes other things: but with the universal good no evil can be connected. If, then, there be anything whose nature is inclined towards some particular good, it can tend naturally to some evil; not as evil, but accidentally, as connected with some good. But if anything of its nature be inclined to good in general, then of its own nature it cannot be inclined to evil. Now it is manifest that every intellectual nature is inclined towards good in general, which it can apprehend and which is the object of the will. Hence, since the demons are intellectual substances, they can in no wise have a natural inclination towards any evil whatsoever; consequently they cannot be naturally evil.

Article 5. Whether the angel was wicked by the fault of his own will in the first instant of his creation?

I answer that, on the contrary, it was impossible for the angel to sin in the first instant by an inordinate act of free will. For although a thing can begin to act in the first instant of its existence, nevertheless, that operation which begins with the existence comes of the agent from which it drew its nature; just as upward movement in fire comes of its productive cause. Therefore, if there be anything which derives its nature from a defective cause, which can be the cause of a defective action, it can in the first instant of its existence have a defective operation; just as the leg, which is defective from birth, through a defect in the principle of generation, begins at once to limp. But the agent which brought the angels into existence, namely, God, cannot be the cause of sin. Consequently it cannot be said that the devil was wicked in the first instant of his creation.

Article 6. Whether there was any interval between the creation and the fall of the angel?

I answer that, there is a twofold opinion on this point. But the more probable one, which is also more in harmony with the teachings of the Saints, is that the devil sinned at once after the first instant of his creation. This must be maintained if it be held that he elicited an act of free will in the first instant of his creation, and that he was created in grace; as we have said (I:62:3. For since the angels attain beatitude by one meritorious act, as was said above (I:62:5), if the devil, created in grace, merited in

the first instant, he would at once have received beatitude after that first instant, if he had not placed an impediment by sinning.

If, however, it be contended that the angel was not created in grace, or that he could not elicit an act of free will in the first instant, then there is nothing to prevent some interval being interposed between his creation and fall.

Article 7. Whether the highest angel among those who sinned was the highest of all?

I answer that, two things have to be considered in sin, namely, the proneness to sin, and the motive for sinning. If, then, in the angels we consider the proneness to sin, it seems that the higher angels were less likely to sin than the lower. On this account Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* ii) that the highest of those who sinned was set over the terrestrial order. This opinion seems to agree with the view of the Platonists, which Augustine quotes. For they said that all the gods were good; whereas some of the demons were good, and some bad; naming as 'gods' the intellectual substances which are above the lunar sphere, and calling by the name of "demons" the intellectual substances which are beneath it, yet higher than men in the order of nature. Nor is this opinion to be rejected as contrary to faith; because the whole corporeal creation is governed by God through the angels, as Augustine says. Consequently there is nothing to prevent us from saying that the lower angels were divinely set aside for presiding over the lower bodies, the higher over the higher bodies and the highest to stand before God. And in this sense Damascene says that they who fell were of the lower grade of angels; yet in that order some of them remained good.

But if the motive for sinning be considered, we find that it existed in the higher angels more than in the lower. For, as has been said, the demons' sin was hubris; and the motive of hubris is excellence, which was greater in the higher spirits. Hence Gregory says that he who sinned was the very highest of all.

This seems to be the more probable view: because the angels' sin did not come of any proneness, but of free choice alone. Consequently that argument seems to have the more weight which is drawn from the motive in sinning. Yet this must not be prejudicial to the other view; because there might be some motive for sinning in him also who was the chief of the lower angels.

Article 8. Whether the sin of the highest angel was the cause of the others sinning?

I answer that, the sin of the highest angel was the cause of the others sinning; not as compelling them, but as inducing them by a kind of exhortation. A token thereof appears in this, that all the demons are subjects of that highest one; as is evident from our Lord's words: "Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (*Matthew 25:41*). For the order of Divine justice exacts that whosoever consents to another's evil suggestion shall be subjected to him in his punishment; according to (*2 Peter 2:19*): "By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave."

Article 9. Whether those who sinned were as many as those who remained firm?

I answer that, more angels stood firm than sinned. Because sin is contrary to the natural inclination; while that which is against the natural order happens with less frequency; for nature procures its effects either always, or more often than not.

QUESTION 64. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE DEMONS.

1. Their darkness of intellect. 2. Their obstinacy of will. 3 Their grief. 4. Their place of punishment.

Article 1. Whether the demons' intellect is darkened by privation of the knowledge of all truth?

Dionysius says that, "certain gifts were bestowed upon the demons which, we say, have not been changed at all, but remain entire and most brilliant." Now, the knowledge of truth stands among those natural gifts. Consequently there is some knowledge of truth in them.

I answer that, the knowledge of truth is twofold: one which comes of nature, and one which comes of grace. The knowledge which comes of grace is likewise twofold: the first is purely speculative, as when divine secrets are imparted to an individual; the other is effective, and produces love for God; which knowledge properly belongs to the gift of wisdom.

Of these three kinds of knowledge, the first was neither taken away nor lessened in the demons. For it follows from the very nature of the angel, who, according to his nature, is an intellect or mind: since on account of the simplicity of his substance, nothing can be withdrawn from his nature, so as to punish him by subtracting from his natural powers, as a man is punished by being deprived of a hand or a foot or of something else. Therefore Dionysius says that the natural gifts remain entire in them.

Consequently their natural knowledge was not diminished. The second kind of knowledge, however, which comes of grace, and consists in speculation, has not been utterly taken away from them, but lessened; because, of these Divine secrets only so much is revealed to them as is necessary; and that is done either by means of the angels, or "through some temporal workings of Divine power," as Augustine says; but not in the same degree as to the holy angels, to whom many more things are revealed, and more fully, in the Word Himself. But of the third knowledge, as likewise of charity, they are utterly deprived.

Article 2. Whether the will of the demons is obstinate in evil?

I answer that, it was Origen's opinion that every will of the creature can by reason of free will be inclined to good and evil; with the exception of the soul of Christ on account of the union of the Word. Such a statement deprives angels and saints of true beatitude, because everlasting stability is of the very nature of true beatitude; hence it is termed "life everlasting." It is also contrary to the authority of Sacred Scripture, which declares that demons and wicked men shall be sent "into everlasting punishment," and the good brought "into everlasting life." Consequently such an opinion must be considered erroneous; while according to Catholic Faith, it must be held firmly both that the will of the good angels is confirmed in good, and that the will of the demons is obstinate in evil.

Therefore the good angels who adhered to justice were confirmed therein; whereas the wicked ones, sinning, are obstinate in sin. Later on we shall treat of the obstinacy of men who are damned.

Article 3. Whether there is sorrow in the demons?

I answer that, fear, sorrow, joy, and the like, so far as they are passions, cannot exist in the demons; for thus they are proper to the sensitive appetite, which is a power in a corporeal organ. According, however, as they denote simple acts of the will, they can be in the demons. And it must be said that there is sorrow in them.

QUESTION 65. THE WORK OF CREATION OF CORPOREAL CREATURES.

1. Are corporeal creatures from God? 2. Were they created on account of God's goodness? 3. Were they created by God through the medium of the angels? 4. Are the forms of bodies from the angels or immediately from God?

Article 1. Whether corporeal creatures are from God?

I answer that, certain heretics maintain that visible things are not created by the good God, but by an evil principle, and allege in proof of their error the words of the Apostle (2 Corinthians 4:4), "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers." But this position is altogether untenable. For, if things that differ agree in some point, there must be some cause for that agreement, since things diverse in nature cannot be united of themselves. Hence whenever in different things some one thing common to all is found, it must be that these different things receive that one thing from some one cause, as different bodies that are hot receive their heat from fire. But being is found to be common to all things, however, otherwise different. There must, therefore, be one principle of being from which all things in whatever way existing have their being, whether they are invisible and spiritual, or visible and corporeal. But the devil is called the god of this world, not as having created it, but because worldlings serve him, of whom also the Apostle says, speaking in the same sense, "Whose god is their belly" (Philippians 3:19).

Article 2. Whether corporeal things were made on account of God's goodness?

I answer that, Origen laid down that corporeal creatures were not made according to God's original purpose, but in punishment of the sin of spiritual creatures. For he maintained that God in the beginning made spiritual creatures only, and all of equal nature; but that of these by the use of free will some turned to God, and, according to the measure of their conversion, were given a higher or a lower rank, retaining their simplicity; while others turned from God, and became bound to different kinds of bodies according to the degree of their turning away.

But this position is erroneous.

In the first place, because it is contrary to Scripture, which, after narrating the production of each kind of corporeal creatures, subjoins, "God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1), as if to say that everything was brought into being for the reason that it was good for it to be. But according to Origen's opinion,

the corporeal creature was made, not because it was good that it should be, but that the evil in another might be punished.

Secondly, because it would follow that the arrangement, which now exists, of the corporeal world would arise from mere chance. For if the sun's body was made what it is, that it might serve for a punishment suitable to some sin of a spiritual creature, it would follow, if other spiritual creatures had sinned in the same way as the one to punish whom the sun had been created, that many suns would exist in the world; and so of other things. But such a consequence is altogether inadmissible.

Hence we must set aside this theory as false, and consider that the entire universe is constituted by all creatures, as a whole consists of its parts. Now if we wish to assign an end to any whole, and to the parts of that whole, we shall find, first, that each and every part exists for the sake of its proper act, as the eye for the act of seeing; secondly, that less honorable parts exist for the more honorable, as the senses for the intellect, the lungs for the heart; and, thirdly, that all parts are for the perfection of the whole, as the matter for the form, since the parts are, as it were, the matter of the whole. Furthermore, the whole man is on account of an extrinsic end, that end being the fruition of God. So, therefore, in the parts of the universe also every creature exists for its own proper act and perfection, and the less noble for the nobler, as those creatures that are less noble than man exist for the sake of man, whilst each and every creature exists for the perfection of the entire universe. Furthermore, the entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine goodness, to the glory of God. Reasonable creatures, however, have in some special and higher manner God as their end, since they can attain to Him by their own operations, by knowing and loving Him. Thus it is plain that the Divine goodness is the end of all corporeal things.

Article 3. Whether corporeal creatures were produced by God through the medium of the angels?

I answer that, some have maintained that creatures proceeded from God by degrees, in such a way that the first creature proceeded from Him immediately, and in its turn produced another, and so on until the production of corporeal creatures. But this position is untenable, since the first production of corporeal creatures is by creation, by which matter itself is produced: for in the act of coming into being the imperfect must be made before the perfect: and it is impossible that anything should be created, save by God alone.

Article 4. Whether the forms of bodies are from the angels?

I answer that, it was the opinion of some that all corporeal forms are derived from spiritual substances, which we call the angels. And there are two ways in which this has been stated. For Plato held that the forms of corporeal matter are.... Avicenna, however, and certain others, have maintained that the forms of corporeal things do not subsist per se in matter, but in the intellect only. Thus they say that from forms existing in the intellect of spiritual creatures (called "intelligences" by them, but "angels" by us) proceed all the forms of corporeal matter, as the form of his handiwork proceeds from the forms in the mind of the craftsman. This theory seems to be the same as that of certain heretics of modern times, who say that God indeed created all things, but that the devil formed corporeal matter, and differentiated it into species.

Reply to Objection 1. By immaterial forms Boethius understands the types of things in the mind of God. Thus the Apostle says (Hebrews 11:3): "By faith we understand that the world was framed by the Word of God; that from invisible things visible things might be made." But if by immaterial forms he understands the angels, we say that from them come material forms, not by emanation, but by motion.

QUESTION 66. THE ORDER OF CREATION TOWARDS DISTINCTION.

1. Did formlessness of created matter precede in time its formation? 2. Is the matter of all corporeal things the same? 3. Was the empyrean heaven created contemporaneously with formless matter? 4. Was time created simultaneously with it?

I answer that, on this point holy men differ in opinion. Augustine for instance, believes that the formlessness of matter was not prior in time to its formation, but only in origin or the order of nature, whereas others, as Basil, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, hold that formlessness of matter preceded in time its formation. And although these opinions seem mutually contradictory, in reality they differ but little; for Augustine takes the formlessness of matter in a different sense from the others.....the formlessness of the heaven is indicated by the words, "darkness was upon the face of the deep," since

the air is included under heaven; and the formlessness of the earth, by the words, "The earth was void and empty."

Reply to Objection 1. The word earth is taken differently in this passage by Augustine, and by other writers. Augustine holds that by the words "earth" and "water," in this passage. primary matter itself is signified on account of its being impossible for Moses to make the idea of such matter intelligible to an ignorant people, except under the similitude of well-known objects. Hence he uses a variety of figures in speaking of it, calling it not water only, nor earth only, lest they should think it to be in very truth water or earth. At the same time, it has so far a likeness to earth, in that it is susceptible of form, and to water in its adaptability to a variety of forms. In this respect, then, the earth is said to be "void and empty," or "invisible and shapeless," that matter is known by means of form. Hence, considered in itself, it is called "invisible" or "void," and its potentiality is completed by form; thus Plato says that matter is "place." But other holy writers understand by earth the element of earth, and we have said how, in this sense, the earth was, according to them, without form.

Article 2. Whether the formless matter of all corporeal things is the same?

Article 3. Whether the empyrean heaven was created at the same time as formless matter?

Article 4. Whether time was created simultaneously with formless matter?

I answer that, it is commonly said that the first things created were these four--the angelic nature, the empyrean heaven, formless corporeal matter, and time. It must be observed, however, that this is not the opinion of Augustine. For he specifies only two things as first created--the angelic nature and corporeal matter--making no mention of the empyrean heaven. But these two, namely, the angelic nature and formless matter, precede the formation, by nature only, and not by duration; and therefore, as they precede formation, so do they precede movement and time. Time, therefore, cannot be included among them.

But the enumeration above given is that of other holy writers, who hold that the formlessness of matter preceded by duration its form, and this view postulates the existence of time as the measure of duration: for otherwise there would be no such measure.

QUESTION 67. THE WORK OF THE FIRST DAY.

1. Is the word light used in its proper sense in speaking of spiritual things? 2. Is light, in corporeal things, itself corporeal? 3. Is light a quality? 4. Was light fittingly made on the first day?

Article 1. Whether the word "light" is used in its proper sense in speaking of spiritual things?

I answer that, any word may be used in two ways--that is to say, either in its original application or in its more extended meaning. This is clearly shown in the word "sight." In its primary meaning, it signifies that which makes manifest to the sense of sight; afterwards it was extended to that which makes manifest to cognition of any kind. If, then, the word is taken in its strict and primary meaning, it is to be understood metaphorically when applied to spiritual things, as Ambrose says. But if taken in its common and extended use, as applied to manifestation of every kind, it may properly be applied to spiritual things. The answer to the objections will sufficiently appear from what has been said.

Article 2. Whether light is a body?

I answer that, Light cannot be a body, for three evident reasons.

Article 3. Whether light is a quality?

Article 4. Whether the production of light is fittingly assigned to the first day?

Objection 1. It would seem that the production of light is not fittingly assigned to the first day. For light, as stated above (Article 3), is a quality. But qualities are accidents, and as such should have, not the first, but a subordinate place. The production of light, then, ought not to be assigned to the first day.

Objection 2. Further, it is light that distinguishes night from day, and this is effected by the sun, which is recorded as having been made on the fourth day. Therefore the production of light could not have been on the first day.

Objection 3. Further, night and day are brought about by the circular movement of a luminous body. But movement of this kind is an attribute of the firmament, and we read that the firmament was made on the second day. Therefore the production of light, dividing night from day, ought not to be assigned to the first day.

Objection 4. Further, if it be said that spiritual light is here spoken of, it may be replied that the light made on the first day dispels the darkness. But in the beginning spiritual darkness was not, for even

the demons were in the beginning good, as has been shown . Therefore the production of light ought not to be assigned to the first day.....

Reply:

Objection 1. According to the opinion of those who hold that the formlessness of matter preceded its form in duration, matter must be held to have been created at the beginning with substantial forms, afterwards receiving those that are accidental, among which light holds the first place.

Objection 2. In the opinion of some, the light here spoken of was a kind of luminous nebula, and that on the making of the sun this returned to the matter of which it had been formed. But this cannot well be maintained, as in the beginning of Genesis Holy Scripture records the institution of that order of nature which henceforth is to endure. We cannot, then, say that what was made at that time afterwards ceased to exist.

Others, therefore, held that this luminous nebula continues in existence, but so closely attached to the sun as to be indistinguishable. But this is as much as to say that it is superfluous, whereas none of God's works have been made in vain. On this account it is held by some that the sun's body was made out of this nebula. This, too, is impossible to those at least who believe that the sun is different in its nature from the four elements, and naturally incorruptible. For in that case, its matter cannot take on another form.

I answer, then, with Dionysius , that the light was the sun's light, formless as yet, being already the solar substance, and possessing illuminative power in a general way, to which was afterwards added the special and determinative power required to produce determinate effects.

QUESTION 68. THE WORK OF THE SECOND DAY.

1. Was the firmament made on the second day? 2. Are there waters above the firmament? 3. Does the firmament divide waters from waters? 4. Is there more than one heaven?

Article 1. Whether the firmament was made on the second day?

Objection 1. It would seem that the firmament was not made on the second day. For it is said (Genesis 1:8): "God called the firmament heaven." But the heaven existed before days, as is clear from the words, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Therefore the firmament was not made on the second day.

Objection 2. Further, the work of the six days is ordered conformably to the order of divine wisdom. Now it would ill become the Divine wisdom to make afterwards that which is naturally first. But though the firmament naturally precedes the earth and the waters, these are mentioned before the formation of light, which was on the first day. Therefore the firmament was not made on the second day.

Objection 3. Further, all that was made in the six days was formed out of matter created before days began. But the firmament cannot have been formed out of pre-existing matter, for if so it would be liable to generation and corruption. Therefore the firmament was not made on the second day. On the contrary, it is written (Genesis 1:6): "God said: let there be a firmament," and further on (verse 8): "And the evening and morning were the second day."

I answer that, in discussing questions of this kind two rules are to be observed, as Augustine teaches. The first is, to hold the truth of Scripture without wavering. The second is that since Holy Scripture can be explained in a multiplicity of senses, one should adhere to a particular explanation, only in such measure as to be ready to abandon it, if it be proved with certainty to be false; lest Holy Scripture be exposed to the ridicule of unbelievers, and obstacles be placed to their believing.

We say, therefore, that the words which speak of the firmament as made on the second day can be understood in two senses.

Reply to Objection 1. According to Chrysostom , Moses prefaces his record by speaking of the works of God collectively, in the words, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," and then proceeds to explain them part by part; in somewhat the same way as one might say: "This house was constructed by that builder," and then add: "First, he laid the foundations, then built the walls, and thirdly, put on the roof." In accepting this explanation we are, therefore, not bound to hold that a different heaven is spoken of in the words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," and when we read that the firmament was made on the second day.

We may also say that the heaven recorded as created in the beginning is not the same as that made on the second day and there are several senses in which this may be understood. Augustine says that the heaven recorded as made on the first day is the formless spiritual nature, and that the heaven of the second day is the corporeal heaven.

Article 2. Whether there are waters above the firmament?

I answer with Augustine that, "These words of Scripture have more authority than the most exalted human intellect. Hence, whatever these waters are, and whatever their mode of existence, we cannot for a moment doubt that they are there." As to the nature of these waters, all are not agreed. Origen says (Hom. i in Gen.) that the waters that are above the firmament are "spiritual substances."

Article 3. Whether the firmament divides waters from waters?

I answer that the text of Genesis, considered superficially, might lead to the adoption of a theory similar to that held by certain philosophers of antiquity, who taught that water was a body infinite in dimensions, and the primary element of all bodies. Thus in the words, "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," the word "deep" might be taken to mean the infinite mass of water, understood as the principle of all other bodies. These philosophers also taught that not all corporeal things are confined beneath the heaven perceived by our senses, but that a body of water, infinite in extent, exists above that heaven. On this view the firmament of heaven might be said to divide the waters without from those within--that is to say, from all bodies under the heaven, since they took water to be the principle of them all. As, however, this theory can be shown to be false by solid reasons, it cannot be held to be the sense of Holy Scripture.

It should rather be considered that Moses was speaking to ignorant people, and that out of condescension to their weakness he put before them only such things as are apparent to sense. Now even the most uneducated can perceive by their senses that earth and water are corporeal, whereas it is not evident to all that air is also corporeal, for there have even been philosophers who said that air is nothing, and called a space filled with air a vacuum. Moses, then, while he expressly mentions water and earth, makes no express mention of air by name, to avoid setting before ignorant persons something beyond their knowledge. In order, however, to express the truth to those capable of understanding it, he implies in the words: "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," the existence of air as attendant, so to say, upon the water. For it may be understood from these words that over the face of the water a transparent body was extended, the subject of light and darkness. Whether, then, we understand by the firmament the starry heaven, or the cloudy region of the air, it is true to say that it divides the waters from the waters, according as we take water to denote formless matter, or any kind of transparent body, as fittingly designated under the name of waters. For the starry heaven divides the lower transparent bodies from the higher, and the cloudy region divides that higher part of the air, where the rain and similar things are generated, from the lower part, which is connected with the water and included under that name.

Reply to Objection 1. If by the firmament is understood the starry heaven, the waters above are not of the same species as those beneath. But if by the firmament is understood the cloudy region of the air, both these waters are of the same species, and two places are assigned to them, though not for the same purpose, the higher being the place of their begetting, the lower, the place of their repose.

Article 4. Whether there is only one heaven?

I answer that, on this point there seems to be a diversity of opinion between Basil and Chrysostom. The latter says that there is only one heaven, and that the words 'heavens of heavens' are merely the translation of the Hebrew idiom according to which the word is always used in the plural, just as in Latin there are many nouns that are wanting in the singular. On the other hand, Basil, whom Damascene follows, says that there are many heavens. The difference, however, is more nominal than real. For Chrysostom means by the one heaven the whole body that is above the earth and the water, for which reason the birds that fly in the air are called birds of heaven. But since in this body there are many distinct parts, Basil said that there are more heavens than one. In order, then, to understand the distinction of heavens, it must be borne in mind that Scripture speaks of heaven in a threefold sense.

Reply to Objection 1. The earth stands in relation to the heaven as the center of a circle to its circumference. But as one center may have many circumferences, so, though there is but one earth, there may be many heavens.

Reply to Objection 2. The argument holds good as to the heaven, in so far as it denotes the entire sum of corporeal creation, for in that sense it is one.

QUESTION 69. THE WORK OF THE THIRD DAY.

QUESTION 70. THE WORK OF THE FOURTH DAY.

QUESTION 71. THE WORK OF THE FIFTH DAY.

QUESTION 72. THE WORK OF THE SIXTH DAY.

QUESTION 73. THE THINGS THAT BELONG TO THE SEVENTH DAY.

Etc.Etc...etc.etc.etc.etc.

THE CREATION OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD I.

Angelology is the study of angels, of their names, of their place in the divine hierarchy and of their role.

An angel is a heavenly creature, especially in the three Abrahamic religions and in the Avesta. This word means a messenger of God, that is, an intermediary between God and men. Sometimes he transmits a divine message, sometimes he acts himself according to the divine will.

The angel is normally invisible, but when he lets himself be seen, in a dream or a vision, he has a human appearance, transfigured by a supernatural light.

Note on loose sheets found by the heirs to Peter DeLaCrau and inserted by them at this place after deliberation.

PUTTING IN PERSPECTIVE.

Zoroastrianism.

Zoroaster evokes two angels, one of light (the good) and the other of darkness (the evil), who fight and accompany God.

Druidism.

There are three great differences between the notion of *ethnosoi* in the Celtic tradition and the notion of angel among the Jewish-Islamic Christians.

- Among the Jewish-Islamic Christians, they are created but immortal, beings having their own life: they may rebel. For the druids, it is only the temporary state of metamorphosis, taken up by some gods to come onto earth. As soon as they return into the Next World (in the *Sedodumnon*) the *ethnosoi* gods in question take over immediately, of course, their anthropomorphic "normal" superhuman state, and give appearance of birds.

- Among the Jewish-Islamic Christians the visual elements borrowed from the birds are only the wings (a pair, two pairs or three pairs, etc.). For druids this can be much more (complete change into a swan for example).

- Among the Jewish-Islamic Christians, angels are male (Genesis 6: 4: they conceive children with the daughters of men). For druids, they are most often (but not always) female.

The *ethnosoi* gods correspond to the Victories of Greco-Latin Paganism. Their wings or their total change into birds symbolize the rapidity of their movement and their status of beings intermediate between the man and the hereafter. These god-or-demon or goddess-or-demonesses, or fairies, are then generally the sign of the intervention of the Other World in the affairs of men.

End of the note of PeterDeLaCrau found on a loose sheet.

Greek philosophy.

The angels are mentioned for the first time among the Neo-Platonists, Porphyry of Tiro (c. 260) and Iamblichus (c. 320). The hierarchy is, gods, archangels, angels, daimons, archons of the cosmos or of matter, heroes, souls of the dead, human souls. According to Porphyry, the demons inhabit the sublunary region of the world, while the angels inhabit the region above the Moon.

"You put the question: "What is the token of the presence of a god, an angel or an archangel, or a demon, or of some archon [governor of a planet] or a soul?"

I will, therefore, in a single statement lay down the proposition that the apparitions are in accord with their essences, powers and energies. The spectral forms of the gods are uniform; those of the demons are diversified; those of the angels are simpler in appearance than those belonging to the demons, but inferior to those of the gods; those of the archangels approach nearer to the divine Causes; those of the archons -- if those that have charge of the sublunary elements seem to thee to be the lords of the world -- will be diversified but arranged in proper order" (Iamblichus, *On the Egyptian Mysteries* II, 3)

Proclus establishes the following hierarchy of spiritual entities: intelligible gods, intellectual gods, hypercosmic gods, encosmic gods, angels, good demons, heroes. "I ask from the intelligible gods fullness of wisdom, from the intellectual gods the power to rise aloft, from the supercelestial gods guiding the universe an activity free and unconcerned with material inquiries; from the gods to whom the cosmos is assigned a winged life, from the angelic choruses a true revelation of the divine; from

the good demons an abundant filling of divine inspiration, and from the heroes a generous, solemn, and lofty disposition" (Commentary on Plato's Parmenides).

HEAVENLY WORLD AND HIERARCHY ACCORDING TO VALENTINUS (Phrebo ? + 100 Alexandria + 160).

A Christian theologian marked by the Platonic doctrines, Valentinus, of Egyptian origin, came from Alexandria to Rome around 135. He composed Letters, Homilies, a treatise on the three natures and a Gospel of Truth (which could well be the writing of the Nag Hammadi library which begins with these words).

His doctrine is very complex, but also very rich, and it remains one of the best examples of theological explanation of the beginnings of Christianity. In this system, only God is the "Father," "unbegotten," "incomprehensible," "elusive" and "eternal." With him coexists "Thought," which is also "Silence" or "Grace."

Pleroma is a Greek word meaning "fullness" and in this sense belongs to the classical language. It is mentioned about fifteen times in the New Testament. It is also found in late Neo-Platonism, for example in Damascius (at least three times). But it is Gnosticism which gave it a technical value (and which influenced Christians and Neo-Platonists).

It is not easy to discern the technical sense from the common one: we speak of the pleroma of the divinity, that is to say of its fullness; of the pleroma of Christ, that is to say of the abundance of his gifts; of the pleroma of the times, that is to say of their fulfillment; of the universal pleroma, that is to say of the totality of beings. In fact, the Gnostic meaning is reflected in all of these expressions.

There is pleroma where the unity and wholeness of spiritual principles command the constitution of the world or the unfolding of the history of salvation; there again where the complete plan of divine wisdom is revealed in time, especially in privileged times (the "last times"). The pleroma encompasses the One-and-All which founds the experience, organizes its elements, distributes its mediations; it embraces everything that contributes to and takes part in creation, in its cosmology (dualism of the world above which is light and of the world below which is darkness), in its chronology (divisions of time, astrological determination of favorable or unfavorable eras), in the soteriology that accompanies ontology (fall into the world of bodies, return to the world of spirits).

The Valentinus's pleroma.

From the Unbegotten Father etc. and from his Thought will be born three couples of eons: Intellect and Truth, Logos and Life (Ideal) Man and Church, which form the Ogdoad. Logos and Life emit ten eons. Man and Church emit twelve. In total, there will be thirty eons, which form the Pleroma. Only Nous (Intellect or Monogenous Son) contemplates the Father. But the thirtieth eon, Sophia (Wisdom), suffers from not being able to comprehend the "infinite greatness of the Father." Because of this "passion," Wisdom falls and this fall gives birth to the Demiurge (who is none other than the God of the Old Testament). The Monogenous Son emits a couple: Christ, who will be the revealer of the gnosis of the Father, and the Holy Spirit, whose mission will be to harmonize the eons in grace. The historical Jesus will only become the Chosen One when the eon Christ descends upon him, at the time of his baptism by John in the Jordan River.

The difference of such a system with Jewish Christian and Muslim theologies is that in such a system the supreme God and the Demiurge are not confused.

Analysis (metahistory or scenario).

The classical Valentinian doctrine and the original teaching of Valentinus survived only through a few fragments quoted by Clement of Alexandria (Stromatae), Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies) and Hippolytus of Rome (Refutatio), which is quite poor. Some are ready to attribute to him the composition of the Gospel of Truth, known from Irenaeus (Against Heresies III, 11, 9) and of which a Coptic version was discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1947, but this remains a hypothesis difficult to prove.

Under these conditions, it is preferable to turn to the version of the Valentinian myth elaborated by Ptolemy, a disciple of Valentinus, which is the subject of a detailed presentation in what is known as the "Great Notice" of Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies, I, 1-9), and of which the following is a summary.

The Pleroma consists of 30 eons, or spiritual entities (ogdoad, decad, dodecad), emanating in androgynous pairs from the original dyad, the Father of all things, called "Abyss," and his spouse "Silence." A drama will disturb the harmony of the Pleroma because only "Intellect," the first eon emanating from the Father, is able to know him. On the periphery, Sophia, the youngest of the aeons,

will succumb to the desire to know the Father and rush towards him, until she is put back in her place and her disordered "tendency" (enthumêsis) is expelled from the Pleroma.
EQUIVALENT TO THE FALL OF LUCIFER IN TODAY'S CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY BUT MORE ROMANTIC.

2) Once all the eons have been consolidated, they will emit the "Savior" and his escort of angels to go out of the Pleroma to deal with the formless emanation of Sophia, called Achamoth. The latter produces the hylc substance (matter), the psychic substance and the pneumatic substance that will enter into the manufacture of the cosmos and mankind (see I,1-4).

2).THIS IS A MAJOR DIFFERENCE FROM TODAY'S CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

Achamoth fashioned a "demiurge" with psychic substance, an inferior god who knows nothing of the spiritual world above him. He then makes himself a material world (cosmos), and then makes man with the hylc substance, into which he breathes a psychic soul. Unbeknownst to him, Achamoth deposits the spiritual seed in the human soul, so that this shapeless seed can grow and receive training for salvation (see I,5).

3).SIMILARITIES WITH TODAY'S CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. See the Augustinian notions of grace of predestination and of mass of perdition.

Human beings are thus divided into three categories.

-The pneumatics (or Gnostics), who will necessarily be saved, the psychics (the ordinary believers of the Church), who can hope for an eternal salvation, but inferior to that of the pneumatics, only if they let themselves be strengthened by faith and good works, and finally the hylcs (the rest of mankind), who will finally be destroyed with the cosmos (see I,6).4). It is the mass of perdition.of St. Augustine.
HEAVEN AND PARADISE.

The conception of salvation is relatively simple: all the pneumatic substance must return to the Pleroma, a true nuptial chamber where the pneumatic beings will unite with the angels of the Savior to form eternal syzygies, following the example of the Savior and of Achamoth.

As for the psychics who will have practiced good works, they will have the right to rest in the company of the Demiurge outside the Pleroma, in the place left vacant by Achamoth and the Savior. For nothing psychic can enter the Pleroma (see I,7).

Judaism (Old Testament).

The "Revelation" (of truth) being apparently insufficient, the Bible borrowed this concept from the mythologies of ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer, etc.) where the angels were seen as a sort of celestial court living with the great gods. The Judeo-Christian cherubim correspond, for example, to the Assyrian kerubim (which were winged bulls).

According to the Talmud, the names of the angels came with the Israelites from Babylon, and would be a borrowing from the Persian religion.

The attendance of the Assyrian and Babylonian gods during the exile in Babylon by the Bible writers introduced into the testamentary world a specialization with angels, agents of good and demons, fallen angels.

In the Hebrew Bible, angels are therefore envoys who originally perform good or evil tasks.

Each angel has a special office: Michael keeps the children of Israel, Gabriel gives strength and courage, Uriel (God is my Light) enlightens men in the darkness of the night, Raphael takes care of our physical and spiritual health.

The angels of the Judaic tradition are at the root of the Christian tradition: the seven archangels are common to them, three of them are known to us under the same name: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Today Christianity.

The expression celestial hierarchy refers, in Christian theology, to a systematic stratification of angelic creatures. It is not a dogma, but a theological opinion, which found its classical wording in the fifth century, in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, at the same time as the notion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and by analogy with it.

The Bible distinguishes various kinds of heavenly creatures: besides the angels properly so-called (named or not), we find in Isaiah some Seraphim, in Ezekiel some Cherubim, in Paul some Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues and Archangels. In total, from the Old to the New Testament, nine different categories. However, the concept of a hierarchy between these spiritual

beings derives rather from the Jewish apocryphal tradition, but also from the religious and philosophical background of the Hellenistic period. It was therefore from materials of diverse origins that the Fathers of the Church carried out a systematic ordering. From the second half of the fourth century onwards, this one ends in a division into nine angelic choirs, divided into three levels; namely, in order of importance: the seraphim, the cherubim and the thrones, then the dominions, the virtues and the powers, finally the principalities, the archangels and the angels. If we are indebted to St. Ephrem and to the Fathers of the Syrian Church in general, the sketch of this order, we already find a sketch of it in certain Greek Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem. It is, however, Pseudo-Dionysius who will consecrate the expression.

In the Latin Fathers, Augustine of Hippo was essentially interested in the mode of angelic knowledge, and Gregory the Great had taken over the systematization of Dionysius, bringing only a few modifications (he inverted principalities and virtues). Following them, the medieval theologians will not question the Dionysian hierarchies, which have come down to them through the translations of John Scotus Eriugena, but from the twelfth century onwards the scholastic masters will tend to neglect the mystical aspect of angelology in order to focus on the intellectual aspect of the separate Intelligences. The interest in the celestial hierarchy as such tends to fade.

In a way parallel to this theological evolution, medieval piety has favored an individualization of the angels: devotion to St. Michael the archangel or the personal guardian angel. Moreover, even if in Rhenish Mysticism the angel still represents both a spiritual guide and a spiritual level, the fact remains that, towards the end of the Middle Ages, the angelic function tends to diminish within new forms of mystical experience, in which the essential consists now in the communion of the Passion of Christ, and no longer in receiving the radiations of the celestial light.

Whereas in the East, with Gregory Palamas in particular, the theory of uncreated energies continues to guarantee angels a leading role in the process of deification, in the West, on the contrary, the notion of angelic stratification does not get over a modernity marked by Nominalism (rejection of Universals and intermediate spheres), Humanism (centrality of the human being) and Individualism (affirmation of an irreducible identity).

Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*) drew on passages from the New Testament, specifically Ephesians (1:21) and Colossians (1:16) to develop a schema of three Levels, Spheres or Triads of angels, with each hierarchy containing three Orders or Choirs.

Pseudo-Dionysius is a Neo-Platonic writer converted to Christianity. In his book *The Celestial Hierarchy*, the angelic stratification corresponds to a threefold intention of the author: to align himself with the Neo-Platonic theology, to theorize the spiritual life and, in a sense, to justify the emergence of a hierarchy in the Church.

The Neo-Platonic Theology

Thought of the emanation and return to the One, Neo-Platonism works out a view of the universe marked by intermediaries, so as to reconcile also the multiplicity of pagan divinities and the superior uniqueness of the divine. In the fifth century, in the philosopher Proclus, celestial intelligences carry out a teaching theophany by transmitting to the lower world the knowledge and energy of the by nature unknowable, deity. Moreover, for Iamblichus in the *Book of the Mysteries* as for Proclus in the *Platonic Theology*, every reality reflects the triple movement of intelligence, so that the arrangement of the celestial intelligences will take the form of hierarchized triads. As soon as Iamblichus, the Neo-Platonists establish this celestial hierarchy : gods , archangels, angels, daimons, chief archons, human souls.

“Nevertheless, that which operates to purify the souls is complete in the gods, but is simply of an exalting character in the archangels. The angels only loosen the bonds which fasten them to the sphere of matter. Demons draw them into the realm of nature, and the half-gods bring them down into the province of the operations of the senses. The archons either entrust them with the charge of things pertaining to the cosmic world, or with the dominion of those belonging to the realm of matter, as the case may be. Souls, when they appear to the beholders, attract.....” (Iamblichus, *On the Egyptian mysteries*, II, 5).

According to this perspective, Pseudo-Dionysius is led to divide the nine angelic categories into three triads, each of them performing the three mystical operations of purification, enlightenment, and union, with more or less intensity according to whether it is more or less close to the One God, that is, to the divinizing principle. The first triad is the highest in the hierarchy, for it is united to the divinity without intermediaries: it is the seraphim, the cherubim and the thrones (which carry God). The second triad is united to the divine through the intermediary of the first: it receives a lesser illumination that it has the function of transmitting to the lower stage, and is composed of dominations, virtues, and powers. As for the third triad, consisting of principalities, archangels, and finally angels, it forms the last link between the higher orders and the world of men.

In the world of Matter, the lower triad presents itself as the guardians of communities and individuals: messengers and interpreters, these reveal to men the divine mysteries, with a spirit of perfect conformity with the divine will.

In the world of the Soul, the intermediate triad represents the struggle and victory over the demon, but also the spiritual strengthening through an ideal of universal love.

Finally, in the world of the spirit, the superior triad, prone to illuminations and to the conflagrations of wisdom and science, initiates to the contemplation, viewed as a diving within the divine nature. To the descending illumination thus corresponds an ascending illumination: the human contemplation of the Trinitarian mystery is therefore necessarily situated at the summit of a progression through the stages of the angelic status .

According to the Fathers of the Church, angels are educators who prepare the soul for the work of Christ, by introducing it progressively into the spiritual life. They thus make it participate in the angelic life, as in their very being, by disengagement from material realities, which anticipates the modes of existence in the hereafter. Clement of Alexandria will go so far as to claim that the soul takes successively the nature of the angels who have taught it in proportion to its mystical ascension? This opinion has not been kept by tradition, just as the notion of a celestial hierarchy has never been established as a dogma, probably because both ask in terms of nature a question that a Origen has asked from this period, in terms of grace.

In the context of a Church in which theological decisions were continually to be delivered, a second volume, entitled *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, completes and reflects, in Pseudo-Dionysius, the presentation of the angelic hierarchy. Here again the term is not found in the New Testament, but the Areopagite was the first to apply it to the structures of the Church by making an analogical comparison between the celestial triple order and the ministerial triad composed of a bishop, presbyter and deacon. To this triad of initiators corresponds the triad of initiates: purified, enlightened, perfect (or monks), a classification in which we recognize the three stages of the spiritual life. From this authoritarian pattern, the monks will keep the ideal of imitation of the angelic life that they will symbolize by the image of the mystical ladder.

Although both authors Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Thomas Aquinas, drew on the New Testament, the Biblical canon is nevertheless relatively silent on the subject.

In the New Testament, only a few chosen ones and especially the Virgin Mary discuss with the angels. The angel of the Annunciation: the angel Gabriel appears to Zachariah in the Temple, at the crossroads between the Old Testament and the New One, and then to Mary at Nazareth, entering her house, and saluting her (Announcement to Mary, Gospel of Luke) in order to announce to her the good news of her virginal conception and of the incarnation of the Word, "Ave Maria" (Angelus) transmitted by innumerable generations. The birth of Jesus, called the Son of God, is accompanied by a vision by shepherds and their flocks, of legions of celebrating angels , a prefiguration of the Church: through the sacrament of baptism, the Christian is again connected to God , who was reconciled with mankind through the by birth, then the Passion of Christ, the Messiah, his only begotten Son, on the Cross. During his agony, an angel called "Angel of Consolation" appears to him in the Garden of Olives: showing him a chalice in which he does not want to drink: this scene of Gethsemane has been painted by many Christian artists for centuries. Finally, at the Resurrection, angels appeared to the holy women and spoke to them, to announce the resurrection of Jesus, angels described this time as "white as snow" or clothed "like lightning." In the Gospels, no description of the angels was made, only the artists representing them with a pair of wings (white became the symbol of the Resurrection in liturgy). In the Revelation , Saint John reports the vision of St Michael and his legions of angels fighting

and winning the victory of God, definitive against the "ancient serpent" that misled the Earth for centuries.

In his preaching Jesus speaks little of the angels, he quotes especially the good angels (Matt 22:30, Matt 25:31, Luke 15:10, Luke 20:36), the angels of the children (the "cherubs"), who always see the face of the Father in heaven (Matt. 18:10) and the angels of the divine justice.

The language of the angels is nevertheless evoked by St. Paul in chapter 13 of the first Epistle to the Corinthians: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." What is at the very least very strange, angels having no necessity to make sounds to make themselves understood by men and to communicate thoughts to them.

First Level.

The first level angels serve as the heavenly servants of God the Son.

-The word seraph is normally a synonym for serpents when used in the Hebrew Bible. The word seraphim (singular "Seraph") mean "burning ones."

Mentioned in Isaiah 6:1-7, Seraphim are the highest class and they serve as the caretakers of God's throne and continuously shout praises: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord; the whole earth is full of his glory!" According to Isaiah 6:1-8, the seraphim are described as fiery six-winged beings; with two wings they cover their faces, with another two they cover their feet, and the last two they use to fly.

-Cherubim have four faces: one of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle (later adopted as the symbols of the four evangelists). They have four wings covered with eyes, a lion's body, and the feet of oxen. According to the book of Genesis, the cherubim, with a "flaming sword," after the sin of Adam, forbade man access to the tree of life.

Modern usage has blurred the distinction between cherubim and putti. Putti are the most often wingless human babies or toddler-like beings traditionally used in figurative art.

-The "Thrones" (Greek: thronoi, pl. of thronos) are a class of celestial beings mentioned by Paul of Tarsus in Colossians 1:16 (New Testament). They are representations of God's justice and authority, and have as one of their symbols the throne precisely.

It is not unusual to find that the Thrones are associated, by some, with the Ophanim or Erelim from the Jewish angelic hierarchy, however there is very little evidence to sustain this thesis. The Ophanim (Heb. Ofanim =wheels, from the vision of Daniel 7:9) are said to be moved by the spirit of other beings, which raises the question if the Ophanim are really spiritual beings or if they are purely material beings. They appear as a beryl-colored wheel-within-a-wheel, their rims covered with hundreds of eyes. They are closely connected with the Cherubim in the vision of Ezekiel (10:17): " 7 When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them. Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above."

Christian theologians that include the Thrones as one of the Choirs don't describe them as wheels, describing them as elder men who listen to the will of God and present to him the prayers of men. The Twenty-Four Elders in the Book of Revelation are usually thought to be part of this class of angels.

Second level.

Angels of the Second Sphere work as governors of the creation by subjecting matter and guiding or ruling the spirits.

-The "Dominions" (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) (lat. dominatio, plural dominationes, also translated from the Greek term kyriotētes, pl. of kyriotēs, as "Lordships") or "Dominations." The Dominions regulate the duties of lower angels. It is only with extreme rarity that the angelic lords make themselves physically known to humans.

The Dominions are believed to look like divinely beautiful humans with a pair of wings, much like the common representation of angels, but they may be distinguished from other classes of angels by wielding a scepter or a sword.

-Virtues. These angels are those through which signs and miracles are made in the world. The term appears to be linked to the attribute "might," from the Greek root *dynamis* (pl. *dynameis*) in Ephesians 1:21, which is also translated as "Virtue" or "Power." They are presented as the celestial Choir "Virtues" precisely, in the *Summa Theologica*.

From Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De Coelesti Hierarchia*: "The name of the holy Virtues signifies a certain powerful and unshakable virility welling forth into all their godlike energies; not being weak and feeble for any reception of the divine Illuminations granted to it; mounting upwards in fullness of power to assimilation with God; never falling away from the Divine Life through its own weakness, but ascending unwaveringly to the superessential Virtue which is the Source of virtue."

-Powers or Authorities

The "Powers" (lat. *potestas*, pl. *potestates*), or "Authorities," from the Greek *exousiai*, pl. of *exousia* (Eph 3:10). The primary duty of the "Powers" is to supervise the movements of the heavenly bodies in order to ensure that the cosmos remains in order. Being warrior angels, they also oppose evil spirits, especially those that make use of the matter in the universe. These angels are usually represented as soldiers wearing full armor and helmet, and also having defensive and offensive weapons such as shields and spears (see Ephesians 6:12).

They are warrior angels created to be completely loyal to God. Some believe that no Power has ever fallen from duty, but another theory states that Satan was the Chief of the Powers before he fell. Their duty is to oversee the distribution of power among humankind, hence their name.

Third level.

Angels who function as heavenly guides, protectors, and messengers to human beings.

Principalities or Rulers

The "Principalities" (Latin: *principati*) also translated as "Rulers," from the Greek *archai*, pl. of *archē* (Eph 3:10), are the angels that guide and protect nations, or groups, and institutions such as the Church. The Principalities preside over the hosts of angels and charge them with fulfilling the divine ministry. There are some who administer and some who assist.

The Principalities are shown wearing a crown and carrying a scepter. Their duty is also said to be to carry out the orders given to them by the upper sphere angels and bequeath blessings to the material world. Their task is therefore to oversee groups of people. They are the educators and guardians of the realm of earth. Like beings related to the world of the ideas, they are said to inspire men in many things such as art or science.

Paul used the term ruler or authority in Ephesians 1:21, and rulers and authorities in Ephesians 3:10.

Archangels

An archangel is the angel charged with the most important news such as the Annunciation, or as the leader of the armies (Revelation 12: 7). In the Bible, three archangels are evoked, Michael, Gabriel, who was sent to see Mary, and Raphael, who appears in the book of Tobias (it is he who tells Tobias the existence of seven archangels)

The word "archangel" comes from the Greek *archangelos*, meaning chief angel, a translation of the Hebrew *mal'akh*). It derives from the Greek *archein*, meaning to be first in rank or power; and *angelos* which means messenger or envoy. The word is only used twice in the New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 1:9.

In most Christian traditions Gabriel is also considered an archangel, but there is no direct literal support for this assumption. It is also worth noting that the term 'archangel' appears only in the singular, never plural, and only in order to designate Michael.

The name of the archangel Raphael appears only in the Book of Tobit . Tobit is considered Deuterocanonical by Roman Catholics (both Eastern and Western Rites), Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Anglicans. The Book of Tobit is not, however, acknowledged by most Protestant denominations, such as Reformed Christians or Baptists. Raphael said to Tobias that he was "one of the seven angels who stand before the Lord," and it is generally believed by the scholars that Michael and Gabriel are two of the other six.

A fourth archangel is Uriel whose name literally means "Light of God." He plays a role in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which is considered canonical by both the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox Church.

The Seven Archangels are said to be the guardian angels of nations * and countries, and are concerned with the issues and events surrounding these, including politics, military matters, commerce and trade: e.g., Archangel Michael is traditionally seen as the protector of Israel and of the ecclesia (Gr. root ekklesia), theologically equated as the Church, the forerunner of the spiritual New Israel.

Another possible interpretation of the seven archangels is that they are the seven spirits of God that stand before the throne described in the Book of Enoch, and in the Book of Revelation.

Editor's note. Some scholars make a distinction between archangel (with a lower-case a) and archangel (with an uppercase A). The former word can denote the second-lowest choir (arch-angels in the sense of being just above the lowest Choir of angels that is those who are called only "angels") but the latter word (with an uppercase) may denote the highest of all the angels (i.e., Arch-angels in the sense of being "above all angels," of any Choir. The seven highest seraphim, Michael, being the highest of all).

-Angels

The "angels" or malakhim, i.e., the "plain" angels (angelos, i.e., messenger or envoy), are the lowest order of the angels, and the most recognized. They are the ones most concerned with the affairs of living things. Within the class of the angels, there are many different kinds, with different functions. They are for instance sent as messengers to humanity.

Personal guardian angels are not of a separate order but rather come from this order of Angels. It is a common belief that they are assigned to every human being, Christian or not. It is unknown whether they guard multiple humans at the same time during their existence or just one, but the latter is a more typical opinion**.

During the Middle Ages, many patterns were proposed, some drawing on or expanding on considerably the Pseudo-Dionysius, others suggesting completely different classifications (some authors limited the number of Choirs to seven instead nine), some in nearly inverted order.

In summary therefore.

In its relationship with Mankind , the angelic world is organized according to three perfect hierarchies. It was Dionysius the Areopagite who, first in the 4th century, was able to extract this "revelation" from the Bible.

The first hierarchy, the highest, is composed of the seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones. They are so close to God or of the Demiurge that they receive from him directly his wills, that they communicate to the lower hierarchies. They are like the ministers of a king.

The second hierarchy, composed of the Dominations, the Virtues, and the Powers, deals with the general manner in which these wishes will be applied to men. They are like the staff of the king's army. As for the third hierarchy, that of the lower angels, it carries out to us the commandments of God or of the Demiurge. They are like the king's army, present on the ground. It is precisely because of their inferior nature that they can be so close to us. This hierarchy is composed of the angels of the order of the Dominations, charged with the general destiny of the peoples, with the order of the Archangels, who announce the great news, and finally with the crowd of the guardian angels who look after each individual in particular. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my father in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

This conviction was never denied by the Church, which continues to celebrate the feast of the guardian angels on October 2nd. As for the saints who would have seen their guardian angel, they are numerous.

John XXIII and then John Paul II, each in his own way, evoked the presence of these protecting angels, pointing out also their function of "witness of our life" during the last judgment. Same thing in Islam.

Christianity has therefore taken over the main angels of Judaism, including Lucifer, chief of the rebel angels, identified with Satan, but added to them other intercessors between God or the Demiurge and men.

From the fifteenth century onwards, without the expression disappears from the handbooks, the celestial hierarchy played no longer any structuring role, either in theology or in mysticism.

Current situation

Contrary to the Orthodox tradition, less marked by modern personalism, contemporary Catholic education is a continuation of the evolution described above. The expression of celestial hierarchy now refers exclusively to the historical work of Pseudo-Dionysius. Thus, at the level of the ordinary pastoral duties, John Paul II avoided using this expression, preferring to evoke, with regard to angels, a set of personal beings, having a name sometimes personalized sometimes collective and grouped in choirs.

Anselm Grun, German Benedictine, a specialist of the question, draws of it a contrasting balance: disinterest of the current theologians but enthusiasm of a public fond of esotericism. From the perspective of a depth psychology, he advocates the rediscovery of the personalized guardian angel, a figure of mediation, in which God manifests his active presence. No mention of any angelic stratification, but resumption of the vocabulary of the energies, transposed into the field of the psyche, where God uses the energies he has created through angels.

* And in this case corresponds to the teutates of our ancestors.

** And corresponds in this case to the genius and juno, or genii cucullati (hooded spirits) of the Romans.

THE CREATION OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD II.

THE FALLEN ANGELS.

Demonology is the study of fallen angels or demons, of their names, of their place in the demonic hierarchy and of their role.

The four Gospels ascribed to the new Joshua (Yehoshua Bar Yosef), however, mention the Gehenna of fire (ah the joys of the love religion) many times, the Sheol and so on, but without giving too much detail.

As we have already had the opportunity to say it, the idea of hell such as we understand it today, is almost absent from the Jewish Bible (Old Testament).

The notion of Sheol differs from it noticeably. This Sheol was conceived by the Hebrews as a pit (Psalm 69, 15-16; 88: 7) a place of silence, oblivion and darkness (Psalm 88: 11-13). The dead led there a larval and crepuscular existence, deprived of all that is desirable in life, strangers to all relation with God. In short, the ancient Jews (the Hebrews) did not believe in a true life after death.

Same thing for the Devil!

In the book of Genesis, where the tradition of the origins of the Universe and of the Man is related, there is nothing but the serpent tempting Eve, the name of Satan or Lucifer is nowhere.

Even if the following verse is found in the much later and very late book of Isaiah" (14: 12) about the death of the king of Babylon:

Morning star, you have fallen from heaven,

Even though you were as bright as the rising sun!

You told yourself,

"I will go up to heaven.

I will put my throne

Above the stars of God (El).

I will sit on the mountain of the assembly.

I will be like God Most High."

But you were brought down to the Sheol.

You were brought down to the deep places where the dead are."

It was a post eventum (after the fact) prediction, as always, of course, of the fall of Babylon and of his last king.

Origen, in his *De principiis*, was the first to consider that the passage from Isaiah quoted above testified that Lucifer - the morning star - had fallen into the abyss for having wished to equal God; and that his forfeiture had made him become ... Satan, the Accuser, the Tempter, in short, the Devil.

Subsequently, Tertullian, St Cyprian, St Ambrose, and many others, less illustrious, have accredited this thesis.

The Devil and the hell, therefore, entered theology and consequently Genesis only after the first (strictly speaking) Christian texts - the Gospels - on the basis of the interpretation of aHebrew text!

THE CREATION OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

We have already said a few words from the Judeo-Christian dual language on this subject: creation ex nihilo but mention in Genesis of a pre-existing raw material called Tohu wa Bohu in Hebrew Materia Prima in Latin, and shaped by the "elohim." It is not useless to return to it.

First of all, let us remark that some philosophies do not make the creator god of this (failed) world the supreme god of their system but make him an inferior god called in generic terms "demiurge" but with a proper name that varies according to the system, for example Yaldabaoth.

Metahistory or myth relating to the creation of the material world that is ours according to John Lamb Lash, a specialist in comparative mythology.

To explain the origin of the material universe, the Gnostic authors have elaborated a complex mythology. From the unknowable original God, a series of inferior deities were generated by emanation. The last of these deities, Sophia, conceived the desire to know the unknowable Supreme Being. This illegitimate desire gave birth to an evil and distorted god, or demiurge, who created the universe. Yaldabaoth was born of the Will of Sophia or Wisdom without divine consent. Sophia in love with the magnificence of her creator begot Yaldabaoth in the secret of her intimacy. This being, although inhabited by the divinity of his mother, was far removed from the divine transcendence that had inspired this creation. Sophia, conscious of her error, hid her offspring from her fellow eons and placed him in a "cloud of light" as it is written in the Apocrypha of John found at Nag Hammadi in 1947, a text belonging to Sethian Gnosticism according to specialists.

To sum up: the World is not as it should be, evil reigns in it. Let's look for the error!

The Christian cosmogony despite the biblical texts speaking of an original chaos or tohu wa-bohu, is an absolute ex nihilo creationism but there exist of it today different kinds.

- Theist creationism, in which God is recognized as Creator but whose Creation would run its course freely afterwards.

- Literalist creationism based on a literal reading of the Bible or of the Quran. Literalist creationism being a movement which defends certainties fixed in the literal reading of religious texts, it is frequently opposed to science whose research and discoveries constantly question what seems to have been acquired. As a result, creationism is often found on the political scene on the side of the most conservative groups in each country, especially since its interpretation concerns not only the past of the earth and of the life, but also the ancestors of man and the social organization.

- Concordist creationism, which seeks agreement between the text and the scientific research.

- The finalist creationism, which adopts the scientific approach without reserve but discusses its finality. Since the end of the twentieth century, literalist creationism was given up in favor of the Intelligent Design theory, which is nevertheless considered by some people as a masked creationism.

The word creationism, therefore, designates in the broad sense a doctrine of a religious order according to which one or more divine beings are the creators of life.

The creationist currents are very various from those who support fixism by working out a theist theory of nature to those with more deist positions which embrace the transformist theory (teleology or hypothesis of the intelligent design).

Fixist creationism reads the Bible or the Quran as if they were books of natural science and history, conveying the belief that the narrative of the creation of the universe as provided by religious texts gives a literally exact description of the origin of the Universe. This interpretation of texts such as Genesis or Quran is based on the conviction that these texts were "inspired."

Creationism, however, is not limited to the currents interpreting religious texts literally, but also includes those who admit that the universe is more than 6,000 years old, the proponents of intelligent design, some currents that admit aspects of the theory of Evolution, but excludes Man from the theist evolution which admits that the evolution of species takes place but is directed or influenced by some deities or a Creator who would give birth to the universe, the living thing and the mechanisms making them able to evolve on their own.

The book of Genesis (from the Greek "birth," "beginning," "source," "origin," "cause") is the first book, called in Hebrew "bereshit" (heading according to the translation of Andrew Chouraqui), of the Torah (Pentateuch), therefore of the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) and of the Christian Bible. Jewish tradition considers that it was written under the divine dictation by Moses.

The book of Genesis explains the origin of the man and of the Hebrew people until his coming in Egypt. It contains the presuppositions and historical bases of Israel's national and religious ideas and institutions, and is used as a preface to his history, laws and customs. The original narrative describes the creation of the world by God in six days.

The present creationism based on a literal reading of the Bible is of recent origin, and the symbolic interpretation is older, as the criticism that Origen, although a convinced Christian, does, shows it well.

In a passage that was later chosen by Gregory of Nazianzus for inclusion in the Philocalia, an anthology of some of his most important texts, he made the following very modern-sounding remarks: "For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? And that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally."

And in another passage of his book against Celsus, Origen said:

"And with regard to the creation of the light upon the first day, and of the firmament upon the second, and of the gathering together of the waters that are under the heaven into their several reservoirs on the third, the earth thus causing to sprout forth those (fruits) which are under the control of nature alone, and of the great lights and stars upon the fourth, and of aquatic animals upon the fifth, and of land animals and man upon the sixth, we have treated to the best of our ability in our notes upon Genesis, as well as in the foregoing pages, when we found fault with those who, taking the words in their apparent signification, said that the time of six days was occupied in the creation of the world" (Against Celsus. Book 6,60).

The symbolic interpretation, frequent in St. Augustine, was therefore admitted in the Middle Ages and in early Renaissance, as well as in the Jewish exegesis. The Protestant Reformation, then the Catholic Counter-Reformation of the Council of Trent, led to the development of the belief in the literal accuracy of the Bible, asserting that the particular translation proposed by the Vulgate contained no errors in relation to the Dogma, which justified using it as a reference for the purpose of exegesis and teaching. The great diversity of interpretations of the Bible in the different Protestant currents stems from one of the foundations of the Lutheran Protestant reformation promulgating a direct relationship between the Christian and the Bible, open to the interpretation of each reader.

Scientifically, the exploration of the planet leads to the discovery of species hitherto unknown to Westerners, and the great variety of the living and the Earth surprises. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scientific theories attempted to explain the geology of the Earth. In biology, the debate is opened between the partisans of fixism, particularly represented by Georges Cuvier, and the defenders of transformism founded by Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck. Charles Lyell also tries to make biblical accounts agree with observation, and explains the diversity of living things by the existence of "creation centers": certain regions of the Earth would have species very different from the others because they would come from differing creation centers from which they would have colonized the neighboring regions. During his round-the-world trip on the Beagle, Charles Darwin interprets his observations following the theories of Charles Lyell.

In 1859, he publishes the Origin of Species. The essay introduces a break (there will be from now on a before and after Darwin) in the scientific knowledge of the origins of life in general and of the origins of man consequently, although Darwin avoids talking about him in the book. The theory developed by Darwin argues that living beings see their biological characteristics evolve over time and that the environment in which a group of individuals lives undertakes a natural selection which, through

reproduction and transmission of certain hereditary characteristics, extends the evolution of these biological characteristics to the whole group. According to this theory, there is no creating entity suddenly giving life to a completely and definitely formed species.

Before the development of the twentieth-century theology, the Catholic Church was clearly unfavorable to transformism. Pope Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, affirmed again in 1893 the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible:

"The Books of the Old and New Testament, whole and entire, with all their parts, as enumerated in the decree of the same Council (Trent) are to be received as sacred and canonical.... not because, having been composed by human industry, they were afterwards approved by her authority; nor only because they contain revelations without error; but because, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author."

The sociologist and historian of religions summarizes in this way the subsequent evolution of the Church's thought. The huge effort developed by Science in all fields, without excluding the Bible from them, has cleared our religious representation of Man and world. The Six Days, Adam and Eve, the Flood, the writing of the Pentateuch, the Near East world, the "sources" of the Gospels, the literary genres, the history of the manuscripts and of the canon, the Bible remains a religious from which we had to go out in order to study and understand with an intellectual set of tools and a cultural equipment that owe it nothing. Their implementation was at first felt as sacrilege before their novelty was lately received by Pius XII in his encyclical *Divino Afflante* (1943), then accepted by Vatican II in the constitution *Dei Verbum* (1965).

The Church no longer intends to decide on scientific fields. Now better inspired the Church rejects the fundamentalist doctrine of biblical inerrancy and considers that the Bible does not aim to inform the reader about natural sciences, cosmology, history, geography or any other field of knowledge unrelated to the salvation of the human being. She nevertheless continues to affirm that the spiritual soul, directly created by God, does not proceed by evolution. For Pope John Paul II (*The Origins of Life*, Speech of 22 October 1996 at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences):

Consequently, the theories of evolution, which, according to the philosophies which inspire them, consider the spirit as emerging from the forces of living matter or as a simple epiphenomenon of this matter, are always incompatible with Christianity.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

The species *Homo sapiens* (the modern man) is derived from *Homo Erectus* some 200,000 years ago, somewhere in Africa. The peopling of the Earth would have begun 50 to 100,000 years ago. If it is possible to consider mathematically speaking that there exists indeed a "Mitochondrial Eve," which would have lived in Africa about 150,000 years ago, and a Y chromosome Adam, also living in Africa, dating back some 142,000 years, but this mitochondrial Eve and this Y Adam have no reason to have known each other nor even to have been contemporaries. They share this status of an ancestor of mankind with many other previous individuals. The ancestors common to all present mankind would all belong to that part of mankind that survived a bottleneck that reduced the number of human beings to a few thousands, and women to less than 500, 70,000 years ago.

THE FIRST MAN.

Adam is a character from the Book of Genesis and Quran. In these texts, which founded biblical mythology and Jewish, Christian and Muslim beliefs, he was the first man, directly created by God. He is also the companion of Eve, created from his body.

Onomastics proposes several trails concerning the origin of the name Adam. For example, it can be a word meaning "humus." But it can also come from a Semitic root, *adom*, meaning "red" (like blood).

The role of divine blood as animating element of human beings formed from clay figurines made by the gods corresponds to very archaic processes of sympathetic magic and is found in the versions of the creation of man present in the Atrahasis epic or the Epic of Creation. In the first case, it is Ea who creates him by the sacrifice of the god named We-Ilu, while in the second it is the work of Marduk, who sacrifices the god Qingu, one of those whom he vanquished during his fight against Tiamat.

The creation of the human being is also the main theme of the myth of Enki and Ninmah. This begins with the creation of the world and the initial peopling of the Earth by the gods, who unite and multiply until they have to produce their own food to survive, what displeases them to the highest degree. They complain to the goddess Namma, who solicits her son Enki so that he works out substitutes for the gods, who would work in their place and for their benefit. Enki made a mold, then gave it to his mother so that she puts some clay in it, thus forming the human beings, who came to life thanks to the help of a group of goddesses in the forefront of whom was Ninmah, who assigns to them their destiny: to work for the gods. The exact way in which men come to life is not known, as the text reached to this day is accidentally interrupted, exactly at the point where that is perhaps evoked.

It seems therefore that coexisted with the tradition making Enki the creator of man another which attributed this action to Enlil. The Song of the Hoe, which seems to refer to a mythological background of Nippur, tells us that this god created man by taking clay with a hoe (main subject of the text) to place it in a mold from which came out the first of men.

In any case, the original Sumerian/Akkadian myth is very clear: men were created to serve and honor gods.

To return to the Judeo-Christian anthropology, according to the Bible, in the book of Genesis, Adam is the first man and was created by God on the sixth day of Creation from a little bit of earth he fashioned in his image, before animating it with his breath. The Greek *pneuma* as well as the Hebrew *ruah* mean both "wind" and "spirit," according to the principle common to the Greek and Hebrew worlds, through which an animate being is a being which is breathing.

In terms of mimicking or gesture, it is therefore an operation of sympathetic magic, traditional in the Middle Eastern world, inspired not by the potter's technique but by that of the maker of divine figurines, with the breath of this mysterious God (the *lohim*, let us never forget that in this text it is spoken of *lohim* = gods and not of the One God) instead of the blood of the gods as in the original Mesopotamian myth, to animate this big voodoo poppet (a golem?)

Then, as God considered it was not good for man to be alone, he modeled animals that he brought to Adam to see how he would call them. Adam gave a name to each of them, but there was no company that suited him. Then God put him to sleep, and made him a woman from one of his ribs (the mention of a rib would be in reality, in a previous Sumerian legend, a play on words, rib and life being in Sumerian almost homographic. This play on words would have disappeared with the translation in Hebrew).

Adam recognized the woman as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, that is to say, "taken out from him." He admitted the woman as his mate, and God commanded them to be fertile, to subdue the animals, and to eat vegetables. The first couple was placed by God in the Garden of Eden, so that Adam cultivates the soil and guards it (still the plot of the Sumerian myth, men were created to serve the gods, not for themselves).

God had allowed everything to Adam except the consumption of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying to him: "You must not eat from that one, for when you eat from it, you will die". The Serpent (Nahash in Hebrew), described as "the craftiest of the wild animals" appeared and told the woman that God was lying, that they would not die, but that their eyes would open and that their new knowledge would relate them to gods.

The woman ate the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam, who ate it in turn. But after they had tasted the fruit, they saw that they were naked and went to hide. When God spoke to Adam, God realized that they were hidden, and, asking him why, Adam replied: "I heard you in the garden – for God indeed according to the Judeo-Islamic Christians can walk in a Garden like a common Cyrus king of Babylon- and I was afraid, for I am naked; then I hid. It was in this way that God perceived that they had tasted the forbidden fruit, for when he asked, "Who told you that you are naked?" Adam had to confess his fault by admitting that he had eaten the fruit.

THE ORIGINAL SIN.

This fundamental text, however, intended to be understood by everyone, at least in principle, is an equation with several unknowns.

-The personality of the mysterious tempter having taken the appearance of a serpent.

- To what exactly corresponded the second tree planted in the middle of the Garden of Eden, the tree of life, distinguished from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? To the immortality characterizing gods precisely (therefore we would find there again one of the elements of the Sumerian myth sought by Gilgamesh to Prince Utanapishti: the immortality plant).

-How, besides, to forbid the evil if it is not said in what it consists of. Disobedience is not the only of the evils in this world.

All this is therefore a little muddled, the scribes of King Josiah in Jerusalem having apparently adapted reminiscences of the Sumerian legend for their own scenario but having somewhat lacked genius in their merger of the theme of the cedar forest and of the plant of immortality, secret of Utanapishti (which finally be will stolen by a snake).

The exact nature of the fault of the first man as it emerges from the very text of Genesis is therefore not very clear. It is not a sin against nature against himself or against his wife and the alternative is the following.

-Either this original sin consists in disobedience to God.

-Or this original sin consists in having wished to equal God, in wishing to become like God, by becoming immortal.

The other difficulty of this text comes from the fact that the word meaning God is a plural, *elohim*, and does not make very monotheistic (again a tendentious translation?)

Then a sin of hubris like Satan? A sin against the spirit?

What is certain in any case it is thatit is in the relation to divinity, in the relationship man / god or men / gods in the plural, that lies this original vice of the first man, for the Bible. For as for being mortal, men know that since always.

" Gilgamesh, whence do you direct yourself? You shall not find the life you seek, for at the creation of mankind the gods allotted death to men. They retained life in their own hands. Gilgamesh, let your belly be full, make you merry by day and by night. Make every day a day of feasting and of rejoicing, dance and play, by day, by night, let your clothes be sparkling and fresh, wash your hair, bathe your

body, attend to the babe who holds you by the hand, take your beloved and let her rejoice in you. For this is the lot of mankind to enjoy, immortal life is not for men" (tablet X).

Here below, on the other hand, what according to the Bible, God then said to the woman, " I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Lastly, God said to Adam, " Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life [...] By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Then He said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and also take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground [ground and not dust] from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

The fault which leads to the exclusion of the Garden of Eden is called original sin. Its doctrine has been extremely debated since its origins, and it has taken very distinct forms in the various Christian denominations.

The story attributes three sons to Adam and Eve: Cain, Abel and Seth, then other children whose name is not given. He died at 930 years.

As all truths defined by Faith are intangible, this one plays an important role, for without it one cannot understand the doctrine of original sin, and consequently the doctrine of redemption.

The Church considers the man gifted - unlike animals - of an immortal soul. It presupposes a considerable leap, due to the intervention of God. How this intervention happened, the Church no longer specifies it: we are free to think that God could completely make the man or to use for that one or more living beings.

Editor's note.

The story of Adam's creation, whatever its origin, involves a first man and is therefore opposing if it is taken literally to his much more gradual appearance according to the theory of evolution. But Darwinism constitutes a descriptive and explanatory edifice, not a moral and normative injunction. The confusion has been facilitated by linguistic ambiguity: Darwin certainly explains that the most suitable lines ought to eliminate those in the long run, but this is an estimate of the probable one, and by no means a moral objective he would recommend.

The progressive human evolution, considered by the Catholic Church - and studied by some of her members (Breuil, Teilhard de Chardin) - as a hypothesis, is not accepted by other currents of Christianity that are more creationist and even more fixist.

For the Catholic Church, the main teaching of the narrative of the Creation is that Man is a divine creature. The way in which God operated to create Man is secondary and its presentation in the Bible could only be allegorical.

In this matter, the manner in which God proceeded is the object of science, that the creation of man is the result of a divine will is that of faith.

Her position is that God is the only creator, that he created the world out of love, and that the spirit cannot be the result of a simple evolution of matter.

Pope Benedict XVI summarized the views of the Catholic Church in April 2007: Catholicism believes in the creative reason at the beginning of everything and principle of everything, a statement that is not refutable in the sense of Karl Popper and on which science therefore can't take a position in one direction or the other.

NOAH.

The continuation of the book of Genesis says that nine generations after Adam and Eve, the humankind born from the first couple disappeared because of the flood, with the exception of Noah and his family (his wife, his sons Japheth, Shem, Ham and their wives), to whom God entrusted the task of re-founding humanity. In the Bible, Noah is therefore the most recent ancestor common to all mankind. God also gave him commandments, but less than he would do later with Moses.

THE HAPPY FEW. THE FIRST PEOPLE CHOSEN BY GOD.

Abraham is relatively little quoted in the Old Testament in relation to the other founding figures (the name Abram or Abraham appears there 236 times against 359 for Jacob, 772 for Moses and 1080 for David).

The onomastic proposes several trails concerning the etymology of the name of Abraham.

The story of Genesis (17: 5) gives a popular etymological explanation which remains largely widespread, according to which it means "father of a multitude of nations." But is nonetheless inaccurate even if it actually contains a play on words with a Hebrew term meaning "the crowd." The origin of the first name of the biblical patriarch, "Abram" is, for its first part (ab- or av) a well-established Semitic root meaning "father" and for its second part (-ram) is derived from the Akkadian raamu ("to love") or from the Western Semitic rwm ("to be high"). This theophoric name (ab- or av- the father may be the God or ancestor deified) is also common in the first and second millennium among the Arameans and the Semites of the South.

Consequently the name may mean, according to the first possibility, "He loved the father" or "the father loves" or, according to the second, perhaps more convincing, "he rose compared to the father."

The question of the historicity of the Biblical character Abraham has been the subject of considerable scientific work by archaeologists.

The existence of extraordinarily abundant archives (clay tablets) has made it possible to conclude since that the name "Abraham" is found at different times and in different places of Mesopotamia, without any particular use to Ur in Chaldea can be noted. Moreover, the migrations in Mesopotamia are now fairly well known, and none corresponds to the trajectory of the Biblical account, from Ur in Chaldea to Palestine. Archaeologists also find that the geography of Palestine at the supposed time of Abraham does not correspond to the biblical account (for example, the city of Beer Sheva did not exist in the 19th century before our era). Abraham could not have camels at that time because they were not yet domesticated. These anachronisms and the fact that there are no chronological indications in the Biblical narratives make thus very little relevant the idea of a patriarchal period.

The book of the Bible in which the story of Abraham is narrated was probably written between the seventh and fifth centuries before our era, by combining narratives of various origins gathered by several editors. This seems to reflect a belated origin compared to other older patriarchal figures such as Jacob's, and the idea of a character who lived in the second millennium is given up by most researchers. The conclusion of scientific studies is indeed the non-historicity of Abraham, a Biblical personage, therefore of faith, and not a historical person.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

Jewish tradition places the interrupted sacrifice (of Isaac) on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22: 2) at the present location of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The Muslim tradition places the sacrifice, not of Isaac, but of Ishmael, in the desert.

In a more general way, Abraham's gesture, although remained only intentional, is historically one of the first examples of submission to religious authority, and as such takes on the character of a (dangerous) archetype.

THE SECOND PEOPLE CHOSEN BY GOD.

For the reader, let us point out that the expressions New Israel, True Israel (Verus Israel), "substitution," refer to the doctrine that Christianity, revealed to mankind through the word and deeds of the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus, replaced Judaism in the purpose of God for mankind and that it became thus the new people chosen by God to fulfill His will.

The result of this psychosis or of this conditioned reflex from their childhood that Christians pass to themselves from generation to generation and in this respect they are incurable, is that they know for eternity only one reference culture, that of the Jewish people and its literature, and will ignore the others, all the others (Indians Chinese Africans....). Muslims are right to consider that they are the men of a single book (Ahl al kitab) and not of 12 or 36 as the Fenians of Ireland.

The fundamental characteristic of Christian thought, in line with the Jewish thought, is that of the discrimination between chosen and non-chosen: there are the human beings who will benefit from God's favor and those who will not benefit from it. Those who will benefit from it are those who will lead a Christian life.

The paternity of the substitution theology is generally attributed to Paul of Tarsus (cf. Epistle to Galatians 6: 15-16) : "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God."

Several New Testament texts sent to European communities present Christianity as a new spiritual Israel: But you [Christians] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2: 9-10).

" For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3: 3).

"A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God"(Romans 2:28).

The theology of substitution took an enormous place among the Fathers of the Church: considering that Israel had not converted, since he had not recognized the Messiah, they asserted that his role was finished, and that the Christians were to replace him.

In the middle of the second century, Justin of Nablus, in the Dialogue with Trypho, a dialogue in which he defends Christianity against a fictitious Jewish interlocutor, affirms :

"Israelitikon gar to alethinon pneumatikon kai Iakob kai Isaak kai 'Abraam tou en akrobustia epi tho pistei merturethentos hupo tou Theou kai eulogethentos kai patros pollon klethentos hemeis esmen, hoi dia toutou staurothentos Christou to Theo prosachthontes".

"For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (who in uncircumcision was approved of and blessed by God on account of his faith, and called the father of many nations), are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ, as shall be demonstrated while we proceed" (chapter 11).

It is sometimes considered that this Christian apologetic work is the first writing which has advocated the separation between Jews and Christians but Marcion too advised rejecting as a whole the Jewish influence on the Christian faith.

This doctrine was developed by several other authors, among whom:

- Tertullian (born about 150-160 and died about 230-240) in Carthage. In his *Adversus Judaeos*, Tertullian uses metaphorically Genesis 25 23, and makes the eldest of the twins Esau the incarnation of the Jews and the younger Jacob, the Christians, the "least" (Jacob) who must supplant his elder.
- John Chrysostom (349-407), Patriarch of Constantinople, author of another *Adversus Judaeos*.
- Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

As the Old Testament informs us, originally, the divine election proceeds from God. It is he who intervenes in the life of a man - prophet or visionary - to make him a messenger of His will. This is at least what the legend of the first prophets: Abraham, Joshua, Moses, shows us.

And justly, the Old Testament is full of the narrative of mythologized events that led under Josias to the unification of the Hebrew people around one land and one God, Yahweh, the two aspects forming a rigorously inseparable unit in the Israelite design of the divine mission. Invested with the responsibility consisting in making the divine project triumph, the people chosen by God, the Hebrew people, is distinguished from all others: it is the chosen people and therefore the people composed of the "chosen persons."

The 1970 amendment to the Law of Return confirms besides maternal filiation. In the Jewish religious view - this is a pleonasm, a non-religious Jew being no longer Jewish in the strict sense of the term, since *de facto* he renounces the elective mission that God has entrusted to him and thus escapes the number of the chosen persons - it is therefore to the "Jewish people" to realize the purpose of God for all nations.

On the contrary, through the separation brought by the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus and those who will enter his replacement, the divine election is not inherited by birth, material wealth, social position, nor by the observance of ritual sacrifices, but only by inner virtues and elevation to the values of the spirit. No one is *a priori* "chosen," only is chosen the one who conquers the inner nobility in fidelity to the God of Love, and this is offered to all, Jews or not, on the sole condition of having the will of that since God's love for his children includes the right to free will. From then on, the status of chosen person is totally separated from the membership in the Jewish people: it acquires a universal dimension, sounding the death knell of the Old Covenant for the benefit of the New One. It is this fundamental break with traditional Judaism that will give birth to Christianity. But it is not the only one. In this background, the role attributed to the "chosen persons" is also redefined in its entirety. Henceforth, the election no longer constitutes a privilege or a mark of valorization, but, on the contrary, an obligation to serve with disinterestedness for the greatest glory of God.

History should be left to the care of historians. It is up to them to enlighten us on the complexity of these phenomena, to tell us why and how, to situate the respective responsibilities of the different protagonists and to evaluate their consequences by rigorous and demanding scientific research and above all, without ideological prejudice.

In 1943, the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* of the pope of the time Pius XII, will affirm again: "By the death of our Redeemer, the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished."

However, since the 1950s and especially after the project of physical extermination of Jewish populations in Europe by the Nazis, the debate has entered a new phase, worming itself into the very heart of the Catholic Church, which, from Vatican II onwards and in an increasingly pronounced way, now openly condemns not only the various forms of violence and misdemeanors she has historically been guilty towards Jewish populations, but also the very principle of the "substitution" of the election, the latter being considered the main source of crimes perpetrated against the Jewish populations in the Christian West during the last two millennia. The pagans became Christians had access to Holy Scripture and Jewish festivals, but a movement of human jealousy, completely human, led them to reject the Jews at the margins or outside.

During the Second Vatican Council, the section 4 of the *Nostra Aetate* statement defines in this way the position of the Catholic Church in relation to Judaism. Here is an excerpt: " The Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are

found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith -are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself..... True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new * people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ."

This is why Monsignor Francis Deniau, Bishop of Nevers and President of the Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism, is therefore perfectly legitimate to declare in 2004: "Today the Church has repudiated any theology of substitution and recognizes the current election of the Jewish people, the people of God of the Old Covenant that has never been revoked according to Pope John Paul II before the Jewish community of Mainz on 17 November 1980. "

Henceforth, we now have two chosen people instead of one. Stop it, that's enough and enough is enough!

*, However, for some exegetes of the Council, the expression "new people of God" would express the internalization that the Church would have made of the theology of substitution ...

THE MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

To designate what is usually translated as "miracle," the most used word in New Testament texts is *semeia*, signs, terata, prodigies; we also find, *ergon*, work, and *dunamis megalas*, power (as in the case of Simon Magus).

The narrative of a miracle is a religious language known from antiquity. There are many miracles in Jewish and Hellenistic literature (as in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana); inscriptions relate miraculous cures in Epidaurus, the sanctuary of the god of medicine, Asclepius. Miracles are also present - albeit to a lesser extent - in ancient Greek and Latin literature and among its historians.

Flavius Josephus, like some closer rabbinic sources and the New Testament, keep the memory of these individuals. A certain Eleazar drove away the demons of the possessed (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 8); Hanina ben Dosa of Galilee healed from a distance like in the episode of the healing of the son of a Roman officer, where Jesus is also supposed to act at a distance. Other commanded nature: Honi, the circle drawer s ("Onias" in Josephus), and his grandson Hanan enjoyed reputations as rainmakers. These rainmakers were aware of their favored relationship with God: Hanan the rainmaker even went so far as to pray that his audience would distinguish between himself and the one who truly granted rain, the Abba [Father] in heaven ."

The value of miracles as "signs," affirmed in the New Testament, in a certain way joins the analysis of rationalist historians for whom they are not an objective description of facts but a way of expressing a religious truth.

Thus, during the episode of the feeding five thousand persons, Mark says: "they had not understood about the loaves; because their hearts were hardened (Mk 6: 52). The explanation is given in the Gospel according to John: "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).

Each miracle story is the message of a lesson; it is almost a parable in itself. The Gospels combine with it a very great wealth of meaning, probably covering a double sense difficult to find today. Some of the various healings, resurrections and miracles performed by Jesus are explained by the Midrash and the process of "double meaning" that is to say, of texts with double, not to say triple or multiple, meaning.

The central problem of the Midrashim in the New Testament is the conversion of non-Jews "at the end of time," in other words, "in messianic times" (the coming of the Messiah is only one element among others). How will the non-Jews, the strangers, the pagans, accept the Torah, the Law? How will they be received into the people of Israel, bearer of the Law? And what will become of him if he loses the exclusivity of the Law?

One of the complications, which was to fuel, as today, the discussions between more or less "Judaizing" pagans and more or less "integrated" Jews, concerns the possibility of a "light" law, made for example of the only ten commandments ; as opposed to the "heavy" law of the 613 mitzvot instituted by the Torah, including circumcision, kosher food and strict respect for the Shabbat.

The most significant episode in this respect is that of the healing of the paralyzed reported by Mark 2: 4: "Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on." And by Luke 5:19: "When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus."*

The metaphor of the paralyzed is one of those used by the Midrash. It is that the practice of the Law is called Halakha, whose proper meaning is "walking." The pagan who does not know the law is logically a disabled person who cannot walk.

The historical consistency of the New Testament, the apocrypha, and other "intertestamental" texts is therefore null, like, let us say, that of the books of Ruth or Jonah. These fables, no more than those of Aesop, report no real event.

But for believers, the signs of Jesus testify that the Father sent him (John 5: 36, 10: 25. They were invitations to believe in Him (John 10: 38. To those who speak to Him with faith, he grants what they ask for (Mk. 5: 25-34, 10: 52, etc.).

The miracles appear therefore as testimonies and effects of faith (Matthew 8: 5-13; Mark 9:23) that Christ did not value in themselves: "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe" (John 4: 48).

* Peter DeLaCrau will always make fun of priests exploiting public credulity but respect the faith of the simple people. The relatives of the sick are so persuaded of the powers of Jesus that they are ready to do anything to put him in touch with him. And it must be acknowledged that in this sense (to illustrate the power of faith) the narrative is a success. A little like in the case of the healing of the centurion's servant which is following besides.

MIRACLES AND MAGIC.

In his analysis of Jesus's resurrection of Lazarus, Renan stressed the impact of social pressure in the most famous of the miracles of the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus, the resurrection of Lazarus.

"As always happens in the lives of great and inspired men, he underwent the miracles that opinion demanded of him rather than he performed them. At this distance of time, and with only a single text, bearing evident traces of artifices of composition, it is impossible to decide whether in this instance the whole is fiction, or whether a real fact which happened at Bethany has served as a basis to the rumors which were spread about it. It must be acknowledged, however, that the way John narrates the incident differs widely from those descriptions of miracles, the offspring of the popular imagination, which fills the synoptics. Let us add that John is the only evangelist who has a precise knowledge of the relations of Jesus

with the family of Bethany, and that it is impossible to believe that a mere creation of the popular mind could exist in a collection of remembrances so entirely personal. It is, then, probable that the miracle in question was not one of those purely legendary ones for which no one is responsible. In other words, we think that something really happened at Bethany which was looked upon as a resurrection.

Fame already attributed to Jesus two or three works of this kind.[1]The family of Bethany might be led, almost without suspecting it, into taking part in the important act which was desired. Jesus was adored by them. It seems that Lazarus was sick, and that in consequence of receiving a message from the anxious sisters Jesus left Perea.[2] They thought that the joy Lazarus would feel at his arrival might restore him to life. Perhaps, also, the ardent desire of silencing those who violently denied the divine mission of Jesus, carried his enthusiastic friends beyond all bounds. It may be that Lazarus, still pallid with disease, caused himself to be wrapped in bandages as if dead, and shut up in the tomb of his family. These tombs were large vaults cut in the rock, and were entered by a square opening, closed by an enormous stone. Martha and Mary went to meet Jesus, and without allowing him to enter Bethany, conducted him to the cave. The emotion which Jesus experienced at the tomb of his friend, whom he believed to be dead,[3] might be taken by those present for the agitation and trembling[4] which accompanied miracles. Popular opinion required that the divine virtue should manifest itself in man as an epileptic and convulsive principle. Jesus (if we follow the above hypothesis) desired to see once more him whom he had loved; and, the stone being removed, Lazarus came forth in his bandages, his head covered with a winding-sheet.

This reappearance would naturally be regarded by everyone as a resurrection. Faith knows no other law than the interest of that which it believes to be true. Regarding the object which it pursues as absolutely holy, it makes no scruple of invoking bad arguments in support of its thesis when good ones do not succeed. If such and such a proof is not strong, many others are! If such and such a wonder is not real, many others have been! Being intimately persuaded that Jesus was a thaumaturgus, Lazarus and his two sisters may have aided in the execution of one of his miracles, just as many pious men who, convinced of the truth of their religion, have sought to triumph over the obstinacy of their opponents by means of whose weakness they were well aware. The state of their conscience was that of the stigmatists, of the convulsionists, of the possessed ones in convents, drawn, by the influence of the world in which they live, and by their own belief, into feigned acts. As to Jesus, he was no more able than St. Bernard or St. Francis of Assisi to moderate the avidity for the marvelous, displayed by the multitude, and even by his own disciples.

Death, moreover, in a few days would restore him his divine liberty, and release him from the fatal necessities of a position which each day became more exacting, and more difficult to sustain. Everything, in fact, seems to lead us to believe that the miracle of Bethany contributed sensibly to hasten the death of Jesus. The persons who had been witnesses of it, were dispersed throughout the city, and spoke much about it. The disciples related the fact, with details as to its performance, prepared in expectation of controversy.

The other miracles of Jesus were transitory acts, spontaneously accepted by faith, exaggerated by popular fame, and were not again referred to after they had once taken place. This was a real event, held to be publicly notorious, and one by which it was hoped to silence the Pharisees. The enemies of Jesus were much irritated at all this fame. They endeavored, it is said, to kill Lazarus."

Now Hubert and Mauss's general theory of Magic is precisely within the framework of a reflection on the relation between the individual and the collective. Mauss starts from the fact that magic is always performed by an isolated and nonconformist individual, but that what is expressed in him is the pressure of society that believes in magic. The effectiveness of magic is therefore moral and not

physical, social and not individual, it is the product of a collective belief and not the fact of a bad association of ideas as Frazer wanted.

"Frazer, as we have seen, proposed his own criteria. The first is that magical rites are sympathetic rites. But this is not sufficient. There are not only magical rites which are not sympathetic, but neither is sympathy a prerogative of magic, since there are sympathetic practices in religion. During the festival of Succoth, when the great priest in the temple of Jerusalem poured water onto the altar, hands held high above his head, he was obviously performing a sympathetic rite destined to bring about rain. When, during a holy sacrifice, a Hindu officiant prolongs or shortens at will the life of the sacrificial victim, following the peregrination which accompanies the libation, the ritual is still eminently sympathetic. In both cases the symbolism is perfectly clear; the ritual appears to act by itself. However, in each of these rituals the dominant character is religious. Sympathetic rites may therefore, be either magical or religious..... In cases such as these, we are not dealing with simple matters of fraud. In general, the magician's simulations are of the same nature as those observed in nervous conditions. As a result, it is both voluntary and involuntary at the same time. Even when it starts off as a self-imposed state, the simulation recedes into the background and we end up with perfect hallucinatory states. The magician then becomes his own dupe, in the same way as an actor when he forgets that he is playing a role. Nevertheless, we must ask why he pretends like this. Here we must be careful not to confuse true magicians with those charlatans who turn up at fairs, or Brahman jugglers who brag to us the spiritists. The magician pretends because pretense is demanded of him, because people seek him out and beseech him to act. He is not a free agent. He is forced to play either a role demanded by tradition or one which comes up to his client's expectations. It may appear that the magician vaunts his prowess of his own free will, but in most cases he is irresistibly tempted by public credulity..... Thus, what a magician believes and what the public believes are two sides of the same coin. The former is a reflection of the latter, since the pretenses of the magician would not be possible without public credulity. It is this belief which the magician shares with the rest, which means that neither his sleights of hand nor his failures will raise any doubts as to the genuineness of magic itself. And he himself must possess that minimal degree of faith—a belief in the magic of others, when he is a spectator or patient. Generally speaking, while he does not see the causes at work, he does see the effects they produce. Indeed, his faith is sincere in so far as it corresponds to the faith of the whole group. Magic is believed and not perceived. It is a condition of the collective soul, a condition which is confirmed and verified by its results. Yet it remains mysterious even for the magician. Magic as a whole is, therefore, an object a priori of belief, a belief which is unanimous and collective. It is the nature of this belief that permits magicians to cross the gulf which separates facts from their conclusions..... We might end here and conclude that magic is a social phenomenon, since we have uncovered the notion of collectivity behind all of its manifestations. However, in its present form, the idea of mana still seems to us to be too cut off from social life; there is still something too intellectual about it. We have no clear idea whence it comes, on what foundations it flourished. Therefore, we shall try to dig deeper still, in order to reach those forces, those collective forces, which we claim to have produced magic and of which mana is the expression. Thus, if magic is to exist, society has to be present. We shall now try to show that this is so and to what extent it is so..... We agree with Lehmann, then, that magic produces mental excitation in individuals. Among water diviners, for example, it may develop into a kind of hyperesthesia. What we deny is that a magician can reach this state of his own free will or that he feels himself to be an isolated being. Behind Moses, who touched the bare rock, stood the whole nation of Israel, and while Moses may have felt some doubts, Israel certainly did not. Behind the village water diviner and his wand, we find the anxiety of a whole village, desperate for water. The state of the individual, we consider, is always conditioned by the state of society. An explanation for Lehmann's theory is that the part played by society in modern magic today is almost entirely subconscious. It can exist without being observed, therefore it can be neglected. We should also point out that it is rare, in our own culture, for the remnants of our magical system to be practiced by whole groups. However, there is no need to consider these moribund, poorly developed systems as fundamental ones. It is primitive society where we find the most complex and rich phenomena and where we must go in search of facts to explain the origins of magic, facts which are collective in nature. Furthermore, the psychologists' arguments do not invalidate our own, since each time they observe newly formed magical behavior, they ought to be aware that it always occurs in a sympathetic milieu, in the bosom of a cult group of spiritualists or followers of the occult. We may here generalize on these observations. When the people gather round a magician and then he withdraws into his private world, it may seem at this moment that their participation is also withdrawn, but in fact it is more real than ever at this point because it is society's presence which gives him the confidence to become possessed and permits him to come out of this state in order that he may perform his magic. It is the people's impatience that causes the magician to become excited and which at the same time commits

him to the group. Society is willing to be hypnotized by any kind of simulation performed by the magician, and he may himself fall the first victim. This kind of feverish attention and the anticipation which results from it are found among all agricultural and pastoral tribes, even hunting tribes, indeed all people who share large continental environments. One only has to consider the terribly urgent economic pressure involved. Mrs. Langloh Parker collected a story in central Australia, which admirably describes the spiritual state of a whole tribe, desperately in need of water. It describes how, because of the tribe's anxiety, the sorcerer was forced to perform and how his influence was recognized to the extent that he brought forth a deluge... CONCLUSION. Magic is, therefore, a social phenomenon"(Marcel Mauss. General theory of magic).

OTHER CHRISTIAN MIRACLES REMAINED FAMOUS.

In general, historians admit generally that Jesus presented himself as a healer and exorcist in an action of salvation in accordance with his word of liberation - at least, that his entourage perceived him as such. The miracle plays an important role in the conversion to Christianity. As soon as the process of separation between the Pharisee Judeans and the Christian Judeans began, the former were wary of the latter because of their magical practices - rabbinical literature has kept testimonies of this defiance.

When Jesus heals a deaf man he puts his fingers in his ears, spits and touches his tongue (Mark 7: 31-37).

When Jesus heals a blind man, he puts saliva on his eyes (Mark 8: 22). Saliva is omitted in Matthew and Luke. Lucke avoids such a mention because the sympathetic virtue of saliva can evoke magic. During the healing of the deaf of the Decapolis, the great Nazarene Rabbi uses a formula in Aramaic language : ephphata (opens) and Luke, once again, avoids the evocation of a foreign word of superior virtue because he addresses to communities of Greek culture that are not very receptive to such practices.

All these processes belonging to the domain of sympathetic magic, here we must say two words.

To work out his theory of magic, Frazer did not start as Tylor from a study of "primitive culture" but of a philological enigma raised by the legend of the priest of Nemi south-east of Rome. According to this legend, the king-priest or rex-nemorensis can only be replaced by a fugitive slave who returns to assassinate him after having provided himself with a "golden bough" (some mistletoe). To explain this legend which involves the magical power of a plant in a rite of change of the sovereign, Frazer proposed a general theory of magic in primitive societies.

"Magical actions are those which are destined to produce special effects through the application of two laws of sympathetic magic-the law of similarity and the law of contiguity. He formulates these in the following way: 'Like produces like; objects which have been in contact, but since ceased to be so, continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed.' One might add, as a corollary: 'The part is to the whole as the image is to the represented object.' Thus the definitions of the anthropological school tend to confuse 'magic' with 'sympathetic magic.' Frazer's ideas are dogmatic in this regard; he expresses no doubts and offers no exceptions to his rules. Sympathy is a sufficient and inevitable feature of magic; all magical rites are sympathetic and all sympathetic ritual is magical. It is true that magicians perform rituals which are akin to religious prayers and sacrifice-and not always in a parody or imitation. It is also true that priests in a number of societies have a remarkable predisposition towards magical practices. But these facts, we are told, are but the encroachments of recent times and should be excluded from our general definition, which is only concerned with pure magic.

From this first proposition, it is possible to deduce others. In the first place magical rites act upon their object directly without any mediation by a spiritual agent; moreover, their effectiveness is automatic. However, as far as these two properties are concerned, the first is not universal, since it is admitted that magic-in its degenerate phase, when it became contaminated by religion-has borrowed figures of gods and demons from religion. The truth of the second proposition is not affected by this, since in the cases where we have intermediaries, the magical rite acts on them in the same way as it does on external phenomena; magic forces and constrains, while religion conciliates. This last property, which seems to distinguish magic from religion in every case where there is a temptation to confuse the two, remains-according to Frazer-the most permanent general feature of magic."

THE IMAGE OF EDESSA.

The portrait sent by Christ to Abgar, king of Edessa, called mandylion, was for a very long time, even under Islam, at the center of a whole cult in Edessa. A single contact with the relic resulted in surprising cures ...

There is also a correspondence between Christ and Abgar, confirmed by Eusebius of Caesarea in his Ecclesiastical History. The relic was recovered and brought back to Constantinople, where it was greeted by a magnificent celebration on 15 August 944, and where it remained until 1204.

Editor's note. The same legend and mythology as in the case of the Shroud of Turin; which had been seen on the occasion of the Fourth Crusade in 1024, in Constantinople, before reappearing in the patrimony of a French nobleman of the same century, Geoffrey de Charny.

As far as Edessa what is sure is that there was in this region (Urfa in south-eastern Turkey, ancestor of the kingdom of historical Armenia) Jewish Christians of the Elcesaites type as soon as the 1st century (following the preaching of Jude or Thaddeus, one of the disciples?)

THE "WHITE" MAGIC OF ST. PETER.

We shall not here speak of his "black" magic to kill someone (for example, Ananias or the philosopher Simon of Samaria).

"At Jaffa there was a disciple called Tabitha...she became ill and died..... Peter sent everyone out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and said, 'Tabitha, stand up.' She opened her eyes, looked at Peter and sat up (Acts of the Apostles 9: 34-41).

Rational explanation: the woman was not dead, but only in a coma.

"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ he Nazarene, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk " (Acts of the Apostles 3,1-8).

Rational Explanation: Psychotherapy. The psychic prevails over the somatic.

THE MIRACLES OF ST. PAUL.

" Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14: 8-13).

Rational Explanation: Psychotherapy. The patient received a kind of "emotional shock." Facts magnified by the popular rumor in Lycaonia, as we can see (Zeus, Hermes, etc.)

See above what is written about the cures done by Hercules or Aesculapius.

"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11-16).

Rational explanation: mentally ill or epileptic momentarily relieved by this ceremony.

" He fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him....And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted" (Acts of the Apostles 20: 9-12).

Rational explanation: the child was not dead. Besides Paul himself says it (his life is still in him).

THE TORC OF ST VICINIUS IN SARSINA (Italy).

In the oldest documents, it is spoken of a chain used to exorcise the possessed, although it is in fact a collar that reminds a lot of a torc, that is to say a Celtic adornment; as can still be seen today in the Cathedral of Sarsina. It is a curved and smooth metal rod, which can be closed around the neck of the possessed, since, as an old codex preserved in the church reminds of it, it was specially made formerly to make demons flee.

Editor's note. The torc was indeed a typically Celtic necklace. The high-knowers of the druidic tradition (druides) however did not see it as a means of practicing exorcisms, because the cases of possession were very rare for them (two or three per generation). It was simply for their goldsmiths an object with magnetic effects soothing and regulating on the body, or with effects of the placebo type. The possessed of today are rather suggestible and gullible people, a little too inclined to see the marvelous everywhere, suspecting Satan in the least of the small anomalies of their life; and therefore ready to accept the most absurd, or most irrational, rites, in order to find an improbable serenity, sometimes even to the point of losing all contact with reality.

ST NICHOLAS.

Saint Nicholas is especially known for having resuscitated three little children (killed by a pagan, of course, specifies our Turinese friend, at least if we have well understood his book). But another of his miracles is less well known.

A Saracen, during an incursion on the coasts of Calabria, stole an icon representing St. Nicholas, and considered locally as endowed with thaumaturgical virtues. Returning home, the Saracen tried to put the effigy to the test, and after leaving the door of his house open, he left the image to watch over his property. On his return, his house had been ransacked by thieves. Furious, he accused the icon and threatened it to burn it if his possessions were not found again. St Nicholas shortly after appeared to the thieves and forced them to give back the result of their burglary, under penalty of beating them. The evildoers gave back the booty and converted to Christianity. God sometimes has strange methods to show the way to be followed ...

Saint Nicholas, as a friend of children, a giver of affection and gifts; is undoubtedly the heir to a very ancient Celtic deity characterized by the wearing of a hood of inexhaustible content, somewhat analogous to the horn of abundance of the Orientals. Specialists are reluctant to identify it clearly. Some make the connection with the giant Gargantua in France or think of a god Gurgunt become Dagda in Ireland.

THE BEAR OF ST URSICINUS (HURSANNUS). Hermit in the valley of the river Doubs in Switzerland. 6th - 7th century - celebrated December 9th.

Ursicinus separated from his master Columbanus at the time when he left the shores of Lake Zurich for those of Lake Constance. Why, he who followed the great Irishman in his epic "as a faithful son follows his father and preceptor" (*ut pius filius patrem and praeceptorem*), decided to try solo adventuring? Of course we do not know. Was he tired of community life? Did he want to test his strength by working personally?

"Moved by his desire for solitary life" (*vero solitariae vitae cupidus*) he separates from the others, keeping with him only the blessing of his superior; and here he descends the great Roman road which, from Vindonissa, runs along the Aar River and the Jura towards Avenches. According to legend, he settled at first in the village of Bienne at the foot of that mountainous region which the old maps referred to as Jurassus Mons.

On Mount Repais the stick of Ursanne fell upon a rock near the Doubs River called Beridai or Beauregard; it sank in the ground, where it formed powerful roots, so that it rapidly became a huge oak, which stood near the chapel bearing his name, and which still preserved its luxuriant vegetation; despite the pilgrims breaking its branches to carry them off as talismans.

Having once touched the rock at the foot of the hill where his hermitage stood, St Ursicinus made spring from it a magnificent pure water, sufficiently abundant to supply the fountains of the village; A spring that the local people named of course "the well of St. Ursicinus."

According to the legend, a bear used to bring roots and herbs to the hermitage of our saint, who could thus feed himself and even support the community.

This explains why, in the representations which have handed over to us the image of the saint, the latter appears most often accompanied by this bear, miraculously domesticated, which faithfully provided for his daily nourishment. These relations, though not very natural, with a bear, strongly struck the disciples of the anchorite, who perhaps lost his Irish name on this occasion to take that of Bear cub (Ursicinus).

It must be said that the bears were then particularly useful to the saints, as we shall see again. And bears, at the time, in these wild valleys, there were as many as you wanted.

Ursicinus died at a very advanced age (*plenus dierum and vitae*), after having performed many miracles and acquired many merits. It was in the year 620, on the 20th of December, according to local tradition, when he was about sixty-eight years old. It was in any case on that day that the feast of the saint in the bishopric of Basel and some others was celebrated.

The body of St. Ursicinus was buried piously by his companions in the modest oratory of the community then transferred by St. Wandregisilius to the church of the first monastery, a church consecrated to the Prince of the Apostles. This modest sanctuary was itself replaced in the seventh or ninth century. Every year, on December 9, the day of the patronal festival, the population of Saint Ursanne pays a just tribute to his protector. Few parishes can be honored to keep the complete relics of their patron saint, and thereby ensure their full protection. It is a fact that that of Saint Ursanne has covered unfailingly its city throughout thirteen centuries of history.

The same traditional devotion went to Saint Fiacre, a contemporary of the great Irish men, of Scottish origin, and who led into the vast forests in the region of Meaux a life in every respect similar to that of

the hermit of the Doubs River. His reputation for holiness attracted him to the sick and pilgrims, whom he delivered and healed in great numbers. Like Ursanne, he found himself a little reluctantly at the head of a community of disciples determined to pray, to work, and to do good. As his work of clearing necessarily held a large place in his life, he was regarded as the patron saint of the gardeners. One day the deputies of Scotland came to him to offer him the throne of his father, who had just died (for he was the son of a king). But he asked God to spare him from the honors of the world, and immediately had the appearance of a leper, so that the deputies changed their minds and immediately turned around. This is why, no doubt, he was invoked chiefly for the skin or blood diseases, for scrofula, and all sorts of other infirmities. Popular piety has united the two anchorites in the same veneration, what suggests that they may have known each other since they both passed the Channel at about the same time. It is even pretended that our hermit often sent back to St Fiacre the visitors who came to ask him for cures.

THE BEAR OF ST GALL. Hermit of Lake Constance. 6th - 7th century. Dead in 646, when he was almost ninety-five years old. Celebrated October 11th.

In the region of Lake Constance and then on the other side of the lake, in Bregenz (Bregentia) in 612, St Columbanus continues his evangelization of the populations. This is where the genius of one of the team's companions, named Gall, is revealed. Gall of his original name Cellach, Latinized in Gallus, had already been on the Rhine frontier, where he had been somewhat initiated to foreign languages. Colombanus declares war on non-Christians, knocks pagan altars down, powders the standing stones (menhirs), scatters offerings, proclaims Jesus Christ, and converts (forcibly) the populations.

Gall having fallen ill, and not being able to continue the journey, asked Colombanus to stop in order to end, in this place, withdrawn from the world. Guided by a deacon from the region, he moves towards the solitude where he will build his final hermitage. One evening the deacon, and St. Gall, stop to camp on the banks of a river. The holy person plants in the ground his stick to which is suspended a little bag containing relics of the Virgin. They fish for fish, roast them on a small brazier, pray and then fall asleep.

In the meantime, a bear comes down from the mountains and comes close to picking up crumbs that the holy picnickers had dropped. Seeing that the man of God says to the animal: "I command thee in the name of the Lord, O beast, pluck up a trunk and put it in the fire." The beast, obeying this order, tore off a tree and set it in the fire. Then the holy man took his sack and drew out a whole loaf of it that he handed to the improvised servant which took it, saying, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, go away from the valley. You will now stay in the mountains and nearby hills, and you will no longer attack a man or a herd of this region. "

Gall therefore had built a cell not far from Lake Constance, and died there a few years later. In the place where these events took place, a church was built in his honor, changed during the eighth century into a monastery dedicated to his name.

THE BEAR OF St COLUMBANUS.

St Colombanus also lived a very singular experience with a bear.

" Columban was weakening his body by fasting, under a cliff in the wilderness, and he had no food except the apples of the country. A fierce bear of great voracity came and began to lick off the necessary food and carry the apples away in its mouth. When the meal-time came, Columban directed Chagnoald, his servant, to bring the usual quantity of apples.

The latter went and saw the bear wandering about among the fruit trees and bushes and licking off the apples. He returned hastily and told the father, who commanded him to go and set aside a part of the fruit- trees for food for the bear and order it to leave the others for himself.

Chagnoald went in obedience to the command, and dividing with his staff the trees and bushes which bore the apples, he, in accordance with Columban's command, set aside the part that the bear should eat, and the other part that it should leave for the use of the man of God. Wonderful obedience! It did not venture at all to take food from the prohibited part but, as long as the man of God remained in that place, sought food only from the trees that had been assigned to it."

Rational Explanation. The poor beast has doubtless begun by being afraid of Chagnoald, and has prudently withdrawn from him, the time to pursue his picking. Fair example in any case of cohabitation between man and animals called "wild," kind wolves ... See also the episode in which St. Columbanus removes away from him twelve hungry wolves only by praying.

His relations with the Austrasians having become once more strained, Colombanus left behind him his disciple, and crossed the Alps of the Austrian Vorarlberg with several of his followers: Chagnoald and

some others. After arriving in Italy about 613, he secured the protection of Agiluf, king of the Lombards, and of Queen Theodelinda, his wife; what enabled him to make emerge from the soil in the Apennines, near the river Trebbia a new foundation, the last, Bobbio. Worn out by years of walking, deprivation and suffering, the Irishman died on November 23, 615, when he was seventy-two years old.

Among the many other miracles traditionally attributed to St Columbanus, let us remind of his extraordinary meeting with the dragon who lived in the area where the Bobbio monastery stands. The dragon was defeated with a single knife as his only weapon ... the knife of St. Columban, still kept in the monastery, was then considered to be endowed with thaumaturgical powers.

In order to end with this chapter, let us also remind of the deer of St. Edeyrn and St. Teilo, who are represented riding the animal having big horns.

Edeyrn was born in Wales or in Ireland in the ninth century. In 894, he left his country and lands in Brittany in the region of Douarnenez, where he settles in the site of the present town of Lannedern. He builds his hermitage there. A stag pursued by hounds took refuge one day in the hut of Edeyrn to seek shelter and protection. When he saw Edeyrn, he bowed down before him as if it was imploring him to receive him to his house. From then on that stag remained with the saint. He was feeding not far from him during the day, and in the evening he returned to meet the pious Edeyrn.

The lord, who had tried to capture the deer, was very astonished at the thing, and asked Edeyrn to explain it, the holy man revealed to him the power of God and his goodness.

The man who was pagan bowed before the hermit and begged him to ask God for forgiveness.

Rational explanation: it was to be something which resembles the astonishing, power, on animals, of certain tamers. Several of the high-knowers of antiquity, moreover, had done better than St.

Columbanus or Edeyrn in this respect.

" Amid the adventures of these illustrious men, one is ashamed to relate how a certain Mariccus, a Boian of the lowest origin, pretending to divine inspiration, ventured to thrust himself into fortune's game, and to challenge the arms of Rome. Calling himself the champion of Celtica, and a god (for he had assumed this title), he had now collected eight thousand men, and was taking possession of the neighboring villages of the Aedui, when that most formidable tribe-state attacked him with a picked force of its native youth, to which Vitellius attached some cohorts, and dispersed the crowd of fanatics. Mariccus was captured in the engagement, and was soon after exposed to wild beasts, but not having been torn by them, was believed by the senseless multitude to be invulnerable, till he was put to death in the presence of Vitellius "(Tacitus II, 61).

THE MIRACLE OF ST PATRICIA IN NAPLES.

The phenomenon was already known in antiquity since St Plutarch speaks at length about it in his (parallel) life of Coriolanus.

"38. For that statues have appeared to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something like drops of blood, is not impossible; since wood and stone often contract a mold which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colors, and receive tints from the atmosphere and there is nothing in the way of believing that the Deity uses these phenomena sometimes as signs and portents. 2 It is possible also that statues may emit a noise like a moan or a groan, by reason of a fracture or a rupture, which is more violent if it takes place in the interior. But that articulate speech, and language so clear and abundant and precise, should proceed from a lifeless thing, is altogether impossible; since not even the soul of man, or the Deity, without a body duly organized and fitted with vocal parts, has ever spoken and conversed. 3 But where history forces our assent with numerous and credible witnesses, we must conclude that an experience different from that of sensation arises in the imaginative part of the soul, and persuades men to think it sensation; as, for instance, in sleep, when we think we see and hear, although we neither see nor hear. However, those who cherish strong feelings of good will and affection for the Deity, and are therefore unable to reject or deny anything of this kind, have a strong argument for their faith in the wonderful and transcending character of the divine power. 4 For the Deity has no resemblance whatever to man, either in nature, activity, skill, or strength; nor, if He does something that we cannot do, or contrives something that we cannot contrive, is this contrary to reason; but rather, since he differs from us in all points, in His works most of all is He unlike us and far removed from us. But most of the Deity's powers, as Heracleitus says, escape our knowledge through incredulity."

In Naples in the church of St. Gregory of Armenia, built on the ruins of a pagan temple (Editor's note: as often), the blood of St. Patricia becomes liquefied every Tuesday at 10 a.m. This blood comes from the extraction, practiced on her corpse, of one of his molars.

Rational explanation.

This is an example of thixotropy, as in the case of the blood of St. Januarius, that is to say, the capacity of certain gels to become more fluid, up to the point of passing from the solid state to the liquid state; if they are shaken or if man make them move in such a way that their state is disturbed by mechanical contacts. The substance which is presented as the blood of St Patricia being thixotropic like in the case of St Januarius, it is obvious that by manipulating and turning over the reliquary, you can provoke the conditions that lead to its liquefaction.

THE HOLY HEALING DOG (A GREYHOUND): ST GUINEFORT (SEE ST GELERT IN WALES).

In the collection of exempla he wrote in the 1250s, the Dominican Inquisitor Stephen of Bourbon devoted a whole chapter to the strange "superstition" he discovered in the north of Lyons. The farmers venerate there "as a martyr" a "dog greyhound" buried in a wood where once a castle stood.

A lord and his family once lived in this castle located about forty kilometers north of Lyons. A hound named Guinefort lived by their side and it was the favorite animal of the lord. One day when the lord, his wife and the nurse of their newborn, had gone away, a snake entered the infant's room. Guinefort intervened and bravely opposed the attack of the snake against the child. The fight was violent and bloody. In the cradle overturned and blood spread throughout the room. Guinefort defeated the serpent and awaited for the return of his master near the child who had fallen to the ground and was covered with blood. Upon entering the room, the lord thought that the greyhound had killed his son. Become mad with grief, he killed the poor Guinefort with a sword. Only then did he discover the corpse of the snake, and he understood the loyalty of his dog. Full of remorse, he respectfully buried Guinefort and made trees be planted beside his grave.

The people of the country were informed of the exemplary behavior of Guinefort and of his unjust death; they began to honor it as a martyr, to come upon his grave by presenting to it their sick children, in order that it might heal them.

It was in this wood that the women of the region, at the time of the preaching of Stephen of Bourbon, "brought their sick children." Guided by an old woman who told them what to do, they performed a variety of rituals to get their child healed. Let us hazard that the protection of the holy greyhound was not so ineffectual and useless, but it would be wrong to say that it was wanted or allowed by the god-or-demon of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob ...!

Stephen of Bourbon decided to stop this "superstitious" worship: he made the remains of the dog exhumed and the grove cut, ordered that the whole be burned, and forbade anyone to perpetuate the practices hitherto in use.

This cult nevertheless persisted until the beginning of the twentieth century in spite of the repeated prohibitions of the Church to venerate a dog.

Rational Explanation.

The mystery has long surrounded this curious thaumaturge animal, dispenser of miracles, able to restore the health to the sick children. The story of the Dominican friar Stephen of Bourbon makes us clearly think of a place of Celtic worship (a druidic sacred grove).

Rather than the farmers, it was especially the women who, having weak and sick children, asked for its heavenly intercession! In the presumed place of the grave of the "holy greyhound" were brought infant nappies, slippers or small shoes as ex-voto, coins, nails and even they exhibited there briefly naked children.

Offerings of salt, nappies of sick children hung in trees, presence not far from a river, in which children were plunged nine times.

What the Inquisitor discovered in this place was therefore probably the survival of a very ancient worship. For the Celts, the dog was, indeed, a respected animal. (One wonders why, besides, this faithful friend of Man is so despised in the Bible. It is true that it is not a book very natural or very "ecologist" but not really!)

Saint Guinefort or Gunifort seems to have been an authentic Christian saint, come from the British Isles presumably. His parents were of royal blood. Accompanied by his sister Dardaluch (as well as another brother and sister) he first went through the South of Germany to preach. Died at Pavia in Italy, at the end of the Empire or in the beginning of the Middle Ages. Celebrated August 22nd. We lose ourselves in conjecture about the reasons which led the inhabitants of this region, which was then part of the Holy Roman Empire, to bring it closer to their healing hound. Perhaps because of symbolic correspondences obvious for the people of the time, but which are now lost. Or else because of the resemblance of the names.

THE MIRACLE OF THE HEART OF ST CLARE OF MONTEFALCO.

On August 17, 1308, when Clare died, her nuns decided to take the heart of their abbess ... The next day the heart was severed. Inside the heart muscle, in the heart of the virgin, there was then, having the appearance of hard nerves; on one side the cross, three nails, the spear, the sponge and the stick, on the other the column, the whip, that is to say the scourge with five strings and the crown. In the seat of gall there was no longer trace of liquid, but only three round and spherical stones, probably representing the Trinity.

Rational explanation: this description proves above all the imagination of the witnesses.

THE MIRACLE OF THE MACARONI.

There is in Italy a miracle linked to pasta. The facts go back to the second half of the fourteenth century, and concern the almost unknown person of the Sicilian beatified Guglielmo Cuffiello, who died in 1377. One day a man named Guiccione invited Guglielmo to lunch; the wife of the first, who hated the holy man, cooked macaroni, but those destined for Guglielmo were stuffed with bran and other inedible things. However, the dish, after being blessed by the guest, is filled with succulent melted cheese, causing the stupefaction of other guests ...

Rational Explanation: There are three.

First explanation: the woman unwittingly invented a new recipe. A bit like in the case of the Tatin tart.

Second explanation: the guest, out of politeness, did not want to say what he thought of this dish.

Third explanation: to each his own.

THE RESURRECTION DONE BY JEANNE D'ARC.

A resurrection was also effected by Joan of Arc, who thus brought back a stillborn child to life so that he might receive baptism.

EDITOR'S NOTE. Let us be well understood! As for the other examples.

Joan of Arc is admirable in many ways. She was a daughter OF THE PEOPLE (no need to make her a bastard of a king or queen), sensitive, idealist, and intelligent (her answers at her trial prove it!) And above all courageous! For courage was necessary to her in order to find her place in this world of men par excellence, that of the war. It is therefore not our purpose to ridicule her, but to briefly evoke her case before further scrutiny.

THE RESURRECTION OF ANIMALS.

St Martin de Porres in Peru made the old dog of a colleague live again; St. Joseph of Cupertino even brought back to life an entire herd of sheep, and St. Paul of the Cross brought back into the world an ox already slaughtered by the butcher.

THE MIRACLE OF JANE MOREL.

Her right leg became longer with the twelve centimeters missing and regained a normal appearance. This miracle was widely debated during the canonization trial of Jane Frances de Chantal.

THE MIRACLE OF THE ONE-LEGGED MAN.

In Calanda near Zaragoza in 1637, the doctor Diego Millaruelo amputated the leg of the young Miguel Pellicer who was then forced to beg ... On March 6, 1640, on his return from his daily begging, he

threw himself on his bed, tired, and fell asleep. When her mother went to see if her son was asleep, she realized with amazement that her right leg had miraculously grown back. Explanation of the skeptics like Zola: the young man was a false one-legged like many beggars of the time, and uncovered himself in his sleep. EDITOR'S NOTE. The great French writer Zola is known for having stated, one day in 1894, when he visited Lourdes: "I see many canes, many crutches. I see no wooden leg ."

THE MIRACLE OF THE TWO TONGUES.

The child had a second tongue, and precisely under the normal tongue, there was another which, by its form and appearance, resembled the first, except that it was smaller. The convent's mother superior therefore gave her mother a small piece of wood from the coffin into which the body of the servant of God had been brought. The woman took it with confidence and placed it on the child's mouth. At that very instant, the second tongue disappeared, without even a shadow of it remains. The phenomenon had a certain weight in the beatification trial of Francis de Sales, which took place on December 21, 1661, and was again discussed in 1665, during his canonization.

THE STATUS WHICH WEEP, BLEED, SWEAT OR GIVES MILK.

In February 1995 a statue of the Virgin, about 40 centimeters high, from Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, began to shed tears of blood in the garden of a house in the town of Civitavecchia in Italy. The phenomenon quickly attracted the attention of the media, arousing popular reactions of all kinds, complaints against person unknown for abuse of the credulity of the public, or some pilgrimages of devotees.

Author's note. The phenomenon of statues from which biological substances sprout (blood, sweat, tears) is not the prerogative of Christianity, for it is also found in antiquity according to Plutarch (see above). For paganism, it had a highly symbolic value and was considered a kind of language of the gods or demons, thus communicating to the faithful their intentions ... On some occasions (at La Salette for example), the Virgin Mary was particularly clear: "If my people do not wish to submit themselves, I am forced to let go off the hand of my son." These are always events of remarkable interest, even for scientists, sociologists, or specialists in crowd psychology, even though they may be problematic from a theological point of view. Miracles are sometimes diabolico instinctu (due to the Devil).

THE THAUMATURGUS KINGS.

Many Medieval European rulers were believed to have miraculous healing powers, including the King's Evil (scrofula is today the Latin word applied to tuberculosis of the neck).

The House of Habsburg could kiss stuttering away. The kings of Castile could supposedly exorcise demons while their Hungarian counterparts, more prosaically, had powers only over jaundice.

Meanwhile, English monarchs distributed cramp rings, as a cure for "diabolical" sicknesses such as cramps or epilepsy.

In this time scrofula was thought to be caused by some sin, especially the sins of the nation.

Perhaps because of this, the treatment was therefore believed more likely to succeed if performed on a holy day.

In England with Edward the Confessor, the royalty claimed a hereditary divine power to cure scrofula. The healing power was most noticeably exercised by monarchs who needed to demonstrate their reign's legitimacy.

To the populace, it was proof of his divine right to rule that he could channel the heavens.

James I of England, an intellectual, believed it was superstition and yet did it. Elizabeth I laid hands on more than a thousand subjects on one occasion.

The healing touch of some monarchs was well enough known for the afflicted to travel great distances including to seek it.

But remember that in that time traveling then usually meant walking and again walking!

Records show that some sufferers came repeatedly for the royal touch, proof that it had not worked the first time, the second time, or the third time.

Since the reign of Edward IV, monarchs presented the diseased with a gold medal called a "touch piece" and hung it around the ill's neck.

The diseased were instructed to wear the coins, known as angels, constantly to ensure success.

Some observers took the view that many of the ill persons came for the accompanying coin, not for the royal touch itself.

Did the royal touch work?

Contemporary scientists, including some specialists of psychosomatic diseases, tried without success to find an explanation for the effectiveness of the royal touch.

It's possible that the disease went into remission on its own, giving the impression of a royal cure.

The mystique of monarchy was enhanced by the fact that monarchs never caught scrofula, even though they laid their hands upon the diseased subjects.

More than one king confided feeling the pressure of public expectation to his counselors or his daybooks.

Luckily for them, Royal therapeutics were not expected to cure everyone immediately and those who remained ill were usually blamed for lacking faith!

One of Queen Elizabeth's chaplains, William Tooker, wrote in 1597 a book entitled "Charisma, or the Healing Gift."

In a colorful passage, Tooker evokes in the contrast between the virgin, charismatic queen and her unfortunate, diseased subjects.

He wrote that he had seen Elizabeth I with her : "very beautiful hands, radiant as whitewashed snow, free from all squeamishness, touching their abscesses not with fingertips, but pressing hard and repeatedly with wholesome results."

Tooker, Elizabeth and others believed these healing acts were evidence not only of a special divine gift but also of the validity of her succession.

The demonologist Pierre de Lancre boasted that even dead French monarchs could heal these diseased.

It was still believed in the 16th century Saint Louis' arm preserved in Poblet Monastery in Catalonia, could still heal the diseased ????

Henry VII formalized the process. It consisted of four distinct elements:

- The monarch touched or stroked the face or neck of the sick person.

- The monarch hung the medal around the person's neck.

- Ad hoc passages from the Gospel of Mark (16: 14–20) and the Gospel of John (1: 1–14) were read.

Mark 16 indeed contains themes that confirm monarchs' immunity to infectious diseases: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:18)

-Prayers were offered. Until the English Reformation, the prayers were addressed not only to God but also to Virgin Mary and the saints.

By the middle of the 16th century those who wanted access to public healing initially had to undergo a medical examination to guarantee that they did indeed have scrofula.

The ceremony was at its most popular during the Restoration, with Charles II touching an average of 4,000 people each year until the 1680s.

These huge figures are even more astonishing when it is recalled that between 1530 and 1532 Henry VIII is recorded as having touched just sixty-five scrofulous sufferers.

The French historian Marc Bloch has highlighted several points that had hitherto escaped his colleagues. He insists, among other things, that we must beware of the "certificates" of healing of the time, which may resemble the "phony" certificates made by some of our modern (and little scrupulous) doctors.

Thus, on the 25th of March, 1669, two physicians certified the cure of a man affected with scrofulous ulcers, but noted at the same time that "all" ulcers disappeared "except one"; Which is terribly unfortunate for the rest of the events, for there may be a relapse, the scrofula being reputed to be transient, to be up and down, with phases of apparent remission and mortal relapses. One denominated Jeanne Bugain "received relief" after being touched by Louis XIV, but she succumbed some time later. It would have been necessary to follow the patients over a long period to be assured of their complete cure, and this was not the case. Finally, many patients "cured" also very long after the ceremony. But who can then give the real cause of such cures?

What is most cruelly lacking in these cases of scrofulous healings are investigations worthy of a scientist. The only investigation not to be a common "certificate" with no other information than the supposedly spontaneous cure of the patient, and which records cases which have been the subject of a real medical follow-up (before and after the cure); is the one that was carried out in the nineteenth century in Reims. On May 31, 1825, King Charles X of France touched 120 to 130 people in the Hospice Saint-Marcoul. The nuns of the place followed up the patients and drew up a report witnessed by Dr. Noel. It emerged from it that on the hundred cases presented, five of them were "cured."

But the report must be read to the end. The physician certifies, in fact, in a very short passage, "that it was used for their cure only the treatment habitually in use!" In other words, it was not just the simple royal touch, the patients had also received the usual care.

CONCLUSION ON THESE MIRACLES OF THE SOVEREIGNS (FROM ANTIQUITY TO OUR DAYS).

One day some sovereigns [...] imagined - or their communication advisers imagined for them - in order to strengthen their somewhat fragile prestige, to try the role of thaumaturge. Persuaded themselves of the sanctity conferred on them by their function and their race, they probably thought it quite simple to claim such power. One realized that a dreaded evil sometimes gave way, or seemed to yield, after the contact of their hands, which was almost unanimously held sacred. How could it not have been there a causal relationship? What gave rise to the belief in these miracles was the idea that there should be a miracle.

Doubtless they would not have thought of crying miracle if they had not been accustomed to wait for some miracle from kings. But to this expectation – is it necessary to remind of it? – all inclined the minds. The idea of sacred kingship; a legacy of almost primitive ages, strengthened by the rite of anointing, and by all the blossoming of the monarchical legend, cleverly exploited, moreover, by some astute politicians; all the more skillful in using it, as they commonly shared the common prejudice; haunted the popular awareness. Now there were no saints without miraculous feats; there were no sacred persons or things without supernatural power.

It should also be noted that the clinical definitions of the old tracts were not sure, it was easy to diagnose the scrofula, whereas they were benign lesions, which disappeared on their own. If the attempted healing failed, the explanation was quickly found, "It was because the patient did not have faith." In any case, people who were not cured were obviously not inclined to complain, and that for many reasons. Either it was very difficult for them to publicly criticize their sovereign for their non-cure (you imagine why); or they were persuaded that they had been misdiagnosed (a certain John the Escart, not cured by the King of France Charles VIII, was thus convinced of being affected by "another" sickness).

Faith never proves the reality of what is believed, only the level of persuasion of those who indulge in it. The author has written on this subject a beautiful page, which explains to us, through the phenomenon of "expectation," the true popular success met by this kind of miracle.

Those who "believe" today in these cures evoke a "rational" explanation: the psychotherapy of psychosomatic diseases. The patients would then have received a sort of "emotional shock," which would have been provoked by the ceremony and the prestige of the people they approached. This "shock," through a mechanism whose details are still unknown, would have had a decisive impact on the disease, up to the point of defeating it.

"Many of these miracles are often unjustly regarded as mere legends or as myths. The skeptics forget that those who performed these miracles were mostly good and holy people. Good and pious saints cannot lie. Moreover, these saints were then persons endowed with a great intuition; how may we accuse them of ingenuity or stupidity? (Massimo Centini, *A Big Book of Miracles*.) The author, a graduate in cultural anthropology, works on minority cultures and popular traditions. It is particularly concerned with mysticism, religion, and the problematic of the insertion of religious aspects of contemporary culture. He works at the Centre of research of folk traditions in Turin. Our readers are free to believe in the material reality of the facts reported in this book. We are indeed for the domestic harmony and we do not want to be the origin of divorces among our sympathizers. In France, it can take four or five years; and justice generally begins by taking your children and then by expelling you from your own home (the one of which you pay the drafts) in order to establish in it your wife's lover at your expense. They do not call that "justice" of course (they no longer dare), but "defense of the interests of children" (Yes! yes) as if to humiliate a man before them could constitute an indispensable example to give them, so that they then become balanced adults?

The study of these facts in order to confirm them (psychic energy produced by the expectation of the crowd) will be made later.

THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1054.

Historians refer to the schism of 1054 as the progressive detachment and then the separation between the churches which had been constituted within the Roman Empire and its succeeding States, but Christological quarrels had already begun to remove the Church in the West and the Churches in the East quite before that date.

Political factors, such as the Norman invasion of the Byzantine possessions in Italy, or sociocultural, such as the aspiration of the papacy to dominate the political scene, played in the following centuries a role at least as important as the theological quarrels, like that of the Filioque.

The first separation occurred on 16 July 1054 between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, when Cardinal Humbert of Moyenmoutiers laid down on the main altar of Hagia Sophia a bull excommunicating the Patriarch Michael Cerularius and his close collaborators, excommunication which was followed by that of the cardinal and of his assistants by the patriarch.

But it is essentially the diversion in 1204 of the Fourth Crusade, the sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders and the constitution of "Latin" patriarchates in the territory of the Greek Patriarchates that will consummate the separation, leading to the exile of many Orthodox bishops and discrediting durably the Church of the West in the eyes of the Orthodox populations, but also the Orthodox Churches in the eyes of that of Rome whose intellectuals wrote history in such a way as to shift the blame for the schism on the East alone.

THE DISTANT CAUSES.

When the apostles spread the message of Christ, they did so with the sensitivity of each one, which was reflected in the doctrine of the churches they founded. Divisions therefore soon became apparent both within the churches and between the apostles themselves (for example, the conflict between Paul and Peter concerning how to behave towards the pagans).

To these personal differences were added quickly, those specific to the environment that received this message. The eastern provinces of the Roman Empire had Greek tongue as their language of use and had preserved the Hellenistic culture, more individualistic and philosophical than the Roman culture in the Western provinces, more authoritarian and legal. Education being more widespread than in the West, laymen as much as clergymen took delight in theological speculation. When opinions became too divided on a particular point, they appealed to a general assembly to which all the members of the Church were called upon to participate in order to determine what would be considered an article of faith.

In case of failure, the term "schism" was used to describe the separation between various factions within a church and "heresy" to describe a doctrine considered false.

The edict of Milan in 313 established religious freedom throughout the empire without favoring the Christians too openly at first, the majority of the ruling class and of the army being still pagan. To avoid provoking this one, Constantine came to control the new Church whose bishops he personally appointed, some bishops who became imperial officials. They were soon 1,800, of which 1,000 in the Greek-speaking territories and 800 in the Latin-speaking territories. But the Emperor Constantine was quickly confronted with two heresies, that of the Donatists in North Africa and Arianism which preached that only God the Father existed from time immemorial when the Son was created at a certain time. This last heresy had rapidly spread among the various Germanic tribes.

In the face of the resistance of the Arians, Constantine decided to convene in 325 the first general council in his palace of Nicaea, to which about 300 bishops participated, of which only six were from the West, for whom much of the discussion was foreign. Besides various disciplinary problems peculiar to the Eastern Churches, the Council had to solve the dogmatic problem posed by the propositions of Bishop Arius of Alexandria. Constantine decided that the Son was "of the same substance" (in Greek, *homoousios*, in approximate Latin, *consubstantialis*), that the Father, a term that was integrated into the Credo or Nicene Creed. Arius and his followers were then excommunicated. Re-admitted within the Church at the Council of Jerusalem in 325, they were again condemned in 333.

The Council of Nicaea (canon 6) also established three great patriarchates, namely, by order of primacy, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. This honor came from the fact that these churches had been founded by some apostles: Antioch by St. Peter, Alexandria by St. Mark. Rome enjoyed a special status not only because it was there that St. Paul* had ended, denounced by certain Christians, but also because it was the seat of the Roman Empire and until its transfer to Constantinople, the residence of the Emperor. However, if the Bishop of Rome enjoyed a special respect, it resulted from the importance of the city and not from the post holder and this primacy was neither clearly defined nor legally instituted. It was a "primacy of honor" and not a "supremacy of power."

At the Second General, which was summoned at Constantinople in 381, it was decided to raise the Bishop of Constantinople, until then simple suffragan of the Bishop of Heraclea, to the rank of Patriarch and to give him the second place since Constantinople was the "New Rome" (3rd canon). The place of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was confirmed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (28th canon) when the Patriarchate of Jerusalem made its appearance. Thus was constituted the "pentarchy" with as order of precedence: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

THE COUNCIL IN TRULLO.

The gap between Rome and Constantinople increased on the occasion of the Quinisext or in Trullo Council held in 691 and 692 at the request of Emperor Justinian II without consultation of the bishop in Rome. It gathered 220 Oriental bishops and aimed at discussing ecclesiastical discipline rather than dogmatic questions like the previous ones. Its 102 canons or decisions dealt with discipline in the clergy and with good morals for clergymen as well for laymen alike. Some canons flogged the Church of Armenia and others the Church of Rome, as the Saturday fast during Lent or the marriage of the priests. Rome, who had not yet admitted the Canon 28 of Chalcedon, confirming the equality of privilege between the old and the new Rome, rose up against the Canon 36, according to which the two Churches should enjoy the same esteem in Ecclesiastical matter and enjoy equal privileges, Constantinople coming after Rome in time, but not in honor. The then pope, Sergius I disavowed his legates and refused to sign the acts of the council.

The Quinisext Council, in its 82nd canon, recommended that the practice of representing Christ in the form of a lamb or of the "XP" symbol be given up to make room for anthropomorphic representations. Since then, the cult of images had taken on such importance, especially in Greece, that people often saw in them "double" of the saints they were to represent; various miracles were attributed to them as the gift of speech, the seepage of oil or blood. Alarmed by the defeats of the Empire against the Arabs, the emperor Leo III would have decided to forbid the veneration of the images during a volcanic eruption which devastated the island of Thera in 726. This quarrel took place in two stages. During the first, from 730 to 787, the emperors Leo III and his son Constantine V, a Monophysite, adopted an increasingly intransigent and violent attitude against the cult of images. If Pope Gregory II reacted rather gently, his successor Gregory III condemned the Byzantine iconoclasm.

The great political result of the image quarrel was to reject Rome out of the Greek Orient, but also Byzantium out of the Latin Occident.

Four years after his election, the pope Leo III was the victim of a conspiracy organized by young nobles and owed his salvation only to his flight to the court of Charlemagne in Paderborn. Returning to Rome under the protection of Charlemagne, who was to act as a judge, he was accused of simony, perjury and adultery. On December 23 the pope solemnly swore that he was innocent of these accusations, and two days later he crowned Charles by proclaiming him, "imperator Augustus." In doing so, the Pope reversed the situation and gave himself the right to invest the Emperor of the Romans, which implied the superiority of the Church over the Empire.

In the year 866, Tsar Boris I of Bulgaria, who had unsuccessfully requested the dispatch of a Greek Patriarch, turned to Rome, who hastened to send him Frankish missionaries, who professed the creed by including in it the formula of the Filioque. Furious, the Byzantine Patriarch Photios summoned a synod which declared the Pope deposed and anathematized in 867. In the meantime, Basil the Macedonian overthrew Michael III and seized power, ready to sacrifice Photios to be recognized by the pope and the Ignatian Party.

If the end of the Photian schism marked the beginning of a period of appeasement between the two hierarchies, it was also the starting point of another quarrel which directly caused the schism of 1054: the Filioque quarrel. In an encyclical to the patriarchs of the East, Patriarch Photios denounced this addition to the creed of Nicaea by the Western Church that he accused of heresy. The Creed of Nicaea (325) simply said that God the Son "proceeded" from the father and remained silent on the nature of the Holy Spirit. This addition ("ex patre filioque procedit") affirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son.

This expression was adopted at the Third Council of Toledo in 589 to counter the Arianism then prevailing in Visigothic Spain until the conversion of King Reccared. From there, it was adopted north of the Pyrenees to fight against the Frankish chiefs who were all Arian. All but Clovis, who had converted to Roman Catholicism. Charlemagne, in his struggle against the other Frankish chiefs, wanted to lobby so that it is introduced into the Creed, what Pope Leo III refused firmly. But in the 9th century the expression was gradually adopted by the Churches in Germany and Lotharingia. German clergymen brought it to Rome. The German influence growing in the capital, one of the successors of Leo III, Benedict VIII, who desperately needed the support of the Emperor in his struggle against the great Roman families, ended in resolving to accept it 200 years later, when the Emperor Henry II went to be crowned at Rome.

Because of the hostility to German influence, it is not so much the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit which was a problem, but whether the Pope was entitled to impose alone such a decision on the whole of the Church. For the Orientals, the creed of Nicaea having been adopted by a council bringing together all the churches could only be modified by another general council. They shifted thus from the theological level to the level of the Church administration.

THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE SCHISM.

Idle and paralyzed, the Byzantine emperor, the Basileus Constantine IX Monomachos, never left the palace at Constantinople, and saw in the imperial dignity a golden retirement enabling him to play. Asking only peace and tranquility, he wanted to keep the alliance with Rome against the Normans who had conquered the Byzantine territories of southern Italy. In 1051, Pope Leo IX seizes Benevento. In 1053, the Normans threaten to recover the town. An authentic representative of the Cluniac Reformation, Pope Leo IX was in a dilemma. If he desired the alliance of the Byzantines to fight against the Normans, he did not wish to see these territories return under the authority of Constantinople. The pope formed an army with the Byzantines and launched the battle of Civitate on June 18, 1053. Overcome by the Normans, the pope was taken captive for nine months at Benevento, where he began to study Greek language. The Normans authorized his first secretary, Cardinal Humbert of Moyenmoutier, to come and assist him. In March 1054, the Pope was freed and returned to Rome.

Since Pope Benedict VIII had finally resolved to accept the Filioque in the year 1014, the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, persisted in accusing this doctrine of heresy and made the Latin churches closed in Constantinople. Cardinal Humbert succeeded in convincing Pope Leo IX to send legates to Constantinople in order to try a rapprochement between the Latin Church and the Church of Constantinople, thus paving the way for political co-operation on the territories of southern Italy.

To this end Humbert submitted two letters to the Pope's signature. One, destined for the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, cast doubt on the canonicity of his election, rejected the accusations of Cerularius against the Latin Church, and accused him of interfering in the affairs of the Church of Antioch and Jerusalem. The other, destined for the Byzantine Emperor, the Basileus Constantine IX, dealt mainly with political questions, but his last sentence complained of the behavior Patriarch Cerularius.

The delegation was made up of three legates: Humbert of Moyenmoutier, Peter of Amalfi, Archbishop of Amalfi (Byzantine territory) and Cardinal Frederick of Lorraine, chancellor of the Holy See and future pope Stephen IX, the delegation went to Constantinople in April 1054. The delegation has a plenipotentiary writing enabling it to excommunicate its opponents if negotiations failed to succeed. Dissatisfied with the welcome they received, the Pope's legates first went to the house of the Patriarch Cerularius, where they gave him the letter which was for him before they leave without exchanging usual compliments. The patriarch was shocked by the tone of the letter and questioned the status of the delegation. On Saturday, July 16, 1054, the three legates went to the basilica Hagia Sophia when

people were preparing to celebrate the afternoon service. In front of the faithful, Humbert, without uttering a word, placed on the altar of the basilica a bull excommunicating the Patriarch Cerularius and his assistants. The legates leave, not without having symbolically shaken the dust off their feet.

In Rome the report which Cardinal Humbert made of his mission was received with enthusiasm, the anathema pronounced against the Patriarch Cerularius being seen as the just retribution of the Greek accusations against the Latin Church. The cardinal kept his place as leader of the Roman Curia.

With the support of his complete Church, the Patriarch Cerularius went to complain to the Emperor Constantine IX, while the gathered population rumbled against this insult to the Church of Constantinople. The Emperor was obliged to announce that the incriminated bull would be solemnly burned; on Sunday, July 24, a quickly summoned synod anathematized Cardinal Humbert and his assistants, without, however, mentioning the Pope or the Western Church in general.

In spite of its spectacular nature, this episode was considered in Constantinople only as one of the incidents that marked the relations between the senior dignitaries of the two Churches more and more often: the excommunications were directed towards their dignitaries and not against the two Churches themselves, there was therefore no schism strictly speaking. The year 1054, however, is traditionally considered to be that of the schism between the western and eastern churches, although the real significance of the event is minor and diplomatic relations will continue for two centuries between the two sees. Not to mention schism, people realized well that the two Churches were no longer on the same wavelength and that the question of the "reunification" was essential but the very term did not have the same meaning in both capitals. When the Crusades began, there were still cold but polite relations between the two Churches. However, if relations remained tense between the two communities, it is evident that at the end of the eleventh century, both in Rome and in Constantinople, the authorities of the two Churches did not consider that there was a schism.

It was at Antioch that things got worse. The capture of Antioch by Bohemond of Tarentum, the son of Robert Guiscard, in 1098, put the patriarch John in an impossible situation. Bohemond knew that the Emperor would try to take again the city, and that the Patriarch and the people would make his decision to stand up for him; Bohemond, therefore, treated the unhappy patriarch uncereemoniously. John therefore left Antioch to take refuge at Constantinople with the upper clergy, where he resigned; the emperor and the upper clergy chose to him a Greek successor. From 1100 on, there were two patriarchs for the Palestine, a Latin patriarch occupying the siege and a Greek patriarch in exile, each aligning himself with the apostolic succession. It was from this moment that the schism took shape really.

The schism between the patriarchates of the East and of the West was thus realized with the creation by the Crusaders of Latin patriarchates in their own colonies, existing in parallel with the Greek patriarchates, each community referring only to its own patriarch.

The second crusade (1147-1149) was to increase the animosity existing between the political and religious authorities to the western and eastern nations of Christendom. If it had virtually no results in the Holy Land, it nevertheless contributed to considerably increase the rancor of the Crusaders against the Byzantines, whom they accused of complicity with the Turkish enemy and of bad faith towards the princes of Antioch. The Byzantines, as for them, regarded the Franks and Germans as barbarians, undisciplined, and insecure, a judgment extending to the Church of which they were members. It was at this time that the Greek Church produced one of its greatest jurists, Theodore Balsamon (born around 1130/1140, died around 1195/1200). Appointed bishop of Antioch (in exile since the Latins occupied this see), he defended theses hostile to the Latin Church. If Balsamon and the Constantinopolitan Church considered that the Church of Rome had separated from the other four churches of the Pentarchy, it seems that at the end of the century the Latins considered that it was the Church of Constantinople, which, by its refusal to accept the supremacy of Rome, was in a state of schism, even if neither party could tell precisely how long this gap had grown.

A last chance to unite the two Churches came in 1206 on the death in Didymoteichon of the Patriarch John X Kamateros. The bishops who remained in the new Latin Empire assembled and wrote a letter to the Pope offering to accept the supremacy of Rome and to recognize the Pope as the thirteenth apostle on the condition that they themselves might have their own patriarch who would share their language, customs and traditions. A council would then be summoned to discuss the differences between the two Churches. No follow-up was given to their request, the pope believing perhaps that it

would lead to recognize the succession of the Greek patriarchs as the legitimate and apostolic succession while the Latin lineage would be considered overadded.

A last effort was made by John III Ducas Vatatzes emperor of Nicaea in 1234. He urged his patriarch, Germanos II, to write to the pope to invite him to send representatives to the court of Nicaea. Rome sent two Dominican monks and two Franciscans. The Greeks, who hoped rather for a general council, were apparently ready to accept that the Latin use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist was not to be condemned, but required the omission of the Filioque in the Credo. For their part, the monks demanded at the outset the submission of the Greeks to the pontifical authority in Rome. The tone quickly became hot, and soon the two parties separated, accusing each other of being heretics. Henceforth no one could doubt that there was a schism between the Christian Churches of the East and of the West.

From then on, a pejorative view of the "other Christianity," called "schismatic," will be diffused in each of the churches, both in East and West.

In the West Greece and Greeks became objects of suspicion, contempt, and even disgust. The German historian Hieronymus Wolf will rewrite even Roman history by launching the name and concept of "Byzantine Empire" in 1557, in order to separate the history of the Roman Empire from the Orient, presented in a pejorative way, from that of the Western Empire, claimed as the "matrix of Western Europe."

In the East, the Catholics, also called "Franks," were described by many Greek writers as heretics, barbarians, ill-smelling, brutal, grasping, arrogant: they inspired a whole historiography marked by anti-Westernism, which will be found again in writers like Alexander Solzhenitsyn who sees the West as an amoral and materialistic.

* Perhaps given up to the Roman police by other Christians during the raids following the fire of Rome.

THE REFORMATION.

The reformation resulted from a need to consider religion and social life in a different way and took the form of an increased reflection on the question of the relationship to the divinity, central in the theology of the Reformists, who denounce, moreover, the corruption of society engendered by the trade in indulgences ; a system of commutation of penances of Celtic origin. With the fundamental difference that among the Celtic monks, it was a matter of replacing a long penance with a shorter one...BUT HARSHER whereas in Roman Christianity it was a matter of replacing it with a financial penalty, that is to say a payment of money.

Reformers took advantage of the rise of printing to the Bible circulate in vulgar languages (noticeably German after the first translation by Martin Luther), and show that it did not mention the saints or the cult of the Virgin, nor the Purgatory. The reference to the Bible as a norm is nonetheless one of the main motivations of the Reformists. This principle is expressed in Latin by the expression "Sola scriptura".

Started by Martin Luther, then a Catholic monk, in the Holy Roman Empire and Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, then Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and later John Calvin in Geneva, the Reformation affects most of North-West Europe. The attempts at conciliation having failed, it resulted in a split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformatist churches. The Catholic Counter-Reformation started at the end of the Council of Trent only makes only possible to the Catholic Church a partial winning back of the populations moved over to Reformation.

The adoption of the Reformation also has a political nature. It is a means for the princes to assert their independence against a papacy claiming a universal theocracy or for the populations to be able to revolt against a badly accepted sovereign, as in Scotland or in the Spanish Netherlands. In the 16th century, the Reformation results therefore in numerous conflicts between the Emperor and the German princes, as well as civil wars in France, England and Scotland.

Many factors have occurred.

For a long time, historians have thought that the vices of the clergy were the main cause of the Reformation: the debauchery of certain priests and monks who live publicly in partnership, grow wealthy with the money of the faithful. These abuses are not really the causes of the Reformation; the Catholic Church has constantly endeavored to remedy them. Moreover, this thesis is in a way favorable to the Catholic Church in that it equals the Reformation with a reaction against temporal problems (the depravity of the clergy, the indulgences) while obscuring the essentially spiritual concern of the Reformists. The councils of the fifteenth century cannot make effective decision so much the authority of the Pope is weakened. In fact, the faithful do not blame the clergy for not living well, but for believing badly.

Indeed the papacy responds poorly to the anxieties of the faithful. Since the fourteenth century and the great plague, the faithful have lived in the fear of an everlasting damnation. The fantastic themes of the time, dances of death painted in churches, millenarian books, attest to it. Trials against the witches multiplied from the end of the fifteenth century. The fear of death and hell results in the development of the Marian cult, the worship of saints, relics, pilgrimages, processions, and the traffic of indulgences. The goal is to win his paradise on earth even at the cost of a stay in purgatory.

At the end of the fifteenth century, indulgences, perverted practices of Celtic origin, are a means increasingly in vogue to reduce the number of years spent by a soul in purgatory after his death. The elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, future protector of Luther, possesses thus 17,443 relics, supposed to spare him 128,000 years of purgatory. The confusion of the spiritual and of the material accentuates the desacralization phenomena of this epoch. Increasingly, the faithful confesses not pushed by the consciousness of his weakness but for fear of punishment after death. Besides the multiplication of these practices, the Bible, proclaimed in Latin during the Masses, is accessible to the faithful only through the comments of the clergymen, from which it follows a loss of meaning.

Some humanists contribute to the distribution of new ideas. They develop biblical exegesis. The birth of the printing makes possible the publication of bibles in vernacular language. This direct contact accustoms the reader to have a personal relationship with the holy texts and to reflect by himself on their meaning.

From the middle of the fifteenth century onwards, the purchasing power declines. The nobles therefore look on the side of the Church's vast land holdings, usually 20 to 30 per cent of the arable land. Moreover, the Church continues to condemn bank profits, monetary profit, in her ecclesiastical courts, even though her positions have somewhat become more flexible. Bankers are particularly numerous in South Germany. Nobles and bankers are thus less attached to the Catholic Church.

Political factors are not absent either. The development of the states comes up against the temporal power of the Church. More and more, the princes sought to intervene in the choice of the members of the high clergy, bishops, abbots. Indeed, ecclesiastical offices are linked to profits. The one who controls the election of the prelate indirectly controls the benefice. The universal authority of the Pope, proclaimed by Gregory VII since 1075, clashed with the growing authority of the sovereign. The pope can levy regular or exceptional taxes in all countries of the West. The kings, moreover, protest against the exits of silver from their kingdom, of which they are in greatest need for their wars or to strengthen their power. Thus, in England, the taxes levied for the vacant benefices are five times higher than the incomes of the king. The pope also enacts bulls, some laws valid throughout Christendom. It can thus raise troops through crusade bulls, but less and less followed by effects. Sovereigns demand the control of religious orders, the absolute right to make laws in their states, raise taxes or troops and do justice.

But what most weakens the Catholic Church is the loss of sacredness. The faithful see too many sons of priests become priests in turn, too many clergymen to get rich at the expense of the laity, too many bishops living as great lords.

Three precursors are generally recognized by historians: Valdo the founder of the movement of the Poor of Lyons, John Wyclif and John Hus the Czech Reformist burned in 1415 in Constance. But the very notion of pre-reformation has its limitations; if it is undeniable that they are historically previous the Reformation, the pre-reformists may have not considered nor adopted all the principles of the Reformation in the making.

One of the oldest forerunners of the Reformation was John Wyclif. Through his first writings appears the idea that God through the Pope, exercises his right over earthly goods; the kings are accountable to the pope. According to him, the true Church is the Church of Christians, members of the hierarchy, and the Pope himself, but no one is superior to the other. The Pope directs but is no more saint than a Christian. This new affirmation thus questions the place of the hierarchy in the Church. He translates the Vulgate into Old English and recognizes the right of the secular authorities to collect ecclesiastical incomes in 1381, what shocks a lot the members of the English clergy who were very attached to their financial prerogatives. He believes that the Scriptures must be the only source of faith even if he thinks that the fathers of the Church can help in its interpretation. He was convicted in 1376 and 1379. His old enemy William Courtenay, who had become the archbishop of Canterbury, convokes in London in 1392 three synods, which condemn categorically Wyclif and his followers. He dies alone, but is buried in consecrated ground. The Council of Constance (1414-1418) renews the condemnation of his writings, as did Pope Martin V, who published two months before the end of the Council the bull *Inter Cunctas* (22 February 1418) containing the forty-five articles condemned in the Writings by Wyclif. The exhumation of his remains was then ordered, and in 1428 his bones were burned and thrown into the Thames north of London. Following him, the Lollards pushed the people to revolt against the bishops who become rich through their functions in the Church. Wyclif's ideas were not successful outside of England.

In Bohemia and Moravia, John Hus opposes corrupting wealth to evangelical poverty. For him the Gospel is the only infallible and sufficient rule of faith, and every man has the right to study it on his own account. This is a great novelty because the Catholic Church does not favor the personal reading of the holy texts. Moreover, the religious ideas of John Hus are accompanied by nationalist claims. He is fighting for the Czechs are rulers of their homeland. For the Czechs, Hus is the first great hero of their nation. In 1412, he issued burning indictments against indulgences, the sale of which is to finance the war of John XXIII against Ladislaus of Naples. Three of his young disciples are executed to the great scandal of the inhabitants of Prague. He is excommunicated, and the city is prohibited if he stays there. He leaves Prague and preaches in the countryside. He writes tracts on theology. In

1414 he goes to the Council of Constance with a pass from the Emperor Sigismund. There he refuses to acknowledge his mistakes. His writings were burned and he too as a heretic on 6 July 1415. He was immediately regarded by the Czech people as a martyr and a saint. The defenestration of Prague on July 30, 1419, marks the beginning of the insurrection of the Hussites who, for eighteen years, stand up to the five crusades that Europe sends against them at the call of the pope and of Sigismund to crush the "Heretics." Finally, the Church must compromise. The Compactata of Basel (1433) grant the Czechs communion under both kinds and the reading in Czech language of the Epistles and of the Gospel. But two Churches from the preaching of Hus will still survive in Bohemia in the 16th century: the Utraquist Church and the Moravian Church (former Unity of Brethren).

In Germany, the emperor Maximilian wants to use the idea of Reformation against the Holy Father to achieve national unity around him. He makes the humanist James Amyot responsible for the collection of the observations of the Germans on the Church and the Catholic clergy. Most religious orders seek, from their part, to re-establish the monastic rules in their original hardness.

The Lutheran reformation was introduced by the Augustinian monk Martin Luther. Since his entering the convent, Luther seeks by every means to acquire the certainty of his salvation. But neither devotion, nor masses, nor confessions, nor fasting, nor spiritual exercises, nor theology, bring to Luther the appeasement and certainty of his salvation.

In 1512, he finally finds the answer to his questions. Luther will write later: "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning (of Paul's Epistle to the Romans chapter 1:17) the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel....with which merciful God justifies us by faith.....Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me."

For Luther henceforth, the precepts are to be sought only in Holy Scripture. And it is by following the divine laws that the Christian shows his faith.

Luther is especially known for having developed the idea that the righteous will live by faith. In fact, he had to justify himself as soon as 1530 for having added the word "ONLY" to the following verse of the Epistle to the Romans (chapter 3 verse 28): "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith ONLY apart from the works of the law."

In 1515, Pope Leo X authorized a new sale of indulgences. It is not very successful. In 1517, Luther posts his 95 theses against indulgences on the door of the chapel in the castle of Wittenberg. He is indignant at the market-oriented slide of the Church. He undertakes to advocate his theological propositions or concerning the indulgences before who would like to argue with him. He believes that a public debate on the issue is salutary. But the Dominicans who sell indulgences prefer to denigrate Luther. They denounce essentially two propositions of Luther: the non-necessity of the works to win his salvation and the exclusive reference to the Bible. The debate spreads to European universities.

On June 15, 1520, Leo X condemns the ideas of Luther. The Emperor Charles V, who wants to be the champion of papal authority, makes Luther's writings burned at the University of Leuven in December 1520. Luther did not want to remain passive. He still thinks that a public debate is necessary and fights back to show his determination. It is besides this determination that will be the main cause of the separation of Reformists and Catholics. The Pope cannot bear that his authority be contested. He is convinced that he alone incarnates the truth of the Gospel and that Luther speaks only in his name. Luther may well write four works which clarify his thoughts, the pope stands by. The assertion of the sole authority of writing does not imply that the pope is submitted to this writing because only the Pope though the intervention of the Holy Spirit can face up the evolutions of society. Indeed how to interpret the writings over time? Martin Luther sells the manifesto to the Christian nobility of the German nation in a few days to four thousand copies. He advocates the reduction of the sacraments to the number of three: baptism and communion under both kinds and confession. Indeed, the Acts of the Apostles specify that the early Christians confessed their sins to one another. His doctrine also includes the rejection of the transubstantiation doctrine and the affirmation of the freedom of the Christian or of the equality of all believers before God even though they are not all capable of teaching the word of God. It is estimated that between 1517 and 1520 more than 300,000 copies of Luther's writings were sold. Until about 1550 he remains the most widely read author.

After being excommunicated by the Pope, Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms. He appears there for two days before the assembly. He refuses to disavow his works, unless he is convicted of mistakes by the testimony of divine Scripture. He was banned from the Empire by Emperor Charles V on May 26, 1521, what means that anyone has the right to seize him and hand him over to the police. He was forbidden to write and publish. This does not prevent Luther from continuing to write letters and to preach his ideas, helped by his disciples, of whom the most famous is Philipp Melanchthon. In 1521 Melanchthon published the *Loci theologici*, which for the first time systematically presents Lutheran thought with all its novelties and separations in relation to medieval thought.

Some social groups are more or less sensitive to the modern and reformist ideas advocated by Martin Luther, the father of world Protestantism. This is the merit of Luther to have hanged Christianity back to the modernity of the time. The nobility, with Klaus von Falkenstein at his head, is very favorable to Luther. A number of humanists and artists (Durer, Craven) also agree with his doctrine. In the countryside, Luther's ideas are spread by traveling hawkers and commercial travelers.

In the Holy Roman Empire, imperial cities are not sufficiently autonomous to choose their religion. Thomas Muntzer is an exalted and very intolerant mystic preacher. He preaches from city to city and is sometimes driven out by the bishop who does not want competitors. Andreas Karlstadt is one of Luther's former professors. He encourages his students to burn their books in huge public burnings, where precious manuscripts disappear thus, and to learn a trade. He was the first Roman Catholic priest to marry, thus breaking his vows of chastity. He marries a former nun.

The Reformation is also the opportunity for certain social groups to express their dissatisfaction. They thus give the evangelical message a revolutionary dimension. The squires revolted in 1522 under the leadership of von Hutten and Sickingen. For Luther, a religious reformation should not be identified with an economic and social cause. In 1522 also, the peasants of southern Germany revolted while mixing socio-political claims with religious demands. Again, Luther begged the peasants not to resort to force. For him, the Bible cannot bring solution to the problems of civil or economic life. He refuses a social revolt in the name of the Bible, thus expressing his social conservatism. During the war which the peasants gave to the lords in the south of the Holy Roman Empire, he encouraged the lords to punish without mercy the rebels. Indeed, in a short leaflet of 1525, entitled *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, he tells his "dear lords" to "stab smite and slay" the rebels.

We can also quote here, but in the same vein, the ignoble Luther's remarks against the Jews, which are a perfect illustration of religious and not "racial" anti-Semitism: "Oh how they love the book of Esther, which so nicely agrees with their bloodthirsty, revengeful and murderous desire and hope. The sun never did shine on a more bloodthirsty and revengeful people as they, who imagine to be the people of God, and who desire to and think they must murder and crush the heathen. Their breath stinks for the gold and silver of the heathen; since no people under the sun always have been, still are, and always will remain more avaricious than they, as can be noticed in their cursed usury. They also find comfort with this: 'When the Messiah comes, He shall take all the gold and silver in the world and distribute it among the Jews.... I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them. . . . I commend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow...." 1)

Anabaptism and revolt of Munster.

Present as soon as the beginning of the Reformation, particularly in Zurich, in the entourage of Zwingli, these representatives of the Radical Reformation unite the discontents. One of their branches, inspired by the preaching of Melchior Hoffman, advocates the use of violence against non-Anabaptists, in the view of a near end of the world, to which we must be prepared. These followers of Melchior Hoffman, pursued in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, will provoke a new episode of trouble by regrouping in the German city of Munster in Westphalia, where from 1533 to 1535 they try to

establish a theocracy. As of February 1534, the city falls under their control. Under the leadership of John of Leiden, who claimed to be directly inspired by divine visions, the city was administered in a crazy climate, where polygamy was legalized, John of Leiden marrying himself with no fewer than 16 women. The city was captured by force in June 1535 by its former archbishop and the leaders put to death. This episode of the Munster revolt left a deplorable image of Anabaptism, despite the fact that this religious community is in its vast majority involved in an absolute non-violence.

Faced with the unrest provoked by the various tendencies of the Reformation, Luther deals primarily with the organization the new liturgy in the German language. This is the first time that a people can pray from one end of the ceremony to the other in its national language. This revolution does much for the development of the German language. The German Mass is based on the reading of the New Testament, the sermon, the central element of worship, and the songs. Luther writes a collection of sermons that pastors can use during the service. This makes possible a certain doctrinal unity. The religious songs, very numerous during the service, are a powerful emotion factor.

The pastor consecrates the two species that become the true body and true blood of Christ, although it is bread and wine. In the Lutheran doctrine, there is no change of substance but coexistence of two substances: it is the consubstantiation. Luther admits the ordination of pastors, as well as the control of the temporal power over the spiritual power, guarantor of orthodoxy faced with the proliferation of reforms and of strict morality. The prince, as an eminent Christian, and owing to his divine mission, is a kind of bishop charged with imposing order in the Church. He is called *Summus episcopus*. This particular mission of the princes enables them to increase their power over their subjects. The adult faithful continue to receive religious instruction, as well as the children for whom Luther writes the Great and the Little Catechism in simple and appropriate language. He also condemns a great number of Catholic rites: pilgrimages, cults of saints, relics ...

The Lutheran reforms come from Saxony affect the free cities in southern Germany, Brandenburg, Brunswick and Anhalt. In 1529, at the second diet of Speyer, six princes and fourteen cities refused to apply the imperial decrees, going back on the religious liberties of the princes, and declare: "... we protest ..." hence the name Protestants. In 1530, the various movements of the Reformation present their confession before the Diet assembled at Augsburg in the presence of the Emperor. The confession of Augsburg, a very moderate Lutheran profession, was written by Philipp Melancthon. That presented by Zwingli affirms that the Last Supper is only a commemoration. The Reformists in Strasbourg present a third confession on behalf of the Alsatian towns known as the Tetrapolitan Confession. The Diet of Augsburg shows the impossibility of uniting the Reformists even if the Alsations end up adopting the Confession of Augsburg.

At the end of the Augsburg diet, Charles V summoned the Protestants to submit to Rome within seven months. Concerned, the latter constitute in 1531 the Schmalkaldic League. The emperor then grants them a truce. In 1536, under the impulse of Martin Bucer, the Protestants of northern and southern Germany, divided on the problem of the Last Supper, signed the Wittenberg Concord (1536), which enabled Lutheranism to extend its influence in southern Germany and isolates the Swiss. In 1546, when the Protestants refused to recognize the Council of Trent, Charles V raised his troops in order to suppress Protestantism by force. The Protestants, who form the League, suffer a crushing defeat at Muhlberg in Saxony in 1547.

The emperor can also impose the following year to the Protestants the Augsburg Interim which allows them just communion under both kinds and the marriage of the priests. The Protestant princes then get the support of the King of France Henry II in exchange for the right for him to occupy Metz, Toul, Verdun and other cities of the Empire not speaking German. Charles V leaves his brother, the future Emperor Ferdinand I, to sign Augsburg peace in 1555. The secularization already accomplished of Catholic property is ratified but it is forbidden in the future to confiscate other goods belonging to it. Princes and free cities have the right to choose their religion, but subjects are obliged to profess the same religion as their sovereign or to emigrate, hence the saying: *Cujus regio, ejus religio* ((whatever the ruler, his religion). Two thirds of Germany are become Protestant.

After Luther's death in 1546, Philipp Melanchthon became the guide of the Lutherans until his death in 1560. In 1580, the Lutheran theologians succeeded in uniting the different Lutheran states around a text of common confession. This is the Book of Concord.

The Lutheran Reformation extends beyond the borders of Germany. The cultural and commercial exchanges between the Scandinavian world and Germany are very important.

Olaf and Laurent Persson (Olaus and Laurentius Petri), trained at the University of Wittenberg, began to preach the Reformation in Sweden in 1518. They published twelve theses presenting the main ideas of Luther. The Swedish Catholic clergy which owns 30% of the land is very discredited in Sweden. As a result, the Reformation progresses without resistance. In 1527, the Swedish diet accepted the reformation, allowed the secularization of the property of the clergy in favor of the monarchy. The king becomes the supreme head of the Church. In Finland the clergy reforms itself.

In Denmark, during the reign of Frederick I (1523-1533), Lutheran preaching develops thanks to Hans Tausen, who studied in Wittenberg and Paul Helgesen. The Thirty-Three Articles of Copenhagen lay the foundations of the Reformation in 1530 even if it is not yet officially accepted. It will be necessary to wait until 1536 so that at the instigation of Johannes Bugenhagen, Christian III made the confession of Augsburg Denmark's profession of faith. The king is the head of the Danish Church. He appoints superintendents who replace the former bishops. The Reformation is also preached in Iceland where it encounters strong resistance and in Norway, united to Denmark from 1539. The University of Copenhagen becomes a center of Lutheran influence.

In Zurich, Ulrich Zwingli, parish priest of the city, exhibited the 95 theses on January 29, 1523, in the presence of the city's magistrates and of the vicar general of the Bishop of Constance, whose city was dependent on the religious level. For him, baptism and last supper are symbolic ceremonies, whereas Luther's followers see them as sacraments, making it impossible to reach an agreement with the Germans.

Zwingli's point of view prevailed gradually. Zwingli gets the secularization of the convents and creates in 1524 a school of biblical exegesis. In 1525, the magistrates forbid the mass in the city. It is replaced by a very pared-down cult. A matrimonial court is created the same year. Its jurisdiction ultimately ends in extending to the whole moral and social life of the citizens.

The canton of Basel was also reformed in 1529 thanks to the action of Johannes Hussgen (Oecolampadius), as well as Glarus, Berne, Biel, Schaffhausen, Mulhouse and St. Gallen. Protestant successes divide Switzerland into two camps ready for battle. Zwingli would like to create a coalition between the Swiss and German Protestants. But the meeting of Marburg in 1529 did not make possible a full communion with the latter. In 1531, Zwingli was killed and his small army is beaten at Kappel by the Catholic cantons, exasperated by the economic blockade to which they were subjected to. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the Reformation reaches first Neuchâtel then Geneva and the country of Vaud in 1536. After the death of Zwingli and that of Johannes Hussgen (the same year), Heinrich Bullinger encouraged Zurich to sign with other cities the First Helvetic Confession, which is hailed by Luther as a more orthodox text, although unsatisfactory in his eyes. In 1549, after a voluminous correspondence with Calvin (and at the cost of some doctrinal changes) Bullinger succeeded in getting closer to the Church of Geneva, by means of the Consensus of Zurich. Heinrich Bullinger was a prominent figure of Protestant Europe at the time because of the extent of his correspondence, of the spread of his works, of the hospitality he granted to the persecuted (he accommodates Anna Reinhart the widow of Zwingli After his death) and of his role as counselor to Anglicanism. He also writes the later Helvetic Confession, recognized in 1566 by most of the Reformat Churches in Switzerland, and accepted in Scotland, Hungary and Poland.

Strasbourg was reformed in an original way under the influence of local preachers such as Matthew Zell, who successfully comments on the Epistle to the Romans about Salvation, Capito, a talented preacher and a great scholar, and Martin Bucer, enthusiast with Luther's teaching. In 1524, preachers teach the Gospel in the parishes of the city and the worship is simplified. He secularizes the property of the convents. In a median position between Luther and Zwingli, Bucer is considered too close to the latter by Luther at the Marburg colloquium. This is why, in 1530, Strasbourg, along with the cities of Constance, Lindau and Memmingen, presents the Tetrapolitan Confession halfway between Luther and Zwingli on the Eucharistic level. In 1533, a synod develops an ecclesiastical constitution which establishes a weekly assembly of the clergy with the participation of three laymen. Ecclesiastical

discipline is entrusted to laymen or elders. In May 1536 Bucer and the representatives of various Churches of the Tetrapolitan Confession (and others, such as Augsburg or Basel) sign with Luther and the Churches of Saxony, the Wittenberg Concord, to which all Protestantism, with the main exception of Zurich. Strasbourg, where Calvin stayed and taught between 1538 and 1541, use both Tetrapolitan Confession and Augsburg Confession, and the authorities did not allow disseminating teachings contrary to this doctrine. However, from 1563 onwards, the Strasbourg authorities only recognized the Augsburg Confession as a doctrinal norm.

John Calvin, a native of Noyon in Picardy, studied in Paris, then in Orleans and Bourges. Won by Reformation, he must leave France following the Affair of the Placards in 1534. In 1536, the first version of his major work, *De Institutione religionis christianae*, which includes then 6 chapters, is published in Latin in Basel. A new Latin edition of 19 chapters appears in Strasbourg in 1539, followed by another one of 25 chapters immediately translated into French in 1541, and a fourth and fifth version respectively in 1550 and 1554.

The absolute sovereignty of God is proclaimed there. Calvin tries to see the world from the point of view of God. By disobeying God, man is enslaved to sin. He is rarely able to implement his will to do good. Continuing his reasoning, Calvin thinks that faith itself comes from God, it is the predestination. Too bad for agnostics or atheists! They have to weep only the Buddhism of the Pure Land.

Absent from the 1532 edition of the Institution, scarcely mentioned in that of 1536, predestination took a growing place in subsequent editions, Calvin being at the heart of controversies by arguing that God chose from eternity those who will be saved, a very political expression because he doesn't of those who have been chosen for the damnation. Causing another controversy, he opposes to the transubstantiation doctrine and thinks that Christ is really present in the assembly but not in the species, that is to say, bread and wine. Man is a fallen creature who must live in the fear of God; he is filled with the feeling of his imperfection and of his nature which leads him to evil.

In 1536, the council of Geneva, which banned the mass and introduced the Reformation into the city, appeal to Calvin at the instigation of William Farel. He writes a Confessions of Faith to endow the Reformed Church of Geneva with a solid disciplinary and doctrinal framework. But the rigidity that the Reformists try to impose displeases the people, who succeed in persuading the council to expel them in April 1538. Calvin then resides in Strasbourg where he took care of the French refugees and teaches in the High School of the town. The city of Geneva calls him back in 1541. He remains there until his death in 1564. The Ecclesiastical Ordinances were published in September 1541. They served as a foundation for all organizations inspired by Calvin. The basic level is the local Church, with a council composed of pastors, doctors of theology, elected elders and deacons. The consistory deals with the moral life of the community; it prohibits games, drunkenness, vagrancy, dances (sic); it tries to preserve peace between Christians and chooses the pastor of the community among the candidates. Calvin also founds the academy of Geneva in order to train the future preachers necessary for the religious instruction of the population, in 1559.

John Calvin is a supporter of the Weekly Supper, but because of the "weakness of the people," he agrees to celebrate it only four times a year: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the first Sunday in September. He works out a liturgy, the form of prayers and ecclesiastical songs, many of which are borrowed from the Strasbourg ritual. Services are made of sermons, songs and psalms. He also writes a catechism, explaining the doctrine without much pedagogy.

Calvin plays an important role in religious controversies. He fights the Anabaptists. He makes arrest the Spanish theologian and physician Michael Servetus, who had taken refuge in Geneva because he had written against the Trinity. The latter was burned alive in 1553. The trial of Servetus leads to a debate with Sebastian Castellio who campaigns for religious tolerance. Calvin causes controversy also with those who contest the predestination. The strong moral pressure that Calvin exerts on the city with the help mainly of the French refugees comes up against the popular discontent and the representatives of the great families of Geneva. Geneva acquires the reputation of a New Jerusalem where the identification of the city with religion is complete to the Protestants persecuted in Catholic countries. It attracts exiles from all over Europe. From 1540 to 1564, nearly a thousand new citizens are admitted in it. The European influence of the city is due to Calvin who maintains a correspondence with people from almost all the countries of Europe for the sake of Protestant unity. It is also due to the

reputation of the Academy, founded in 1559. This school very quickly welcomes students from all over the continent. It consists essentially of pastors, but also jurists and a part of the European Reformist elite. After Calvin's death in 1564, it is Theodore Beza who led the Reformation in the city.

The Republic of Mulhouse admits Calvinism as the only official religion in 1529. The status of an independent republic enclosed in the Kingdom of France will allow it to escape the wars of religion and to build special ties with the other communities and Reformed states in Europe and the New World.

The rest of France is also affected by the Protestant reform. As early as 1520, Protestant ideas develop. Protestantism appears in the valley of the Dordogne in the 1530s. At the synod of Chanforan of 1536, William Farel and the Waldensians, united, get a budget to print the bible in the vulgar language. Starting from 1540, the increasingly abundant Protestant literature is accompanied by oral hand over. It spreads especially after the publication in French of the Christian institution by Calvin in 1541. Calvin from Geneva takes charge of the religious organization and unites the Protestants in France. Starting from 1555, the groups were organized into assemblies governed by a consistory. Calvin sends dozens of missionaries to help for this new organization. In 1560, there are about forty.

Their success is very great and at the end of 1561, there are more than six hundred and seventy Reformist Churches in the kingdom. It is estimated that at this time more than a quarter of the population of the kingdom of France became Protestant.

French Protestantism was opposed by Francois I and his son Henry II. The repression carried out by Francois I was limited and sporadic. But that of Henry II is firmer. The Edict of Compiègne of July 27, 1557, demands that every Protestant fugitive or rebel be killed without trial. In 1559 the letters of patent of Ecouen mandate certain public figures for going in the provinces and suppressing heresy. Those who refuse are executed. This does not prevent the Reformation from continuing to develop.

After the unexpected death of Henry II, the attempt of conciliation led by the new chancellor Michel de l'Hospital and the regent Catherine de Medici is a failure. In 1561, the Reformists and the Catholics confront vainly their ideas at the colloquy of Poissy. The Edict of January 1562 which allows the existence of the Reformist religion unleashes partisan ambitions and passions, at the origin of the outbreak of the wars of Religion in 1562.

In Germany, the Elector Palatine joins Calvinism, and makes publish in 1563 the Heidelberg catechism taken over by most of the Calvinist churches. Nassau, Bremen, Anhalt, Hesse-Kassel, Hesse-Darmstadt, Schleswig and Deux-Ponts become Calvinists in turn between 1576 and 1600. The Netherlands - which at that time include Holland, Zeeland, Belgium and part of northern France – are entered very early by the Lutheran reformation despite the severe repression of Charles V. But it is above specially Calvinism which imposes itself in the population and part of the nobility. A clandestine synod was held in Antwerp in 1561 under the direction of Guido de Bres. He gave the Netherlands a confession of faith. At the same time, the inhabitants confront Philippe II, King of Spain and son of Charles V, who wants to establish absolutism at the expense of the old tax exemptions and freedoms dating back to the Dukes of Brabant and their successors, the Dukes of Burgundy. Struggling against the old charters, Philip II wants to suppress the principle of freedom which pervade them and, thus, better fight against Protestantism. Faced with the royal persecution, the Calvinists rose in the summer of 1566. They plundered and destroyed the churches. The suppression is fierce. The Calvinist survivors fled and found abroad Refugees Churches, which were organized in 1572 on the principle of the Presbyterian-synodal institutions. Some of the nobility leans towards the Protestants, but the majority remained Catholic. Those the partisans of Philip II had called the beggars petition in favor of tolerance. It is the Compromise of the Nobles presented in Brussels to the governess Margaret of Parma, natural daughter of Charles V and representing the King of Spain. Rejected by power, the "beggars" organize the resistance under the leadership of William I of Orange called William the Silent, Catholic of origin, then converted to Calvinism. William through marriage will form an alliance with the Protestant French nobility, the Chatillon-Coligny, of the family of the French leader of the Protestant party, the Admiral Coligny, and succeeded in taking control of Holland and Zeeland, establishing in them religious freedom. Under the sons of William of Orange, the struggle will continue and, after a War of Eighty Years, the creation of the United Provinces in the seventeenth century will be proclaimed. The territories of the south of the Netherlands (modern Belgium and north of France) having fallen back under Spanish sovereignty, the Catholic religion will be the only one authorized.

The Reformation also reaches Scotland, where it gathers the opponents of the Stuart dynasty, which was closely linked to the Catholic religion. In 1557, the Reformists join their forces in a Covenant, a typically Scottish oath to defend a cause and remain united until death. After the death of Mary of Guise, regent for her daughter Mary Stuart, the Scottish parliament passes the Scottish Confession. This text presented by John Knox is of Calvinist inspiration, since he has studied with him in Geneva.

The statutes voted by the parliament establish a Presbyterian-synodal system. Each local church is run by a college composed of the minister (pastor), elders and deacons. Each church sends representatives to the provincial synods. At the head of the Church known as Presbyterian is the General Assembly of Churches made up of delegates from the provincial synods. At that time most of the Scottish nobility and much of the population are become Protestant. The marriage of Queen Mary Stuart, who remained a Catholic, with Lord Darnley, of the same denomination, provokes a rebellion of the Protestant regions in 1565. Mary finally abdicates in 1568. Her son James VI leans clearly towards the Protestantism and the establishment of an Anglican-type Church which becomes the Church of Scotland.

At the beginning of the Reformation, Henry VIII took a stand for Lutheran ideas. The English sovereign wants to divorce from his wife Catherine of Aragon of which he has only one daughter after 18 years of marriage. The Pope refuses the divorce. The king then proclaims himself the supreme head of the English Church, of which he is the supreme governor. Thomas More and the bishop of Rochester who refuse to recognize the king as supreme head of the English Church are executed. Paul III excommunicates the king, discards ban on the kingdom and preaches the crusade against the king become a bigamist in his eyes. In 1536, Henry VIII suppresses a Catholic uprising against him. At the same time, the Protestants reproach him for not going far enough and not to reform the dogma. In 1539, the Six Articles, voted by the Parliament, keep strict orthodoxy, transubstantiation, communion under a single species, celibacy and chastity of priests.

During the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553), the Church of England moved significantly towards the Reformation. The royal injunctions, enacted in July 1547 at the instigation of Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, and head of the Council of Regency, abolish the six articles, prohibited processions, authorized communion under both kinds, and order the reading of the Holy Texts in English. In 1549, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, replaces Somerset at the head of the Council of Regency. He welcomes the refugees of Strasbourg driven by the victory of Charles V on German Protestants. They bring to the English Reformists their experience and knowledge. Under their impulse, the English Protestants succeed in making Parliament pass the Book of Common Prayer, which becomes mandatory throughout the kingdom with the Act of Uniformity (January 15, 1549). In 1552 the new Prayer Book was much more Protestant, the accompanying Act of Uniformity accentuates the sanctions against priests who did not use the Prayer Book and provides for fines for those who did not go to the Sunday mass. Finally, in April 1553, the Forty-Two articles clarified the Anglican doctrine: the priest becomes a mere minister of the word, he celebrates the Eucharist without reference to transubstantiation, the worship of the saints, the belief in Purgatory, the pilgrimages, the relics, are rejected; the doctrine of justification by faith and predestination is of Calvinist inspiration.

After the death of Edward VI, his elder sister Mary remained a Catholic and becomes Queen (1553). She gets from a parliament carefully recruited the abolition of all previous laws. She governs with Cardinal Pole and makes arrest the prelates who are staunch Protestants. The announcement of her marriage with Philip, the son of Charles V triggers a revolt in Kent, harshly suppressed. The Catholic religion is everywhere restored and the heretics pursued.

When Elizabeth I, half-sister of Mary came to power in 1558, the English clergy was entirely Catholic. In 1559, a new Act of Supremacy gave him the title of supreme head of the English Church; the Book of Common Prayer is restored throughout the kingdom. The clergy must submit or resign. Elizabeth I consolidates the institutions of the Anglican Church by giving them a confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles, in 1571.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation

To remedy its problem of reform, Catholicism has implemented all that it could. It was essential that the propagation of Protestantism should be stopped. The Council of Trent and the Society of Jesus are two examples of these means of putting a stop to the Reformation.

The Council of Trent in Italy.

The internal improvement is mainly the work of the Council of Trent summoned by Pope Paul III at the request of Charles V to face the Protestant Reformation. The council opens in 1545. As for Charles V, he wishes to make the council a kind of vast forum where Protestants and Catholics would discuss freely, what the Pope does not want. The Council of Trent replied to the criticisms of the Reformists, and reaffirmed, more precisely than at the beginning, the doctrines desired by Rome. Catholicism relied much on a tradition going beyond the Bible. The Reformists did not judge the past, the fathers of the Church, or certain councils with contempt, but asserted that there were here numerous contradictions and popular superstitions which distorted the message of the Gospel, what required a complete return to the Bible, the only book inspired and infallible (according to them).

The Council of Trent reaffirmed the authority of the popes, of the clergy over the laity, of the tradition, of the councils, the merits in salvation, the purgatory, the prayers for the dead, the sacrifice of the Mass and the intercession of Mary and of the saints. Catholicism always kept its seven sacraments. The Council of Trent made possible the cessation of the expansion and even the recapture of places already lost. This council sanctioned the split of Western Christianity in two: Catholicism and Protestantism.

THE WARS OF RELIGION.

The wars of religion were of an unrivaled scale, and of an extreme violence. These confrontations have gone round the map of Europe whether in Germany, France or Netherlands.

Christian unity being no more than a utopia, large-scale conflicts were brewing: rightly or wrongly called "wars of religion" (at the time people spoke of "discords"), the religious dimension being variable according to the times, the places and even more according to the individuals. In France, Netherlands and Germany, social and religious suppressions were severe, civil wars broke out, and then with the stances of the princes and magistrates, they became "wars of religion." Emperor Charles V. fought heresy with his army. The Lutherans, in order to defend themselves, established the Schmalkadic League.

After this war the peace of Augsburg (1555) enabled the princes to choose the religion of their subjects according to the principle *Cujus regio, ejus religio* (whatever the ruler, his religion). France, as for her, began to convulse a little after Germany. For 36 years (1562-1598) the wars of religion practically didn't cease. It was during these wars that the United Provinces were created. Indeed, a revolt, in which sense of nationhood, commercial and religious interests, were mixed, broke out in 1566. This revolt, whose origin is remote, confronted the supporters of the Calvinist reforms to the partisans of the Spanish and Catholic hegemony. Behind the scenes, several alliances had been formed. These alliances were sometimes unnatural: Francois I, while suppressing the French Reformists, would support the German princes to annoy Charles V. Similarly he will make an alliance with the Ottomans against the same Charles V. The papacy will procrastinate between France and Spain to counter the Reformation. On the Protestant side, Maurice of Saxony will fight against Charles V against other Protestant princes before turning and defeating him at Innsbruck in 1552. All these conflicts contributed to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War.

The Thirty Years' War began in Germany in 1618 and lasted until 1648. This war began with a revolt of the Protestant Czechs because of the archbishop of Prague who had forbidden the Reformist worship in the city. Richelieu tried to stop the war, but did not entirely succeed. Germany was devastated by this war, which was the most murderous of that time. The end of this war was concluded by the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The latter reaffirmed the right of princes to impose their religion on their subjects. What is not very democratic we will admit it. See Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic (time is money).

In their struggle against the superstitions of Rome and the drifts of Anabaptist spirituality, Lutheranism and Calvinism will contribute to the disenchantment of the world. In these two theological traditions, and especially in Calvinism, it is not the devil, the heavenly beings or the miraculous who are omnipresent, but God. God is sovereign and has revealed His will in Scripture: (the 66 books that make up the Bible). An almighty God helps to reassure the believer. The measure of a man in Protestant spirituality lies in his understanding, in his ability to explain and in his obedience to Scripture.

Our conclusion will be final. As in the case of Islam, all this energy (which did not avoid Salem) would have been more useful to mankind if it had been put in the service of philanthropy and ecology, of agnosticism and atheism.

1) The roots of Christian anti-Semitism are simple: everything comes from the narrative of the passion made by the synoptic gospels. Below, in summary, and without concealing the gray areas, the result that it seems possible to get from all these differing or contradictory testimonies of the four gospels. Jesus was arrested at the initiative of the clergy of Jerusalem, headed by Caiaphas, the high priest in office. The troop which carried out the raid was composed solely of Jewish auxiliaries under the orders of these authorities.

Some authors believe that the demonstration in Jesus of a project of a messianic nature had alerted Caiaphas and his entourage, on the best terms with the Roman power represented by Pilate. The fear of an uprising would have determined the Jewish power to make arrest Jesus.

In the strict sense, there was no Jewish "trial," but only a Roman trial. The narrative of the session of the Sanhedrin, as it is reported in the Synoptic Gospels, is without historical probability. Not only the version of Luke, which completely rewrites that of Mark, but also the other two. This is a pure product

of Christianity which has no other purpose than to show that Jesus was sentenced to death as Christ (Messiah) Son of God; but also that it remains a crime for which his judges will be punished. Pilate has conducted a trial of which we do not know the proceedings. In condemning Jesus to be crucified, after having him scourged, Pilate has perhaps taken a salutary measure. The role of the Jewish crowd is, to say the least, doubtful: it appears only in the episode of Barabbas, itself of a debatable historicity. Jesus, on leaving the court, was taken by auxiliary troops of Rome and crucified by them with other convicts. That's all !

And all this in the hypothesis that this man really existed, what we can doubt.

THEURGY AND SACRAMENTS.

Pagan theurgy.

If we abstract it from the theological background in which it developed during the last centuries of ancient paganism, the notion of theurgy joins that of sacraments because it is an elementary structure of religious life.

According to etymology (*theou-ourgia*), it is defined as a divine action of which man is the instrument and the beneficiary. It involves the implementation of a tangible sign (invocation, gesture, object manipulation) that performs what it symbolizes. In the 4th century, Iamblichus specifies in the Book II of his *Treatise on the Egyptian Mysteries* that these signs accomplish by themselves their own work, asking from the faithful only a minimum of availability. The divine operation is not measured by the knowledge that the faithful has of it, nor even by his fervor. Theurgy is therefore an operative symbolism intended to awaken the divine presence and power and prefigures the efficacy *ex opere operato* and *non ex opere operantis* of the Christian sacraments.

As Ronald Nash noted of pagan rites, "The phrase *ex opere operato* describes the pagan belief that their sacraments had the power to give the individual the benefits of immortality in a mechanical way without his undergoing any moral or spiritual transformation. And this certainly was not Paul's view, of salvation." By contrast, sacraments were considered to be primarily *dona data*, namely some blessings conveyed to those who by nature were unfit to participate in the new order inaugurated by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Pagan sacraments, on the contrary, conveyed their benefits *ex opere operato*. " (Ronald H. Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenic World*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1984, p. 153) (Geisler, McKenzie, 13. Sacramentalism. P. 259).

Besides, theurgy and sacraments answer the same problem. If, on the one hand, God is transcendent and essentially mysterious, and if, on the other hand, he communicates and divinizes man, this communion cannot be accomplished only through human intelligence, even enlightened by God, for deepest thought grasps only relationships and does not reach the absolute as such.

The Neo-Platonic school (3rd-6th century) professed that perfection consists in the mystical union with the ineffable divinity, whereas thought does not rise above the negative theology: it knows only what God is not. That is why this school had come to fill by the theurgic art with the void thus dug between contemplation and "ecstasy." This art was to arouse in the initiate no more wisdom, but a kind of divine euphoria, no more the aim of a distinct truth, but the coincidence with the Ineffable. The prodigies and the Dionysian exaltation were not excluded, but it would be wrong to see in it the essence of Neo-Platonic mysticism. These were only superficial manifestations of a more original communication. In the fifth century, Proclus's biographer, Marinus, praised his master for having practiced, beyond the contemplative virtues, the theurgic virtues, also called "hieratic virtues."

In the latter case, as in the case of the sacraments, it is a question of using a process more radical than thought for a more radical conversion than that of the contemplative one. They wanted to join the divinity in the very heart of its clarity. Paganism, having no centralized doctrinal authority like Christianity, wandered in a multitude of beliefs and rites in this field. The theurgy has not escaped this proliferation, and there can be no question here of expounding its meticulous practices. It is more important to find out how the most learned minds of the time tried to justify them.

The best theological tract of theurgy is the already quoted work of Iamblichus. The reference to the Egyptian and Oriental religious traditions, considered to be more precious than those of the Greeks, is a characteristic of the time. People sought in the East the means of transcending the Hellenic intellectualism. But it is possible that these Oriental influences have especially favored the development of the mystical germs which were already contained in the Greek mysteries and that of profoundly religious philosophies, such as Pythagoreanism and Platonism. In fact, the traditions that Iamblichus recommends, with as much eclecticism as dogmatism, have different origins. Iamblichus firmly rejects any "excessive rationalism" which would claim to reach the divine union by the only effort of the intellect. Plotinus was doubtless targeted through his disciple Porphyry (3rd-4th centuries), who had sent to Iamblichus a series of slightly ironic questions. Plotinus, who professed that the deifying union is not only the end, but the principle of the whole life of the mind, was more reserved about the rites. Porphyry had oscillated from practice to distrust. In his treatise *On the Return of the Soul*, he had even given an explanation of the theurgic efficacy which reduced its scope. The rites would only act on a lower power of the soul, the imagination, to purify it and thus release the higher power.

Iamblichus is not satisfied with this interpretation. And his position will definitively integrate the theurgic art into Neo-Platonic teaching, both as a practice and as a doctrine. The justification he puts forward is perhaps evoked by the pseudonym "Abamon" that the author of the *De mysteriis* gives himself.

Whether this etymology is correct or not, theurgic art is essentially theogonic, since it participates in the power that makes the gods. Master Abamon, in fact, maintains that the power of signs is in no way destined to our utility, nor to the satisfaction of our curiosity, but to the purification of the soul and to its participation in divine liberty.

Outside benefits such as healing, predictions, apparitions, are only means. Theurgy is not magic. Of course, today we would be more demanding on this point. Some sorcery might be suspected in the artifices of the oracle of Colophon and that of Delphi. But let us not forget that there is a magical use of the sacraments. Any symbol may be degraded and twisted. And the principle put forward by Master Abamon is healthy, even if it suffers some doubtful applications. Theurgy does not put the gods at our service, because it is the opposite effect that it aims at. It does not manipulate the gods by making them the passive objects of our prayers and sacrifices. For if the rite is effective, it is to the extent that the gods have freely chosen to enclose their power there. According to Proclus, the deity enlightens us either by the thoughts that he inspires us, or by the actions that he makes us accomplish. These are not only to represent, but to make pass a constituent of the divine generosity function in our proceedings. So that this operation consecrates us or initiates us to the act through which a divine power gives itself its distinctive characteristic.

Here appears the fundamental difference between ancient theurgy and Christian sacraments. These, which have their center in the Eucharist, reproduce the human-divine actions of Jesus and make faithful be united with his sacrifice and glorification. The foundation of the Christian sacrament is the history of Jesus, to which the Christian actually conforms his own history. "Do this in remembrance of me." Everything therefore is based on the truthfulness and historicity of the evangelical narratives, what a dangerous bet, is for if historicity fades and truth is disturbed, THEN EVERYTHING COLLAPSES!

The root of theurgy seems at first very similar. The pagan mysteries made their initiates experiment again the earthly adventure of the god to whom they aspired to be personally consecrated. But the adventures of these gods do not belong to history, they belong to the myth. And if we try to interpret them philosophically, we will see in each god, Apollo, Dionysus or Core, the figure of a determined power of the one and only ineffable source of divinity. The myth then resolves itself into the timeless.

Consequently, in both cases, sacraments and theurgy, there is the preventive and deifying effective grace of the hidden God, and the mediation of an effective symbol. But the sacrament continues the history of a god-man, while theurgy is the act of a mythical thought full of mysticism. On this point, the divergence seems irreducible.

The Christian Sacraments.

We have seen in our previous notebooks that between the theoretical Judaism of the beginning of the biblical narrative and that of the time of Jesus a lot of water had passed under the bridge and that a number of fundamental differences had gradually settled there, especially after the return from exile in Babylon in -538. Judaism, moreover, begins only after this date.

The first imposture: that of the revelation from the outset of Abraham from Moses of Religion with a great R.

We must now deal with the second imposture that which consists in saying or implying that present-day Christianity is only a reform of the Judaism at the time of Jesus, without any external contribution, that all its roots are Jewish and have nothing to do with the world of darkness that are the *goyim*, later renamed (if one can say so) to better stigmatize them "pagans".

Bruce M. Metzger (1914-2007) of the Princeton Theological University put the terms of the problem very well and we will limit ourselves to quoting or summarizing his paper, published in the Harvard

Theological Review in 1955 under the title, "Considerations of Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity."

WHILE CLARIFYING IMMEDIATELY THAT WE DO NOT HAVE THE SAME INDULGENCE AS HIM TOWARDS THE DENIGRATORS OF GOYIM OR PAGANS AND THAT WE DO NOT PLACE THE COUNTERWEIGHT OF THE SCALE IN THE SAME PLACE AS HE DID. IN SHORT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE FOR CHRISTIANISM THE EYES OF JIMENA OR JULIET (for her Romeo).

Metzger has the intellectual honesty to point out that he only deals with the methods used for this questioning.

« The main purpose of this article is to deal with problems of methodology and to raise questions regarding the correctness of certain assumptions which, in some circles, are generally accepted as valid. In order to be concrete, the discussion has necessarily involved certain beliefs and doctrines, but these, so far from being exhaustive, are to be regarded merely as examples. If any conclusions can be drawn from the preceding considerations of methodology, they must doubtless be, first, that the evidence requires that the investigator maintain a high degree of caution in evaluating the relation between the Mysteries and early Christianity; and, second, that.... »

And there we will object to Bruce Metzger that the genetic continuity, the absence of which he underlines, LIES IN THE VERY PERSON OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS NOT COME FROM JUDAISM AND OF WHICH SOME OF THEM WERE EVEN PHILOSOPHERS OR PRIESTS OF PAGAN CULS (like Montanus, a former priest of Cybele for example but Montanism provided the large battalions of non-Marcionite or non-Gnostic Christians, ancestors of the future Reformists Orthodoxes Catholics). AND A CONTRARIO IN THE FACT THAT MANY JUDEO-CHRISTIANS HAVE SWITCHED OFF ALONG THE WAY AND RETURNED TO THE SYNAGOGUE.

We would even object to our distinguished confrere the ardent pro-pagan plea of the Reverend Samuel Angus, namely the preface to his work entitled "A Study in the Historical Background of Early Christianity."

« Christianity arose as an historical religion, historically conditioned in a definite environment. It was based on certain historical facts ; it was preached by and to men who held a view of the world which differs radically in many respects from the views of the present. Christianity not only made history but was modified and shaped by history.....There is a more excellent way of magnifying Christianity than by ignoring or decrying Paganism, or disparaging the rival systems which Christianity overcame...

There has been an increasing recognition of the effect of environment on early Christianity and of the necessity of envisaging Christianity in its complete cultural and religious background. The Graeco-Roman world was the soil on which the Sower went forth to sow the Christian seed; the growth depended not only on the vital forces inherent in the seed but on the preparation and fertility of the soil. We must know the ancient habits of thought and intellectual postulates with which Christianity came into contact and which it partially at least adopted, to understand its task adequately.

To the question, ' Is God the God of the Jews only ? ' Students of ancient history must affirm that He is also the God of the Greeks and the Orientals and the Romans.

There was a rich Pagan preparation for Christianity as there was undoubtedly a rich Jewish contribution to ' the fullness of the times. The spiritual values of Hellenistic-Oriental syncretism cannot be overlooked by students of the history and evolution of Christianity.

The Christian Ecclesia is best appreciated when observed at work in an intensely religious world in competition

with the Synagogues of the Dispersion, the Guilds of the Mystery-Religions, and the Schools of Greek philosophy.

In Paganism there was a ' groping after God if haply they might find Him and such aspirations are of direct interest to us as enabling us to appreciate better the Gospel. In every age Wisdom, entering into holy souls, makes men friends of God and prophets eager to apprehend and live the Truth.

Those who lived with the Word and were Christians before Christ, those who delivered their *testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*, prepared the way of the Lord. And among those who later opposed the irresistible progress of our Faith, when spiritual issues were often confused in political and sectarian zeal, there are found sincere men who were lovers of wisdom both in their characters and in their discourses....Christianity proved unable to discover a method of coming to terms with or appropriating ancient culture without rending the rich fabric of Graeco-Roman civilization. We observe its champions often so conscious of moral perils that in their alarm they rooted up wheat with the tares, refusing to let both grow together till the harvest,

In the hope of contributing, in however modest a fashion, to a knowledge of the conditions in the Mediterranean world at the rise and during the spread of our Faith, this volume is published.

S.A. St. Andrew's College, Sydney, December 22, 1928.

But let us return to the considerations of methodology by Metzger...

« The first scholar who made an exhaustive and critical examination of the statements of ancient authors regarding the Mysteries was Christian August Lobeck. Although Lobeck confined his attention to the Eleusinian, the Orphic, and the Samothracian Mysteries, his monograph, published in 1829, was of the greatest importance....it became possible to discuss intelligently the rites and teachings of the Mysteries. Furthermore, it was also during the nineteenth century that archaeology made quite significant additions to our knowledge of the beliefs and practices of devotees of the Mysteries. Excavations of places of worship supplemented the evidence from classical and patristic authors with thousands of inscriptions, hymns, mosaics, statues, altars, lamps, sacrificial instruments, and the like...

From the latter part of the nineteenth century to the present, many scholars have expressed their opinion regarding the relationship between the Church and the competing religions in the Roman Empire. As would be expected in view of the fragmentary and occasionally ambiguous evidence, different investigators have arrived at quite divergent results. On the one hand, some scholars believe that only a minimum of outside influence came to bear upon primitive Christianity (e.g.,...). Others, on the other hand, are disposed to believe not only that the amount of influence was relatively large but also that it made itself felt in the formulation of central and crucial doctrines and rites of the Church (e.g.,...)

Such widely divergent opinions are due, at least in part, to differences in methodology in dealing with the information.

I. First of all, a distinction is to be made between the faith and practice of the earliest Christians and that of the Church during subsequent centuries. One cannot deny that post-Constantinian Christianity, both Eastern and Western, adopted not a few pagan rites and practices. From Asclepius came the practice of incubation in churches for the cure of diseases. The functions of more than one local demi-god were taken over by Christian saints whose names even, in some cases, remind one of the original pagan prototypes. Statues of Isis holding the infant Harpocrates (Horus), as well as the hymns in honor of the Egyptian Queen of Heaven, find their obvious counterparts in the growth of the cult of Mary. One can add to this iconography the images of the Criophorous Shepherd or Good Shepherd, which was first part of the ancient pagan funerary repertoire. Just as Sabazios with characteristic gesture — the upper three fingers raised, the other two bent down — blessed his adherents, so the Catholic bishop of the West gave (and still gives) his blessing to the faithful. Processions in which sacred objects are carried for display to the onlookers, the tonsure of priests, certain funeral rites, the use of lighted tapers, popular ideas regarding the geography of Hades — all these have quite generally acknowledged pagan prototypes.

The real difference of opinion, however, arises with regard to the relation of nascent Christianity to its pagan rivals.

From the early days of the Church the question of the supernatural efficacy of the sacraments was discussed by theologians. That caused even a schism in the Church of North Africa in the 4th century. Bishop Donatus (in Numidia) and his followers denied the validity of the bishop ordination (307) of the

Bishop of Carthage, Caecilianus, for one of the consecrating bishops was a "traitor" (traditor) : he had agreed to hand over to the authorities worship objects and sacred books during the second and last of the anti-Christian official and general real persecutions in the Roman Empire, the persecution of Diocletian (early 4th century). About sixty bishops from North Africa follow Donatus and elect a new bishop of Carthage, causing a schism in the African church. This was called the Donatist heresy.

The party opposed to Donatism, and especially the Bishop of Rome, asserted that the validity of the sacraments could not depend on the spiritual excellence of the person who administers it. If so, Christians would be in permanent doubt as to the validity of their own baptism or of the communion received during the Eucharist. Donatism was fought by St. Augustine and disappeared only in the eighth century.

The Greek word corresponding, as John Toland clearly saw it in his *Christianity not mysterious*, was MYSTERION.

However, until the beginning of the fourth century, the risks of mixing-up with the pagan mysteries were such that the Christian writers avoided the use of the word "mystery" in this meaning, however, usual in the common language of the second century. The Latin term sacramentum, with the double legal-religious element that Tertullian drew from its pre-Christian usage - an oath taken on the occasion of a trial or an oath of military enlistment; pledge in kind or silver deposited in the temple in the first case, or indelible mark of belonging engraved on the skin in the second - was less giving rise to confusion, despite its possible use in both ways for an initiation to a pagan mystery. It was therefore this Latin word that Tertullian kept to translate the Greek word mysterion.

Though often equivalent to mysterium, sacramentum did not have the same etymological force to keep alive its relation to Scripture. This was to have serious consequences later on.

Contested by the Protestant Reformation (Luther maintained that a priest in a state of mortal sin could not validly administer the sacraments), the sacraments and their effects were again debated at the Council of Trent (16th century). This one confirmed the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church, namely that the sacraments were effective 'ex opere operato,' that is to say 'by their very action,' independently of the qualities or moral virtues of that who is his performer.

At the session of March 3, 1547, the fathers of the council defined (against Luther) that the sacraments confer the desired grace "ex opere operato" (canon 8) with respect to the divine commitment (canon 7): " -If any one says that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred through the act performed (ex opere operato), but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of grace; let him be anathema "(Council of Trent, Session VII, 'De sacramentis,' canon 8).

By this definition the council wished to sweep away the doubts that the faithful might have about the validity of a sacrament in the case of an unworthy or simulating minister. If the rite is performed correctly, God is committed to it and, as regards Himself ("ex parte Dei"), the sacrament is valid and complete. This does not prejudice the personal dispositions of the one who receives the sacrament.

The expression is repeated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in order to express the same doctrine (No. 1128): "This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments act ex opere operato (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not worked by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God (St. Thomas Aquinas). As soon as a sacrament is celebrated according to the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and of his Spirit acts in it and through it, irrespective of the personal sanctity of the minister. However, as we have seen it above, the results of the sacraments also depend on the personal dispositions of the one who receives them. This, however, leaves the problem entirely subsisting in the case of the baptism of children or new ones, as some Protestant denominations which admit only the baptism of adults (in fact everything comes from the idea of original sin dooming to hell whoever is not baptized).

THE 7 SACRAMENTS THEREFORE.

Editor's note. Primitive Christianity hardly distinguished between sacraments and sacramentals. The notion of seven sacraments is a borrowing from Latin scholasticism; Hence besides the distinction between "sacraments" and "sacramentals." The Oriental fathers were not interested in the number of sacraments, and did not trouble to count them. Some Christian denominations recognize only two sacraments: baptism and Holy Last Supper (or Eucharist or Communion). In the today Orthodox Church are also counted as sacraments: Chrismation, Penance, Ordination, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick; all other acts of the Church are considered sacramentals.

TO BE NOTED: NONE OF THE CURRENT CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS REMAIN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ORIGINAL SACRAMENT: EITHER IT DOES NOT EXIST, EITHER IT HAS CONSIDERABLY DEVELOPED.

THE (RADICAL) VIEWPOINT OF PELAGIUS ON BAPTISM (OF CHILDREN OR ADULTS).

Kai ego hama tois suntherois hepomai to Kelton nomo kai apophaino hos ouden aneu theon gignomenon anthropois es agathon apoteleuta. On the relationship or not with Arrian Amitabha and the druids see also our previous notebook, No 31...

Pelagianism is a doctrine developed from the second half of the 4th century by the Breton ascetic Pelagius, Caelestius, Julian of Eclanum and their disciples, characterized by the insistence on the free will of man.

Although the name and the doctrine of Pelagius occupy a great place in church history, there is nothing in his person but very insufficient information. The places and years of his birth and death are nowhere indicated in a certain manner. It is supposed that he was born about the year 370, and is said to have died in a small town of Palestine at the age of seventy. Augustine, Prosper, Orosius, Gennadius and Mercator agree to present him as a Briton. The indication is vague. Jerome adds: *Habet progeniem Scotiae gentis de Britannorum vicinia*. It was concluded that he was born in Ireland. The word Pelagius is, of course, the Greek translation of another word. Which? Scholars have proposed the word Morgan, Morigenos, of which the Greeks would have made Pelagios. It is even alleged that Pelagius had resided in Bangor (Wales). These last two conjectures are not based on any kind of documents. From the Greek form of the name under which he is known, and from various other indications, it may be inferred, with more probability, that before he settled at Rome, Pelagius went to the East, perhaps to Antioch, and that he underwent the influence of the theology taught there. It is certain that he was a monk, at least in the sense that he had designed and endeavored to realize a high ideal of ascetic perfection but it seems well that he doesn't belong to any monastery. He had not received the sacred orders; for Orosius and Pope Zozimus speak of him as a layman. With the exception of Jerome, all the adversaries of Pelagius bear witness to the purity of his manners, and to his piety. Augustine acknowledges that he was generally regarded as a holy man; Paulinus of Nola considered him a faithful servant of God. A letter that Pelagius wrote in 415 to a girl named Demetrias, who has committed herself to the monastic state, shows the stature of his moral conceptions.

The doctrine of Pelagius and Caelestius deals with the consequences of Adam's disobedience. To give an exact account of the evolution which it has produced or occasioned in the dogmas in this matter, it is necessary to indicate what were then the opinions of the theologians.

All acknowledged that Adam's sin had disastrous results for his descendants, in that all humans have become mortal, in that their instincts have acquired pernicious power, and in that they have been more exposed to the seductions of the demon. To these ideas the doctors of the Roman Church added the opinion put forward by Tertullian of a hereditary peccability, that is to say of a corruption produced by the fall of Adam and passed on, as an inheritance, to his descendants.

However, the Fathers of this Church were very far from thinking that this natural corruption had destroyed the freedom of the human being. On the contrary, they asserted expressly that man has the power to do good through his own strength. Hilary (In Psalmo 118) positively attributes to him the beginning of the good: *Is quidem in fide manendi a Deo munus, sed incipiendi a nobis origo est*. They were equally distant from the idea that the sin of Adam should be imputed as a fault to his descendants.

In his first writings, and especially in those he had written against the Manichaeans, Augustine himself had been completely in agreement with the other doctors of the Latin Church. He had admitted an original sin or weakness, which manifests in the ignorance or weakness of the human being and in his inclination for visible and earthly things, but by which his freedom is not at all affected. On the contrary, he had clearly affirmed (*De liberto arbitrio*, II, c.4) that man can, by his own strength, triumph over this obstacle and live as he ought to do, provided he will. *Recte vivere homo, cum vult, potest*. But before his controversy with Pelagius, he had already turned to a more rigorous opinion. In the struggle, it developed and reached a terrible rigidity.

The name and doctrine of original sin or weakness are therefore completely foreign to the doctors of the Greek Church. They agreed well in admitting the fatal effects of Adam's fall for his descendants, but they did not design them as a sickly state of the soul passed on by generation. According to them, the moral nature of man had not been metamorphosed by the fall; but one of the consequences of the fall had been to expose more this nature to the temptations of devils, through covetousness and passions. Concerning the passage of Psalm LI: 5. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Gregory of Nyssa (*De iis qui praemature abripiuntur*) declared that children need no purification, since they are not affected by any disease of the soul. Athanasius asserts that before Jesus there was a rather considerable number of saints who remained pure from all sin. He cites, in particular, Jeremiah and John the Baptist.

Thus all the doctors and fathers of the two Churches prior to Augustine, affirmed in the most positive way that the human will is fully free and capable of yielding or resisting the temptations of sin. Not only the Orientals, but even the Westerners, frequently return to this subject, with regard to which they also express themselves energetically, for all considered human freedom as the essential condition of morality.

The widespread opinion in the Western Church that all human beings have inherited from Adam an inclination to sin, which prevents them from coming to good, and that for this reason they can come to virtue only with the grace of God, appeared to Pelagius and Coelestius a source of ideas dangerous for morality. They believed to notice that human beings, whom it was promised that they would be brought to virtue by this grace, neglected the efforts necessary to reach it. Augustine relates that one day (about 405) Pelagius expressed a lively indignation, when he heard a bishop quote these words, from one of the prayers in the book of Confessions: "Da quod jubes et jube quod vis, give what you command, and command what you want". He felt that these words annihilated human freedom, and that they made him a doll in the hands of God. In order to react against such a doctrine, they opposed to him the propositions which seemed to them the most fitting to increase the feeling of human liberty, responsibility, and dignity. We do not know very well what these propositions were, but it is probable that they did not differ noticeably from those they later expressed. They were not troubled at Rome, either because their teaching had little resonance in it, or because they had been protected by the respect that the integrity of their lives inspired. In 309 they left Rome, threatened by the invasion of Alaric, and they passed into Sicily; then from there to Africa.

Augustine, who at the time led a fierce struggle against the Donatists, neither did nor wrote something against them. Pelagius left Africa to go to Palestine. In 411, Coelestius, who had remained at Carthage, asked for a priest's post. But Paulinus, a deacon of Milan, who was at that time in Africa, accused him of heresy for having professed the following six points:

- I. Adam was created mortal, even if he had not sinned, he would have died.
- II. Adam's sin did harm himself only, it did not harm the entire human race.
- III. Children are born into the same state Adam was born into.
- IV. The whole human race neither dies through Adam's sin nor is saved through Christ's resurrection.
- V. The law gives entrance to heaven as well as the gospel.
- VI. Even before Jesus some men lived without sin.

A council held at Carthage condemned these propositions, and excommunicated Coelestius, although he had admitted the necessity of the baptism of children, by means of a distinction between the kingdom of heaven, in which the baptized alone can be admitted, and Eternal life, that all children can get.

Augustine had not been present at the council which pronounced this condemnation; but in the same year, at the request of his friend Marcellinus, disturbed by some of the Pelagian assertions, he made sermons to refute them, and wrote his treatise *De peccatorum meritis et remissione ac de baptismo parvulorum*. He expresses himself in respectful terms about the character of Pelagius, perhaps because he still hoped to convert him.

Coelestius had appealed to the Bishop of Rome for the sentence which condemned him. But instead of waiting for the result of his appeal, he withdrew to Ephesus. In the East, where the doctrine which we have already described was professed, Pelagius had an excellent reception, especially from John, Bishop of Jerusalem. But Lazarus, Bishop of Aix, Heros, Bishop of Arles, who had been exiled to Palestine, and Orosius, that Augustine had charged with a mission to Jerome, still accused him of

heresy, blaming him mainly for having taught that it was possible for the human being to live without sin, and to observe, with his only strength, the commandments of God. The case was brought before a council assembled at Jerusalem (415). In it John decided to support Pelagius, and his adversaries could not get his condemnation. Lazarus and Heros persisted in continuing, in the same year, in the East. They noted against Pelagius twelve charges, which were brought before a synod held at Diospolis (today Lod in Israel), and presided over by Eulogius, bishop of Caesarea. The first five reproduced points on which Coelestius had been condemned at Carthage. Of the other, we shall relate only those which relate to free will and grace.

Pelagius declined all responsibility for the propositions of Coelestius, they pretended to impute to him, and he approved his condemnation; but on those that he maintained, as belonging to him personally, he was declared orthodox. This decision angered Augustine, who endeavored to demonstrate to the Eastern bishops (*De gestis Pelagii*) that they had been deceived. But he did not succeed in persuading them. Theodore of Mopsuestia, figurehead of the school of Antioch, replied..... The proceedings of this synod were reconstructed by Daniel R. Jennings, a researcher in patristic texts.

In the end Pelagius was acknowledged as being Orthodox in doctrine and in full communion with the church.

Since we are dealing here with theological doctrine rather than with the canonical procedure, we shall not relate the incidents of the prosecutions which resulted in the definitive condemnation of Pelagianism. On May 1, 418, a council of Carthage confirmed and extended the condemnations pronounced in that town and in Milevis 412 and 416. Before Augustine had ensured the support of the secular arm. At his request, Honorius had ordered the praetorian prefect, from the preceding 30th April, to seek and expel from Rome all the partisans of Pelagianism. Pope Zozimus, who for a long time had remained very hesitant, wrote a letter in which he declared that he was agreeing with the decisions of the African councils and the doctrine of Augustine on original sin, baptism and grace, and invited the Western bishops to condemn with him the Pelagian heresy. Eighteen Italian bishops were banished by the emperor for refusing to sign this document. The most celebrated is Julian, bishop of Eclanum, in Apulia, who continued the struggle against the dogma of Augustine, and succeeded in giving the Pelagian doctrine a cohesion which it had not had hitherto. He used powerful arguments against his opponents, to which Augustine endeavored to answer in his books *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*; *Contra Julianum libri VI* (421) and in his *Opus imperfectum*.

In the East Pelagianism had been compromised by the protection it had received from the school of Antioch, and by an appeal from Coelestius to Nestorius, although this appeal had not been favorably received. He was condemned at the same time as this bishop of Constantinople by the General Council of Ephesus (431). But as the sentence did not contain a dogmatic definition of the discussed points, the Orientals kept their doctrine.

Under the impulse of controversy, Augustine had been led to adopt positions directly opposed to those of the Pelagians, and to work out a doctrine which constitutes the definitive term of the evolutions of his thought. It seems to us that this doctrine may be thus summed up: Adam was created completely free, so that he could sin or not sin. But through his fall, human nature has been physically and morally corrupted. The consequences of this fall are the physical death, the corruption of instincts (*Concupiscentia*), and consequently the revolt of the flesh against the mind, the sweat dropping from the foreheads of the workers, the brambles and thorns produced by the earth, the pains of childbirth, in a word, all physical and moral evils.

Concupiscence causes the human being to lose the faculty of choosing the good, for love of God, that is to say, to do good truly. As a result of the loss of this faculty, he has lost the true liberty of his will; for there is nothing left to him but the freedom to act for sensual reasons, that is to say, to sin. This state of peccability was passed on by Adam to his descendants, by the way of generation, so that even children are already affected when they are born. Original sin is manifested in the fact that concupiscence dominates mankind so much that he can be directed only by it in his conduct: Augustine affirms, in many passages, that free will is abolished by the fall. It is true that the human is not deprived of it, to the extent of being irresistibly driven to acts determined by concupiscence, since he can choose between several different motivations; but all these motivations come from

concupiscence, and they are the only ones which work in him: in fact, he is completely unable to obey a nobler motive, and to do what is pleasing to God, only out of love for God. As his will is thus enclosed in a circle of impure considerations, he lacks the liberty which results from the true communion with God, and which consists in a complete submission to his will. In short, the external acts of the fallen human being depend well upon his free will; but not his motives. Now, as motives determine the merit of actions, all his actions are necessarily bad.

Not only the original sin defiles all human actions by the concupiscence; but, even before any action, the result is a guilt which extends over all the descendants of Adam. Through Adam, all mankind has lost the grace of God, and has been subjected to the control of Satan and to the eternal damnation; It has become a corrupt mass, a *perditionis massa*, so that the newborn infants themselves are in a state of damnation. To justify this assertion, Augustine used the erroneous translation of a text of St. Paul.

By comparing the earlier doctrine of the Christian Church with the opinions of the Pelagians and those of Augustine on the consequences of Adam's disobedience, it can be seen that the Pelagians deviated from this doctrine, by refusing almost completely to admit that this fall had fatal consequences for the descendants of Adam; even by denying for the most part of them that mortality was one of those consequences, and by teaching that the practice of good was as easy to the descendants of Adam as to Adam himself before his sin. While the early doctors of the Church generally admitted, not only that death was a consequence of Adam's sin, but that covetousness and evil inclinations had acquired greater power over mankind as a result of this sin, since then much more exposed to the seduction of the evil.

Augustine's system diverged even more from the ancient doctrine. For the idea of an original sin was admitted by the doctors of the West only, not by those of the East. Moreover, the opinion that with this original flaw was passed on a sin sufficient enough in itself, in order to make the human being liable to eternal damnation, had never been taught hitherto. What was not less new was the idea of

Augustine to deny the human person all freedom and to declare him really incapable of doing any kind of good before God. For until then the Orientals and Westerners had agreed on the affirmation of the freedom of the human being.

It has been attributed, not without some semblance of reason, the tendency of Augustine to the mark he had preserved of his former acquaintances with Manichaeism. Doubtless he had essentially moved away from the Manichaean system, inasmuch as he no longer imagined evil as a substance, or as the special creation of an evil being; but it seems to come to analogous results, by showing the earth and the human being in particular, dominated by evil, by teaching that sin exercises an invincible power over the human will, and that the human being must necessarily succumb to evil. A peculiarity which seems to attest Augustine's unconscious return to the Manichean doctrine is that in the time when he was fighting it he insisted resolutely on the value and power of free will, while in his later years in the time of the struggle against Pelagians, he spoke only of the divine grace, independent of all initial fact and of all resistance coming from the human being who is the object of it (Predestination).

THE VIEW POINT OF GREGOR DALLIARD

(Swiss editorial writer for the Sentinel of Nehemiah of the Reverend David Smithers)

ON THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN.

During the interview which was to be concluded by my excommunication, the baptism of children and adults was discussed and whether I wanted to be "again baptized." Bishop H. Schwery asked me: "Do you think that a true Christian should reject the baptism of children and approve the baptism of adults only?"

He Bishop then asked me the following question: "Do you know that such a step [to make yourself again baptized] calls into question your priesthood? What do you think of the sacraments?"

"....."

When we had taken up the subject of baptism during one of my studies of the Bible in Grachen, I had already realized for a long time that the baptism of children was performed against the will of Jesus and the teaching of the apostles. Nevertheless I stayed long without knowing what to do and I strove with all my heart to find a solution that could bridge or, better, create a compromise between the biblical teaching and the doctrine of the Church of Rome.

In the Catholic biblical groups of charismatic revival (CR), we used as a compromise, to renew or strengthen the "baptism" which was practiced one day on the ignorant children that we were, by reaffirming consciously this time this first "baptism" and by resolving to devote ourselves to Jesus Christ, during a private ceremony or in the presence of a group of other faithful. We really felt then had to be born again - and respect the will of God!

As a priest, I tried to incite the faithful who attended the office to devote themselves consciously to Jesus Christ. In certain sermons, I insisted on the meaning of baptism and its actual consequences in our lives. For a time I was careful to point out during the "baptisms" that, of course, we "were baptizing" the child in the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, by pouring each time a few drops of water on the forehead, but that those present should not say, "Amen." Indeed, the "Amen" of those present has the meaning to confirm what has just said and done the one who baptizes. I explained then that it was the newborn baby who had been baptized who was to say "Amen" in a conscious and personal way, when he would be 15 or 16 years old, for example. And that it was only after this taken consciously decision, with all the consequences of a life according to the Christian faith that this could have, that the "celebration of baptism" practiced on that day would become valid.

As it can easily be understood, some people did not agree with this idea and spontaneously asked me: "But is our child now truly, totally, completely, or wholly, baptized? We want our child to be baptized from A to Z, thoroughly and as it should be! "

Other people found this solution reasonable and said: "It's true, our child must be able to decide himself, later, what he wants to do in matters of religion. "

I later realized that the ritual of the baptism of children subjected them to unbelievable psychic and occult ties.

I understood that any human attempt to find a solution and a compromise to free oneself from this non-Christian custom of baptism of newborns failed because of the ideas and engraved in the minds of the people.

I realized even more that the baptism of newborn babies, as well as any justification for this practice and the compromises that accompanied it, were in contradiction with Jesus Christ and the teaching of the apostles. After an intensive study of the Bible, I realized that the baptism of children is not a baptism and that this is a deception having serious consequences. God is impressed in no way, for nothing that goes against his will and his Word impresses him. God accepts as little what men do on a defenseless and unprotected newborn child who is forced to undergo all that an institution imposes, under ending up in hell penalty...

The Church fixed the manner in which the sacraments work in the Middle Ages and no change could take place in this field. Any definition can no longer reduce the scope of this doctrinal statement. For a member of the Catholic Church, this declaration remains a dogma of faith necessary for salvation. The expression "Sacramenta operantur ex opere operato" mean that sacraments act by virtue of the sacramental function performed (or by the very fact that the action is performed). It is mere paganism, magic, trade, it is abominable in the eyes of God and therefore also morally reprehensible.

The Council of Trent was not ashamed to decree:

CANON I.-If any one says that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or that they are more, or less, than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema.

CANON II.-If any one says that these said sacraments of the New Law do not differ from the sacraments of the Old Law, save that the ceremonies are different, and different the outward rites; let him be anathema.

CANON III.-If any one says that these seven sacraments are in such wise equal, as that one is not in any way worthier than another; let him be anathema.

CANON IV.-If any one says that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification;-though all (the sacraments) are not indeed necessary for every individual; let him be anathema.

CANON V.-If any one says that these sacraments were instituted for the sake of nourishing faith alone; let him be anathema.

CANON VI.-If any one says that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify; or that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacle thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through faith, and certain marks of the Christian profession, whereby believers are distinguished among men from unbelievers; let him be anathema.

Now, therefore, we understand better why the Word of God alone is not enough for the Church of Rome. The popes of the Early Middle Ages or of the Middle Ages took up philosophical-pagan speculations (Neo-Platonism) and made them dogmas necessary for salvation in Christian doctrine. Now the Church teaches that the Pope is infallible in the field of faith and morals. Therefore these doctrines, which contradict themselves and contradict the Word of God, are to be dragged along! It is for this reason that more modern or progressive theologians make a very enormous effort to reinterpret these points of doctrine in order to adapt them to the thinking of our time and make them comprehensible. This is nevertheless strictly forbidden by the new canon law."Since the sacraments are the same for the whole Church and belong to the divine deposit, it is only for the supreme authority of the Church to approve or define the requirements for their validity." And the canon 841 of the new Code of Canon Law states: "Since the sacraments are the same for the whole Church and belong to the divine deposit, it is only for the supreme authority of the Church to approve or define the requirements for their validity."

Only the ecclesiastical authority is able to appreciate and determine how they are performed in a valid and effective way! Why not God? Because Jesus and the apostles do not know sacraments, not even two, three, seven or more. Nowhere did Jesus Christ have sacramental intentions which were to be specified later.

In 1439 the Council of Florence decided for Greeks and Armenians (yet, chronologically speaking the first state or official Christianity in the world): There are seven sacraments under the new law: that is to say, baptism, confirmation, the mass, penance, extreme unction, ordination, and matrimony [...]. But these our sacraments both contain grace and confer it upon all who receive them worthily. [...] To effect these sacraments three things are necessary: the things [or symbols], that is, the "material"; the words, that is, the "form"; and the person of the "minister" who administers the sacrament with the intention of carrying out what the Church effects through him. If any of these things is missing the sacrament is not accomplished."

Is it not here mere speculation? Neither Jesus nor the apostles mention anywhere in their teaching those "three things" which must all be realized so that salvation takes place - or, better still, so that is given the guarantee that we are now placed under the protection of God, or that something now begins to work in us through which we deserve heaven!

This is what the Church of Rome means by sacraments: this or that must be accomplished exactly in such and such a way by a specially appointed person for that purpose, while observing a particular ritual and this must be done by a third party, So that it produces its effect. That is necessary for salvation! In case of non-respect of one of the elements, the effect disappears because the sacrament is invalid. By this singular and magical doctrine, the Catholic Church plunges the faithful into anguish and makes them depend on her. With its pagan and Neo-Platonic philosophy, linked to titles,

dignities and functions, she gives This magical anguish as for the sacraments is much more deeply rooted than it is generally believed. If popular customs indeed have their place and justification in the life, it is certainly not the case of magic-religious customs. There is on one side Jesus Christ, who says: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, " (Matthew 28:20); and, on the other, rituals belonging to the mystery cults in paganism, from which Christians had distanced themselves from the beginning....

Editor's note. See John Toland and his Christianity not mysterious.

It is the Lord God alone who sees in our hearts. He cannot be manipulated by any religious ritual nor any particular man: it is impossible to make him enter our lives by magnetism or.....This magical practice is the poorest and most primitive response that the Church can offer our contemporaries in search of truth.

But canon 845 § 1 stipulates:

"Since the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and orders imprint a character, they cannot be repeated."

The Catholic Church, making baptism of children the gateway to salvation, devotes to it the first place, instead of giving priority to the faith in Jesus Christ combined with the necessary conversion of hearts and souls. A baptism without previous faith in Jesus Christ is none other than magic; it does not save anyone and is an insult to the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church has separated the concomitant acts of faith, repentance (or penance) and baptism into sacraments of baptism, penance, confirmation and orders.

Jesus and the apostles did not elaborate any doctrine of the sacraments on this point; they did not divide this phenomenon into sacraments. Nor do they leave room for further theological and philosophic-speculative development of what they teach

The Bible shows us that only adults were baptized by virtue of a very personal decision. In the Catholic Church, on the other hand, it is spoken to newborns as if they were adults.

When one thinks that in the Church of Rome, until now they are almost without exception newborns who have been and are baptized, one can only be perplexed by the arrogance and impudence of this institution, faced with the way it abuses the Word of God and, let us say it squarely, it publicly ridicules baptism. We are surprised to see that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the new canon law (1983) are continuing in this direction. Here is what Vatican II says:

" Whenever the Sacrament of Baptism is duly administered as Our Lord instituted it, and is received with the right dispositions, a person is truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life."

How can man speak of the "right dispositions" about a newborn? ...

The newborn child does not know what is happening, he cannot associate himself with prayer, nor can he pass judgment or make a decision - this practice is in total contradiction with the order of mission given by Jesus:

" Only WHOEVER BELIEVES -and is baptized- will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

To believe through proxy = to go to heaven by proxy?

But for the Church of Rome, the faith of parents and godparents serves as a guarantor for the baptism of the child.

What is this new birth or regeneration of which Jesus Christ speaks for the Church of Rome? For her, the new birth takes place by receiving baptism and by properly performing the ritual of baptism on the person who must (for the newborn) or wants (for the adult) to be baptized.

In this practice, the faith of the person being baptized is not asked, what is in any case not possible, since it is almost without exception newborns that receive baptism. According to Catholic doctrine, no one can be saved without having performed the rite of baptism according to the standards. The baptism thus accomplished is necessary for salvation. However, Jesus said very clearly to Nicodemus."No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the spirit" (John 3:5). Therefore, if the person does not hear and accept first, the Word of God, if he does not believe in Jesus, baptism has no meaning; that person cannot be saved.

But the new Code of Canon Law stipulates in canon 849: " Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception or at least by desire, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words."

This doctrine is absolutely false. Neither a baptism practiced on a person who cannot believe in Jesus Christ nor the observation of the ritual during the celebration of a baptism saves anyone. It is the personal faith in Jesus Christ that is to come first.

Given this magical design of the baptism taught by Rome, we can very well understand the Roman Catholics who are panic-stricken when they see that someone does not immediately make baptize one's little child. The new Code of Canon Law specifies indeed literally (canon 867):

§1. "Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it, they are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it."

§2. "An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay."

Where does this misconception come from?

When I was at the Faculty of Theology of the Einsiedeln Monastery, we learned in the course of patrology (study of the Fathers of the Church) in our textbook *Grundriss der Patrologie*, written by the theologians Altaner and Stuiber:...

According to this doctrine, it is the fulfillment of the ritual of baptism that breaks, that cuts this contact, this bond with the devil, and establishes the link, the communion with Jesus. Given this erroneous doctrine, it goes without saying that newborns must absolutely be baptized immediately after birth to be saved. The more the leaders of the Church have moved away from the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, the more this design of baptism has become established in practice. Like others before him, Bishop Ambrose of Milan († 397) defended in connection with various points of doctrine, and thus also concerning the practice of baptism, a heresy which he had drawn from Neo-Platonic thought and not from the Word of God.

According to the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), little children who died without having received the Roman baptism had neither the enjoyment of the full glory of God in heaven nor total damnation. They went to what was called "limbus puerorum", the limbo for children. Because of this impious doctrine and practice, an inexpressible pain has been inflicted by the Church, from the Middle Ages to today, on many fathers and mothers who have lost their children without being baptized. I know many people of a certain age who, marked by this pain, remain faithful to the Catholic system out of fear and bitterness, desiring nothing but death. It is better that the confessionals cannot reveal everything they hear about it, because such heresies cause people to commit all kinds of sins.

In the past, children who died in their mother's womb were even baptized by an injection of holy water. The Irish Culdee monks wiser contented themselves to make the mother drink of it.

Even today, the Roman institution remains attached to its magical conception of baptism. The new code of canon law in several canons speaks about emergency baptism.

"Baptism is administered according to the order prescribed in the approved liturgical books, except in case of urgent necessity when only those things required for the validity of the sacrament must be observed"(canon 850).

"An infant of Catholic parents or even of non-Catholic parents is baptized licitly in danger of death even against the will of the parents» (canon 868 § 2).

"An abandoned infant or a foundling is to be baptized unless after diligent investigation the baptism of the infant is established" (canon 870).

"If aborted fetuses are alive, they are to be baptized insofar as possible "(can 871).

But the fulfillment of baptism does not save, it is not the gateways of the sacraments, nor does it pose an indelible character through which we are configured to Christ.

The baptism of children is rather in reality the distinctive mark of belonging and affiliation to the Pope's Church.

The adults of the time of Jesus felt and recognized the healing or liberating power and blessing that were released through a contact with Jesus; therefore they brought him their children. We read in Mark 10: 13-16: "3 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them."

Jesus promised that he would be present at all times in his Church. Sharing the same intention as the parents of the time of Jesus, some parents bring their newborn or their little child to the Church today, to present them to Jesus so that he may bless them.

As soon as Jesus came into contact with the children, he fulfilled, as the Son of God, all that is necessary for the children and all that they need. If one of these children dies, he does not go to the "limbus puerorum" or elsewhere, even if he has not received the Catholic baptism - he goes to heaven, "for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these Literally: "to those who resemble them."

When we consider the relations Jesus had with children and adults, it is striking that Jesus does not baptize the children and that he gives no order to baptize these children immediately so that they may be saved . Nor does he indicate that if they were not baptized immediately and that they would die they could not be saved . These ideas are totally foreign to Jesus and the apostles.

If the baptism of children was necessary for salvation, as the Church of Rome taught since the end of the second century, but especially since the fourth century, Jesus would have given the absolute order to baptize the children immediately after their birth, or at least he would have told the disciples: later, you too will have to baptize the children; otherwise they will not go to heaven - otherwise they will go, because of the weight of their guilt, to a place my father calls "limbus puerorum". How could Jesus and the apostles not mention an act so necessary to salvation?

The history of the early Christians (the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles) shows that it was self-evident that only adults who believed and repented, and who had converted, were baptized and began a new life with God, that is to say, became Christians.....

Canon 853 stipulates: "Apart from a case of necessity, the water to be used in conferring baptism must be blessed according to the prescripts of the liturgical books."

Nowhere in the Scripture Jesus or the apostles teach that the water used for the administration of baptism is to be, except in case of necessity, consecrated or blessed by a representative of the Church. Many are the Roman Catholics who expect special help and protection from this sacred water ("holy water"). Through this teaching, the Vatican once again makes its members dependent on one of its magical concepts and, through occult practices, turns them away from Jesus.

One of the oldest extra-biblical testimonies, the Didache (or Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles), written about the year 100, gives us clarification of the manner in which baptism was practiced and who was entitled to baptize in the early Christianity.

"Concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before³.

Klaus Wengst thinks that the initiation to the doctrine of the two paths that is previous to baptism as well as fasting presupposes that only the baptism of persons who have become adults is envisaged. The possibility of a baptism of newborns and children is not mentioned and this silence weighs heavily in an ecclesiastical ordinance which goes so far as to decide on the priorities in terms of water use. The fulfillment of baptism is not related to particular persons; it can obviously be performed by any Christian. Indeed, the preliminary invitation 'Baptize this way' is well addressed to everyone. "

In canon 857 § 1, the Vatican specifies: "Apart from a case of necessity, the proper place of baptism is a church or oratory ."

On this point too, the Church has invented a doctrine, which is totally foreign to the Bible. The apostle Philip did not baptize the high official and administrator of the treasure of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, in a special place prepared by Christians, endowed with specific equipment and isolated from the world. He baptizes him on the edge of the "highway," in the open air, before the eyes of people walking or in a chariot!

" As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized? And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away"(Acts 8:36-39).

To justify her practice of baptism of children, the Church of Rome cannot rely on Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is obliged to invoke later texts. The first allusion to the baptism of little children is found in a work by Tertullian in 197 which condemns this newly introduced custom, as well as that of baptizing the dead.

In the writings known as those of the "Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite," whose authenticity was denied by Erasmus and the Reformers, and which is now also denied by Catholic theologians, it is a question of the baptism of children and of the role of godfather and godmother. But it is now established that these writings date back only to the end of the fifth century.

As we shall see later, his author cannot rely on the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles to justify the baptism of children, but only on what some "divine initiators" have received from the ancient tradition and on what his august masters thought fit to..... ..

These writings can only date from the end of the fifth century, because their author drew not only from Plotinus's writings (+ 270), but also copied word for word the Neo-Platonic Proclus (+ 485). It was from the Latin translation of Scotus Eriugena (c. 850) that the Middle Ages drew its knowledge of Pseudo-Dionysius, whose ideas exercised the greatest influence on the philosophical and theological thought of the great masters of scholasticism. Therefore also on Thomas Aquinas and on many other theologians. These, in turn, made come from the Holy Scriptures a series of religious doctrines, which still today marks Catholic theology, and have the force of law for all the members of the Church of Rome.

But for true Christians, the baptism of children will forever remain a magical and impious practice, derived from non-biblical ideas or traditions.

THE VIEW POINT OF MAX DASHU

(historian of religions)

ON THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN.

As we had the opportunity to see with Gregor Dalliard, the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus ...

-Was baptized in the Jordan by his cousin John at the ford of Bethabara (or Aenon).

-Had never baptized anyone.

Baptism therefore is not initially a Christian practice but a practice spread by the former followers of John the Baptist (who were perhaps the same) on which the early Christians did not always agree (Acts 19. Arriving in the region of Ephesus St. Paul reproaches his rival, the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia -Apollon- for not baptizing in the name of the Holy Spirit.

There is no need here to look at what baptism was in the eyes of John and Apollon (a symbol of purification), but on what the bad pagans converted by a bad Jew (the first Christians converted by Paul) have made of it, that is to say, incontestably a magic formula EX OPERE OPERATO ET NON EX OPERE OPERANTIS IN THE CASE OF NEWBORNS*.

The Christian theologians all claim (with their hand on their heart) that such a ritual (usually decided by adults to prevent the child from dying without having been cleansed of all original sin) has nothing to do with magic. But how a newborn of a few months could WANT to be baptized. It is so much a magic operation that in former times there existed churches specialized in this kind of baptisms, called respite sanctuaries, often located on former places of pagan worship besides as Our Lady of Life in Savoy.

Here is what says to us the historian of religions of the University of Harvard Max Dashu from whom we borrow the following 2012 information.

A very amazing aspect of the ancient sanctuary of Our Lady of Life was that it was as a last hope for the victims of a harmful religious dogma. It became a “respite sanctuary.”

Respite from what? –from the church doctrine of damnation of those who died without being baptized. Notre Dame de la Vie was said to miraculously revive stillborn babies, or newborns who died before a priest could baptize them. Parents were bringing their dead infants for her intervention from at least the 1600s, as we know from records of hearings in 1664 and 1669. Our Lady of Life thus joined to a larger body — mostly local forms of the Virgin Mary — of female divinities who embodied compassion, mercy, and grace.

Church’s doctrine indeed forbade the baptism of dead children, and held that they would go to hell .Around the end of the Middle Ages, the idea of limbo was invented to soften a little the harshness of a dogma that caused so much suffering. Mothers already grieving their infant’s death could not stand the thought that it was doomed to be forever damned. Limbo meant the “edge” (of hell), and the idea was that the babies would remain there, outside the torments of the damned, along with other good souls unsaved by baptism. But limbo has never enjoyed the status of church teaching. In any case, never being baptized meant the baby would never enjoy the beatitude of heaven, but would spend eternity as an outsider. Limbo or no limbo, the clergy would not allow stillborns to be baptized or buried in consecrated ground.

The common people refused to accept these cruel ideas. They sought divine intervention from another source, from Notre Dame de la Vie, or from the Blessed Virgin at other chapels that developed a reputation as respite sanctuaries. Parents would carry the dead child in all haste to the nearest shrine, lay it at the altar of the Virgin, light candles and ardently pray for its revival while a priest performed a rite.

All this depended indeed on the good will of priests, because they had a total monopoly on baptism. Sometimes the vigil for revival would go on for days. Any sign of movement, breath, change of color, or even passing gas or fluid—all of which are common biological occurrences after death—was taken as a miraculous resuscitation or “recovery.” The priest would quickly baptize the child, and in virtually all cases, the child would die “again.” It would then either be buried in a special cemetery at the respite sanctuary, or be taken home for burial in the village.

The “respite” baptisms gave peace of mind to parents, and allowed children to be buried in consecrated ground. At St-Martin de Belleville, the record from 1664 says that an uncle brought a dead infant to Notre Dame de la Vie. The curé testified that the baby was seen to open its mouth and move its tongue around, and that its closed fist opened, extending its fingers. This allowed the vicar to baptize the baby, which lived several more hours. Then it was buried in a plot used for foreigners. This indicates that the clergy involved still regarded the case as somewhat iffy. The priest performing the baptism would pronounce words to the effect of, “If you are alive, I baptize you.” The hierarchy was much more dubious about such cases, and put pressure from above to quash this practice.

The earliest evidence of respite baptisms comes from the late 13th century. Church condemnations of these grassroots miracles appear to begin in 1452 with the synod of Langres. Others followed, with denunciations by bishops at Sens (1524), Lyons (1577), Besançon (1592 et 1656), and Toul (1658). But the hierarchy was obliged to repeat its prohibitions over and over as the respite ceremonies spread. They were fighting a cultural movement fueled by love and compassion, that defied their directives.

People were flocking to respite sanctuaries from Belgium all the way down through eastern France and over into western Germany, Switzerland, Austria and north Italy. Most of these shrines of compassion were chapels of the Virgin Mary. Hundreds of cases are on record just for the 1500s and 1600s, just for the most popular chapels for these baptisms, such as Faverney, Avioth, and others in eastern France. By 1729 Pope Benedict XIV was forced to rule on the issue, in response to a huge upsurge of respite ceremonies in Bavaria and Schwabia. He condemned the rites and backed up the Inquisition’s position that the “signs of life,” unless they were cries or moans, were not enough to allow baptism, no matter how many witnesses.

Emile Thevenot points to two Burgundian respite sanctuaries that sprang up in places where there were traces of a well defined (?) custom around a spring cult presided over by a mother goddess.” That is exactly what had happened at St-Martin de Belleville. As we’ve seen, this sanctuary openly retained the original Goddess who predates even the Roman conquest and was centered around a healing fountain. The refuge its Lady offered to dead newborns connects to widespread folk traditions of pagan goddesses who were seen as welcoming and protecting unbaptized babies rejected by the Church. People linked these “pagan babies” — in Sicily they were actually called paganeddu, in Germany heiden, “heathens” — to the old goddesses, like Zlata Baba in Slovenia, or to faery women, like the Danish huldre. In the German Orlagau, Perchta keeps little ones who died before baptism.

She is ferried across the river with them, recalling Greek and Scandinavian myths of crossing the underworld river of death. Perchta is called queen of the heimchen (“crickets,” an affectionate term for the dead babies). One story says that she once lived in the fertile Saale valley. She fructified the land by plowing it underground, while her heimchen watered the fields. At last the peasants fell out with her, and she determined to quit the country. So Perchta departed.

Of course, these pagan goddesses gave way to the Catholicized Goddess over time. But popular Marian devotion looked very different than the theologian’s concept of the Virgin as an intercessor. She acted much more like an alternative savior who repudiated the notion that infants who died in the womb or soon after birth were doomed, or at least outcasts. She embodied the compassion of the ancient goddess whose successor she was” (Max Dashu).

*The practice of baptizing children in this way has not yet disappeared and has even spread to the New World, since the Notre Dame de Montréal website clearly states that “in case of necessity (for example, in the case of a newborn infant in danger of death, and at its mother’s request) anyone, even a non-baptized person can baptize, provided that they use the baptismal formula of the Church. Let us not forget that baptism in itself is an exorcism (a small exorcism) indispensable to the Christian life. Simplified by the Second Vatican Council, the three exorcisms of baptism are still practiced among Orthodox Christians.

RITUAL OF ORTHODOX *BAPTISM.

Baptism is given by immersion to little children from their 8th day, even before in case of mortal peril **. This primordial sacrament is normally administered by a bishop or a priest, but it can also be administered by any Christian in case of mortal peril; In this case, if the baptism was done according to the standards, that is to say by triple immersion (or general sprinkling in case of impossibility - I saw a baptism in an incubator closed with the help of a syringe ...) and in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, it is not repeated but the baptized must then be confirmed according to the standards.

The ceremony of baptism follows that described in the Treatise on the Holy Spirit by St. Basil of Caesarea (329-379). It includes several very symbolic rites.

-Preliminary prayer: prayer of the first day, marking the birth to the world of the new human being, and prayer of the 8th day in which the newborn receives a Christian name. There is also the prayer of purification of the mother traditionally pronounced on the 40th day after birth; if the baptism takes place before the 40th day, as was customary, the mother does not attend or remains at a distance.

-Rite of the catechumenate with the three exorcisms by the priest, the triple renunciation to by the godparents in the name of the baptized turned towards the west and the reading of the Credo signifying the conversion of the catechumen.

Baptism properly so-called.

- Sanctification of the waters with the same prayer of St Sophronius as for Theophany (baptism of Christ, January 6) pointing out that we also become Son of God through baptism.

-Anointing of the catechumen to strengthen his struggle against evil; it is done with blessed oil and should not be confused with chrismation (see below).

-Triple immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, of the naked baptized, symbolizing the participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and the purification.

-Clarity tunic and cross of baptism: "You have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians, 3:27).

-Chrismation: it is an integral part of the service of orthodox baptism and consists of anointing the baptized with a sign of the cross on his forehead, eyes, nostrils, lips, ears, chest, hands and feet, with the Holy Chrism (or myron) saying, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

-Triple procession around the baptismal font, symbolizing eternity, followed by the readings of the Apostle (Romans 6: 3-11) and the Gospel (Matthew 28,16-20).

What if the child refuses?

An important problem in Russia with regard to the place given to it in Orthodox blogs is the question of how to behave if the parents decide to baptize a child big enough, three, four or even five years and that this one refuses, and this squarely before the baptismal font. Should the priest baptize him by force? Most priests answer that this is out of the question, even if each case should be considered individually. A particularly detailed answer is given by the father deacon Andrew Kuraev he explains that everything comes from the family. If the child had never set foot in church before, it is not surprising that baptism worries him but it shows above all that the family is probably not practicing and baptism is for it a social formality ... in this case the priest must not baptize.

Catholic baptism presents a very simplified version of Orthodox baptism. The essential differences are the triple sprinkling (a few drops of water symbolically poured over the forehead of the baptized) instead of immersion, the Credo and replaced by the Our Father and above all the confirmation is postponed for several years, what makes the communion of little children impossible.

Among Protestants: Baptism is considered one of the two sacraments recognized by the main branches of Protestantism (the other being the Last Supper-Communion), but children are baptized later than in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The Lutherans and the reformist do not call into question Catholic or Orthodox baptisms.

Baptists and Pentecostals like Gregor Dalliard recognize only the baptism of adults. Therefore they baptize again in adulthood those who were baptized as children in other Christian denominations.

* Like most Christian denominations, orthodoxy considers itself to be a continuation in direct line of the early Christian Church, which suffered several schisms, notably in 431 (Council of Ephesus), 451 (Council of Chalcedon) and 1054 Great Schism), whose responsibilities remain a subject of dissension between historians who are culturally influenced by the sources of one or the other church.

** Peter DeLaCrau does not respect priests who abuse human credulity but has always respected the faith of the simple people and the parents mad with grief at the idea of knowing their child to be burned in hell for eternity.

THE CONFIRMATION.

Confirmation (from the Latin *confirmatio*, action to consolidate, to support, to strengthen, to encourage, to affirm) is a sacrament of the Christian initiation in the Catholic Church and in the Orthodox Church (then rather called *chrismation*). Protestant confirmation is practiced in some Reformist Churches, but it does not have the status of sacrament *ex opere operato* as in Catholicism. 1).

It consists in anointing a person baptized with holy oil so that he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Whereas through baptism the baptized dies and resurrects with Christ, the confirmed is filled with the Holy Spirit as were the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. As such, the ceremony confirms the baptized belonging to the Church as communion. Baptism and confirmation are intimately linked: confirmation is, in a sense, the achievement of baptism.

Nevertheless, during the first centuries, baptism and confirmation were only one celebration during the Easter vigil. Over time, Christianity, which was initially an urban phenomenon, gradually spread in the countryside. Consequently, the bishops could no longer celebrate all the Easter Masses nor baptize all the catechumens who had become too numerous and were in too much distant places. Moreover, high infant mortality prompted people to baptize their children early and at any time of the year. Then was asked an essential question for the sacrament of baptism: was it necessary to continue to baptize by giving both baptismal anointments at the same time and to renounce the link with the bishop who traditionally did the second anointing? Or was it necessary that the bishop continues to give the second anointing and that the single sacrament becomes two (complementary) sacraments? The baptism administered by a simple priest and the confirmation by a bishop?

The Orthodox Church has favored the unity of the sacrament of baptism as the only sacrament of Christian initiation with the Eucharist. Unlike the Western Churches (that is, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church), where confirmation is reserved for those who have reached the "age of reason," *chrismation* in the Church Orthodox is therefore normally administered to children immediately after baptism.

Chrismation consists in anointing the new Christian with the Holy Chrism, which is a holy oil (in Greek language called *myron*). The *myron* is a mixture of forty essential oils and olive oil consecrated by the bishop. The Christian is anointed with the oil on his forehead, his eyes, his nostrils, his lips, his ears, his chest, his hands and his feet. Each time, the priest administering the sacrament says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit ."

The sacrament of *chrismation* is an extension of the Pentecost miracle when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. It is through *chrismation* that a person becomes a member of the people of God. The Orthodox Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia explains:

"Through *chrismation*, every member of the Church becomes a prophet, and receives a share of the royal priesthood of Christ."

Although it is normally administered together with baptism, in some cases *chrismation* alone can be given in order to receive new converts into orthodoxy. Although practices on this subject vary, in general (especially in North America), if a new convert comes to orthodoxy from another Christian denomination practicing the baptism by immersion according to the Trinitarian formula ("in the name of the Father , Of the Son and of the Holy Spirit "), he is received into the Orthodox Church through the sacrament of *chrismation*, after which he will receive the Holy Eucharist. If, however, the convert comes from a Christian denomination which baptizes in the name of Jesus only (as in some Pentecostal churches) or from one which does not practice baptism at all (like the Quakers), baptism is necessary before *chrismation*.

The Catholic Church has chosen the second solution (separation in time and space of the two baptismal anointments) , while the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches are remained faithful to the old tradition. In favor of the link with the bishop, the two baptismal anointments are therefore given in the Catholic Church at two different times: one at the baptism by the priest, the other often several

years later, during the confirmation by the bishop. For the Catholic Church, it is therefore baptism, confirmation and Eucharist which constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation.

The sacrament of confirmation is usually given by the bishop or, if this is not possible, by a priest delegated by the bishop. After having laid his hands upon the confirmands (those who will receive confirmation), the bishop (or the priest) anoints them with the Holy Chrism. He speaks the words: "Be marked with the Holy Spirit, the gift of God."

As for baptism, a godfather or godmother accompanies as far as possible the one who receives the confirmation. It is not obligatory that it is the same person as for the baptism.

Within the churches from the Reformation, confirmation is not a sacrament, but only the ceremony that concludes the religious education of catechumens, usually some adolescents.

It is rather close to the profession of faith celebrated among the Catholics but is therefore not prone to the set of problems of the *ex opere operato*.

1) *Ex opere operato* is a Latin phrase whose literal translation is "...by the work worked." Initially used in the field of Christian sacramental theology, it emphasizes that the spiritual efficacy of the sacrament results from its very action, whatever the merits or personal sanctity of the priest or bishop who performs it. The particular divine grace given by a sacrament, and especially the presence of the Holy Spirit, does not depend on the attitude of those who perform them. Thus by the sacrament of confirmation - if it is administered in the way prescribed by the Church- the Holy Spirit is granted to the confirmed regardless of the attitude of the confirming bishop and that of the Christian who receives the sacrament.

OTHER JUST AS MAGICAL OPERATION OF CHRISTIANITY: THE ORDINATION.

The priestly ordination (from Latin *ordinatio*, integration into an *ordo*, that is to say a constituent body) is, among Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans, the liturgical act which bestows the sacrament of the Christian priesthood, called sacrament of orders. The one who bestows this sacrament - a bishop - is the "ordinator" or the "consecrator," the one who receives it is the "ordinand."

The belief that man cannot directly access the divinity, but that he needs a priest is a widely spread belief. See below, for example, the definition of the priest in the forum of the role-play Equestria adventure.

"Faith and divine miracles cause vocations. Priests, those beings called to serve powers which are beyond the understanding of most mortals, preach their wonders and satisfy the spiritual needs of their people. They are not, however, mere sermon makers, but really divine messengers who fulfill the will of the gods by the strength of their arms and through divine magic. These priests are devoted to the doctrines of the religions and philosophies which inspire them and strive to make their faith be known and to increase its influence. Although they have similar powers, there are as many differences between the priests as among the deities they serve, some offer care and forgiveness, others justice, law and freedom, and others corrupt and cause conflicts. The priests act in many ways, but all who follow this path are walking alongside the most powerful allies: they are the armed wings of the gods themselves. "

Editor's note. This definition is as good as any. For instance. The priest is to be differentiated from the sorcerer and the prophet.

The sorcerer deals with impersonal powers, while the priest is the servant of one or more gods. Moreover, the priest is in regular, institutionalized, relationship with the deity, as opposed to the prophet who has an episodic and spontaneous relationship with the deity, hence the tension between the priestly function and the prophetic function in some religions.

The priest is the representative of the deity. He hands over the divine will through the interpretation of dreams, the manticism, the oracles, and the interpretation of sacred texts. He distributes divine grace through the sacraments. He recites the sacred formulas revealed by the deity. He heals the evils of body and soul.

At the same time, the priest represents men in front of God, hands over their sacrifices, their offerings, their prayers.

There were priestesses in the Germanic religion, in Egypt, in the Sumerian religion, especially in the worships of fertility. There are priestesses in certain Hindu cults, especially the worship of Kali, where worship is addressed to the feminine aspect of God.

The wife of the prophet Hosea was a sacred prostitute of the Canaanite worships of fecundity (cf. Hosea 1: 2, 4: 13-14). There were sacred prostitutes in Mesopotamia (Ishtar or Astarte worship) and India. They represented the mother goddess or the goddess of fertility.

In the religion of ancient Rome, the priest (Latin *sacerdos*, from *sacer*, sacred) is an official person in charge of the supervision and control of all that concerns the gods, of any object or any being which belonged to them, of every act which was aimed at them, of any phenomenon considered as a particular sign of their will.

How does one become a priest? By heredity: the priesthood is handed over in certain families, tribes, castes (in India, in ancient Iran, in ancient Israel ...) By vocation of personal type: in the present Christianity and often at the end of the priestly consecration, consisting of a mystical transmission by laying on of hands.

Definition of the priest in the Christian religion.

Christian, who, by the laying on of hands at the time of ordination by the bishop, receives the mission of making Christ present among men, celebrating the Eucharist, forgiving sins, instructing and guiding the people who is entrusted to him.

Definition of the ordination of priests in the Christian religion.

Priestly ordination is the celebration in which the priest receives from the bishop the sacrament known as "sacrament of orders." Through ordination, the new priest receives the sacerdotal nature which is an indelible mark as the baptism. It also enters the "presbyterium" which is the community of priests of a diocese united to their bishop.

For ancient Christianity, as for the Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican churches of today, the presbyterate is, with the episcopate and the diaconate, one of the three ministries bestowed by a sacramental ordination to exercise an original responsibility with regard to the word of God, the liturgical celebration and, especially, the construction of the Church.

The priesthood, whether Christian or Pagan, can be defined by taking into account two main characteristics: the representation (of the deity and of the community) and the mediation between the deity and the community. This mediation is both ritual (through the presentation of sacrifices), magic (through the conjuration of spell and the guarantee of benefits) and prophetic (through divination). The priesthood carries out a religious meditation that makes human society able to enter into a relationship with the forces that overstep or dominate it.

To define the Christian priesthood, it is necessary to refer to Jesus Christ, and to him alone. He is the only priest of the Christian faith, even though there are many ministers of this single priesthood from the earliest days of the Church to this day.

Editor's note. In other words, Christian priests are priests only by proxy, they are not priests in themselves! An astonishing result due to the artificiality of Christianity which is not Judaism, but wants to be more Jewish than the Jews themselves (doctrine of substitution or Verus Israel) since the defeat of Marcion.

To establish the history of something or someone is always undressing it, stripping it naked. The king is always naked after a few lines of OBJECTIVE history. And history is often cruel in this case.

The history of religions shows that this distribution of roles always raises problems: collusion or conflict, various tensions between royalty and clergy, a fluctuating dividing line between magical processes and religious processes, divergences on the status and role of the priest who may take one of the following attributes or gather them all in his person: a worship functionary, a technician of the ritual (especially the sacrificial rite), president or delegate of the community, servant and witness of transcendent forces, mediator of graces, inspired, thaumaturgus, prophet, doctor.

Originally, priestly function and royal function were confused. This is why in many primitive ("without writing") civilizations, it is difficult to distinguish the king from the priest. Thus the Peruvian Incas combined the two functions, so did the Sumerian-Babylonian kings (the Sumerian kings were high priests, also Melchizedek (Genesis 14: 18). The emperor of China as the son of Heaven also exercised priestly functions. Today still the Emperor of Japan is a high priest of the Shinto religion.

In ancient Israel there was an anointing ceremony of the priests who were also chosen from the same tribe, that of Levi. But in later Judaism they will be no longer so. The ordination of the rabbis will be done by laying on of hands, a rite which will pass into Christianity for the ordination of priests.

Sacrament of Orders. Ritual act *ex opere operato* performed by a priest.

Priesthood. In the Catholic and Orthodox confessions, the state of those who received the sacrament of orders, who have the power to say mass and administer the sacraments.

It is the story of the ouroboros or snake eating its own tail, semantically speaking a tautology.

There is no debate on the fact that there is a universal priesthood, common to all Christians. This priesthood consists in making the gospel known to human beings and in praying God for the world. All believers must fulfill this mission and feel responsible. On this point, Catholicism and Reformist agree.

The divergence concerns the ministerial priesthood which, according to Catholicism, is added to the common priesthood.

1. This notion of ministerial priesthood indeed admits an intermediary (separates, say some people) between God and the faithful. The priestly function has two sides, one directed towards God, the other facing the faithful. On the one hand, in the name of the Christian people, the priest offers the Eucharistic sacrifice to God; by doing so in a way he gives the faithful to God. On the other side, by consecrating and distributing the host, the priest carries God and gives him to the faithful. He is therefore like the Christ, who, in the traditional doctrine, represents God before humans and represents humans before God. Numerous Catholic texts underline the Christ-like nature of the priest, that the Reformists categorically reject. For them there is only one mediator, Jesus Christ. They reproach Catholicism with confusing servants with the master, by conferring on the priest functions which belong only to Jesus.

2. The second criticism concerns the obligatory nature of priestly mediation. Catholicism judges the priest necessary. Without him, the relations between God and the believer remain incomplete, insufficient, imperfect. In the eyes of the reformist, this compulsory mediation harms both divine sovereignty and human freedom. The divine sovereignty, for it forgets or denies that God acts and manifests himself where he wants, when he wants, that he is tied to no institution. The human freedom, because the faithful does not have direct access to God; he depends on a clergy.

3. The priestly function, as understood by Catholicism, implies the celebration of a sacrifice, that of the Mass offered to God. For the Reformation, the ministry has the function of announcing the gospel, preaching it and teaching it. He has no sacrificial dimension or aspect. In other words, he does not offer something to God; He gives Him no gift. He proclaims what God offers and gives to human beings. In their relations with God, the faithful receive all and bring nothing, or at least bring nothing but their praise, when they thank God and bless him for his benefits. The idea of sacrifice involves a "work," and denies the sola gratia.

Editor's note. What, in our humble opinion of barbarian druid of the West IS NOT BETTER!

4. The fourth criticism concerns the setting aside of the clergy, its separation from the laity. By his ordination, the priest comes out of the flock. He is no longer like everyone else. It has a sacred nature that sets him apart and distinguishes him from other believers. The distinction is marked, among other things, by celibacy, without this mark being fundamental or necessary. Theologically, nothing prevents the admission of married priests. Celibacy, which is spread and practiced in general way (with a few exceptions) only from the tenth and eleventh centuries, is due to circumstances, to the background, to the historical situation.

More profoundly, the Christian priest is distinguished by two elements:

A. Firstly, he alone has the power to celebrate the Eucharist and to effect the transubstantiation of species. For Reformation, at least in principle, any believer can perform all the acts of worship and fulfill all ecclesiastical functions.

B / A second element distinguishes the priest: he remains priest whatever happens. His ordination prints an indelible mark on his person. The liturgy of ordination emphasizes that the one who receives it becomes a priest for eternity. Liber Psalmorum 109,4: tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech. The priesthood of Melchizedek has no time limitation: he is a priest for eternity, while the function of the Jewish priests ceased with their death.

Editor's note. Let us remark in passing that this Melchizedek in question was not a son of Abraham but a pagan priest-king of Jerusalem of Jebusean nationality and whose god was called El Elyon (for more details see the god El in Ugaritic mythology. His consort was called Asherat). Melchizedek therefore was not a member of the people of Israel, but it was well to this priest of the god ruling over the Ugaritic pantheon that Abraham handed over the tithe of all his possessions. The anachronism of the thing has made that some specialists doubt the historicity of the character. He comes to meet Abraham a little as a heavenly personage (this is the meaning of most rabbinical writings, but also of the texts that were found in the caves of Qumran).

3. The three interpretations of the universal priesthood.

After the criticism of the particular priesthood, let us now see the meaning of the universal priesthood. Three different interpretations have been given.

1. For some, this doctrine means purely and simply that there is no longer a priesthood. The priesthood in fact implies a distinction between the priests and the faithful. If we abolish it, at the same time, the notion of clergy is eliminated. All Christians are precisely on the same level, even if some practitioners perform special functions for practical reasons. We are all, including pastors, lay people.

2. For others the doctrine of the universal priesthood does not mean "we are all lay persons, including pastors." It proclaims, on the contrary: "we are all priests, including the lay persons." Far from suppressing the priesthood, it extends it to all the faithful. It does not define a small group of clergymen, it characterizes all Christians. Each one of us, through his baptism, becomes a priest not only for himself, but for all others, insofar as he must make them know Jesus Christ and to witness to them of the gospel. In this perspective, the doctrine of the universal priesthood also empowers every believer to perform all acts of worship (including the celebration of the sacraments) and to fulfill all ecclesiastical functions. There is no domain reserved for ministers. Orthodox and Catholic reproach often Reformists for accepting that non-ordained lay people preside over the Lord's Supper; they see it as one of the most serious points of disagreement between the various Churches.

Editor's note. All this strangely resembles the idea of the northern men about priesthood. Among the Vikings, for example, it is clear that the gods had much less power than the druids in Ireland. The way in which Iceland officially converted to Christianity in the year 1000 (kristnitaka) clearly shows that it was the head of the family who then played the role of a priest most of the time.

The decision of the Althing logumad, the godi named Thorgeir Thorkellson, can be summed up as follows:

- In their relations with foreign powers, or in external affairs, the Icelanders are Christians.
- At home the Icelanders do what they want (their religious practices are privacy)
- The consumption of horse meat, therefore his sacrifice, remain authorized.

Editor's note. The Christians did not keep their promise and the consumption of horse meat was soon forbidden.

3. Certain currents, which are within the sphere of the radical Reformation, thought that the notion of universal priesthood only implied the illegitimacy of any form of ministry. Some groups, such as the Mennonites and Darbyists, wanted and set up communities without pastors.

Lutherans and Reformists strongly reacted against this view. As early as 1520, in the Tract on Christian Freedom, Luther emphasized that he did not intend to abolish ministries: "For though it is true that we are all equally priests, yet we cannot, nor, if we could, ought we all to minister and teach publicly."

The universal priesthood in no way entails ministerial unity. Specialized ministers are not necessary for fundamental theological reasons, because they alone would be qualified to perform certain functions. They are, however, useful for practical reasons. Not everyone has the knowledge and training to properly explain the Bible or celebrate a public ceremony with order and dignity. In many fields, technicians are called not because it would be forbidden to deal directly with it, but because the skill or the time to do the work oneself is missing.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

The sycophants of Christianity having for 2000 years quite confused the question of this strange proxy priesthood, a bit of history is necessary (indeed nothing like, objective and impartial, history, to kill myths).

From the existence of the hero of this initiatory novel called Gospel, it is to be retained that he was a layman, he was not a member of a priestly family nor caste; he never performed the religious function of the Jewish religion, he never claimed the title of a priest, of a man set apart from the rest of the Jewish community to exercise the sacrificial functions in the Temple of Jerusalem, for we must remember that the Jewish priests exercised their functions only in this Temple. Apart from the letter to the Hebrews, no New Testament scripture speaks of Jesus as a priest. And yet, Jesus is the only priest, of the Christians as this document specifies it:

" If perfection could have been reached through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still a need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. And what we have said is even clearer if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared:

"You are a priest for ever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God" (Heb 7: 11-18).

Editor's note. The mention "to the Hebrews" does not appear in the text of the Epistle: it is a title added in the 2nd century.

Let us remind of the purpose of this letter: to convince the Jews or still Judaizing Christians that the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus was truly superhuman but all this in conformity with their holy scriptures.

The Christian tradition has long attributed this epistle to the apostle Paul, but historians now consider it to be the work of an author whose identity remains debated. It is addressed to the Hebrews, that is to say, here to the Judeo-Christians, during the period when the movement started by the disciples of Jesus is separating from Judaism. These "Hebrews," or Judaizing Christians, respect Jewish Law (Torah) as circumcision and dietary prohibitions.

Its main themes relate to the person of Christ as a mediator, Son of God and high priest. In other words, it is one of the oldest texts of Christology.

One of my former pen-friends in Celtic history, François Vouga, Honorary Professor of New Testament at the Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel in Bielefeld, considers that the Epistle does not belong to the first Christian generation, first because the author presents himself as coming from the second generation and then because his recipients have themselves been converted to Christianity for several years (Heb. 2: 3, 5:12, 10:32). My Swiss pen-friend proposes a date between the 60s (when the first generation disappears) and the 80s or 90s. He emphasizes that the first reference to the Epistle is probably found in the Letter to the Corinthians by Clement of Rome, who does not quote exactly the letter to Hebrews but provides of it a "commented paraphrase " and makes it possible in any case to situate the terminus ad quem of its writing.

The epistle does not contain an author's name. Who is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Clement of Rome? Paul of Tarsus? Barnabas or Apollos. There is no agreement between the exegetes. Luther was the first to propose Apollos as the anonymous writer, author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Apart from this single and anonymous testimony, early Christianity knew no sacerdotal function, but had only apostles (disciples of Jesus who had known him during his lifetime) and charismatic prophets, who preached according to their gifts (charisms). With the disappearance of the apostles and charismatic prophets, the presbyterate (function of presbyter or elder, from the Greek word *presbuteros*), which was originally a purely honorific charge, gradually assumed a priestly nature. If the word "priest" comes from a Greek word meaning the elder, it is because in the beginnings of the Church this function was devolved to men recognized for their experience.

The vocabulary of the New Testament does not make it possible to reconstruct with precision the evolution that led to the distinction between presbyterate and episcopate. It only becomes clear about 150.

From the beginning of the second century onwards, the communities gathered around some persons in charge, the bishops (*episcopoi*, word which means supervisors) themselves surrounded by a team of priests and deacons. Since then, presbyters appear as a college subordinate to the single bishop, with whom they collaborate closely. On the other hand, the same vocabulary reveals that the New Testament does not conceive the presbyterate (or episcopate) in the line of the priesthood, which most translations cannot convey, since they have only the single word " priest "(Greek, *presbuteros*) to

translate two very distinct Greek words: *hierous* (mediator between God and men) and *presbuteros* (an elderly person in the community, without priestly connotations).

The only priesthood that the New Testament knows is that of Christ: the Epistle to the Hebrews presents explicitly his death as a sacrifice, of which he was himself the high priest, and by which he put an end, once and for all, to all sacrifices and priests, thus becoming the sole mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2: 5-6). Thus the New Testament systematically avoids the vocabulary of the priesthood to describe the many ministries it mentions; at the most, he uses it occasionally to designate the Christian people collectively (1 Peter, 2, 5 and 9, Revelation, 1: 6, 5:10, 20: 6). Concretely, the priest is the minister of certain sacraments, that is, he alone can give them. On the other hand, the priest cannot administer either confirmation (except for the Eastern Catholic Churches), unless necessity or being occasionally given a mandate for that by his bishop, or ordination, which are the responsibility of a bishop.

The controversies that followed the lapsi crisis and the Donatist schism in North Africa in the 4th century made it possible to elaborate a draft answer to the question of the effectiveness of the sacrament of ordination.

Let us briefly remind of the facts.

The last of the only two true official and general anti-Christian persecutions from the Roman authorities, that of Diocletian in 303, resulted in the fact that a huge majority of Christians agreed to do the little something they were asked to in order to prove their civic-mindedness by sacrificing a few grains of incense to the statues of the gods of Rome or of the emperor. In any case, they were much more numerous than the confessors who refused, even for some at the risk of their lives (the confessors who had become martyrs).

There were even priests who had agreed to hand over to the authorities the books or liturgical objects they held.

As soon as this last persecution came to an end, and it was relatively short (it was relaxed as early as 305 in the West), the question of the reinstatement by the church of all those lapsi simple faithful or bishops who had failed was asked.

It was without too many problems at first, since the Church of Rome had shown a fairly conciliatory attitude towards them (see the Crisis of Novatianism). The Church for its most part indeed shows itself tolerant towards those who had failed (the lapsi) and reinstated the priests and bishops who have once again embraced Christianity.

It was not the same in the church of Carthage.

Genesis of Conflict.

Initially, in the proconsular Africa and Numidia, the governors engage in searches. Bishops are summoned by the authorities to give the sacred writings and objects of worship up. Attitudes are diverse: Felix, bishop of Thibica, refuses and is transferred then executed in Carthage; Paulus, bishop of Cirta, obeys and gives all up; the bishop of Carthage, Mensurius, uses a stratagem and gives only works that Christians consider as heretical.

But the edict of 304, which requires a general sacrifice to the Roman gods, gives a new turn to the persecutions. Christians who refuse to comply are threatened with death or sentenced to forced labor.

Many Christian leaders then yield to the constraints of power (that he who was without sin should throw them the first stone). Some give up their co-religionists and go so far as to burn sacred books publicly. These Christians are referred to as "lapsi" – Latin lapsus: the one who fell - or still "traditores" – from tradire : to deliver (the sacred books).

This period of persecution is succeeded about the spring 305 by a certain toleration, in the fact because the edicts were not canceled and the return to peace was not official until 307, date of Maxentius' peace. It was on this occasion that the first manifestations of what was to become the Donatist schism and the concept of the efficacy of the rites EX OPERE OPERATO appeared.

The meetings for the succession of the bishop of Cirta, Paulus, made appear an opposition of the "diehard ones" against those they called traditores, meaning, "givers of (sacred objects)" and also, "traitors."

These opponents were certainly influenced by the writings of their fellow countrymen Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage who refused that Christians, who had failed but have been reintegrated into the

community, exercise a priesthood. From their point of view, the sacraments and the spiritual authority of lapsi then reintegrated as priests, were worthless.

Beyond, from 308 to 310, Africa was temporarily detached from the Empire after the secession of the usurper L. Domitius Alexander. Mensurius is therefore reinstated as primate of Africa.

The conflict broke out openly in 312 during the succession of this Mensurius. The appointment to succeed him of a certain Caecilianus was disputed: since he had been ordained a priest by Mensurius, a traditor bishop (and Felix of Abthugni), his ordination was therefore not valid and he could not be a bishop. Bishop Donatus, seventy bishops of Numidia, elected a competing bishop, Majorinus, against him.

The conflict continued in the legal field: the case went up to Imperial arbitration, soliciting Constantine I who had just recovered Italy and Africa by his victory over Maxentius. Considering that this was a minor problem among Christians, Constantine asked the Bishop of Rome Miltiades (311-314) to take care of it. A synod was organized in 313 in the palace of the Lateran (eighteen Italian and Gallic bishops). He confirmed the validity of the ordination of Caecilianus by Mensurius with the following argument: if Christ is present in all the sacraments, a sacrament is effective regardless of the moral antecedents of the priest who delivers it. The first appearance, then, of the magic concept, said in Latin language *EX OPERE OPERATO NON EX OPERE OPERANTIS*.

In other words, a sacrament acts, whatever the sanctity of his minister. Ultimately, a priest may even not agree with the faith of the Church about the Holy Eucharist, but faithfully fulfill the rite of consecration, in accordance with what the Church wants: in this case, transubstantiation will take place. The bread and wine will be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The Donatists, obstinate, again appealed to Constantine, who had to become more seriously involved. The Council of Arles, which ended on August 1, 314, pronounced the same decision, which became law in 317 by the will of Constantine, who ordered the dissolution of the Donatist communities and the confiscation of their property.

See our booknotes number 30.

Early violence and attempts to appease.

The Donatists formed many communities, and the application of the law was accompanied by as much violence in Carthage and in the African provinces. To bring back the calm, Constantine suspended the application of the repressive measures in 321. The Donatists kept on, all the more faithful to their rigorism that they had just undergone violence: they felt that they were the only ones who remained pure, as "sons of the martyrs" without compromise, faced with the "sons of the traditores". Any sacrament that came from an in their eyes unworthy priest was null, so they baptized again those who had received baptism outside their community.

The official position of the Church in Rome, on the other hand, asserted that the validity of a sacrament cannot depend on the moral or spiritual qualities of the person who administers it. If so, Christians would be in permanent doubt as to the validity of their own baptism or of the communion received during the Eucharist. Donatism was fought by St. Augustine and disappeared only in the eighth century.

The celibacy of the priests was not imposed until the 12th century. Even today it is not universal in the Christian churches. In the Catholic Church, it is obligatory only in the Latin rite, but not in the Eastern Catholic rites (Maronite, Melkite, etc.) where priests are generally married (but not bishops and high hierarchy) with this nuance that they cannot marry after their ordination, but only before. Once widowed, they cannot remarry. The same discipline applies to the Orthodox Churches. In the Catholic and Orthodox denominations, the priesthood remains closed to women.

In Protestantism, celibacy is not a condition for pastoral ministry. Pastors are usually married. But they can just as easily remain single. The pastoral ministry is also open to women (married or not) in the Reformist Churches, while in the Catholic and Orthodox denominations the priesthood is reserved for men and forbidden to women.

OTHER RELIGIONS OTHER SPIRITUALITIES.

As we have had the opportunity to say (see higher) originally, priestly function and royal function were confused. This is why in many primitive ("without writing") civilizations it is difficult to distinguish the king from the priest. The king, in ancient Rome, also had important sacerdotal responsibilities. But as he was subjected to innumerable taboos coming from his priestly office, he was handicapped in public

office. This explains why the two functions were separated very early in ancient Rome. However, the high priest continued to bear the title of rex sacrorum ("king of sacred acts").

But there are also religions without priests like Sunni Islam. The muezzin calls for prayer, the ulama and fuqaha are specialists in law and ethics, but there is no specialist who has a mediating function. Within Sunnism, it is possible to compare the function of imam with that of the Reformist pastor or preacher. Indeed, the imam is not a member of a hierarchical structure: he is designated by the community itself and does not claim any favored connection with God. He may be dismissed if he does not fulfill his mission. The Imam (Arabic: imam, Persian: emam, a religious leader, guide, the one who is in front) is only a faithful man who directs the prayer made together. It is preferably, of course, a person who is to be instructed in the rites and daily practice of Islam.

* The situation is somewhat different in Shiite Islam. For the Shiites, supporters of a clerical tradition of Islam, the imam is the spiritual and temporal guide of the Islamic community. Among the Twelvers, they often bear the title of mullah or ayatollah and, as a result, that of imam is more used in Sunnism.

DOCUMENTS.

TEXT I OF IRISH CANONS ABOUT PENANCE COMMUTATIONS.

1) A commutation for rescuing a soul out of hell. 365 Paters 365 genuflections and 365 blows of the scourge every day for a year and a fast every month, this rescues a soul out of hell. For it is in proportion to the number of joints and sinews in the human body that this commutation to save a soul which has merited torments has been devised.

8) Commutation proper for former lay men and women.

Spending the night in water, or on nettles or on nutshells, or with a dead body [....]

Commutation proper for clerics and nuns.

Spending the night in cold churches or remote cells while keeping vigils and praying without respite, i.e., without leave to sit or lie down or sleep.

15) Another commutation of a year of penance.

A fast for three days without eating, drinking or sleeping, the first night spent in water, the second naked on nettles. The third on nutshells.

19) Another commutation: Seven months passed in confinement on bread and water, prostrate on the soil or on the floor together with fervent prayer.

23) Another commutation of the same penance: by means 200 genuflections properly made.

24) Another commutation of the same penance: to remain standing without staff in one's hand or other support until the three Fifties of psalms and their canticles have been chanted.

25) Another commutation of the same penance : to remain in a vigil until the chanting of fifty psalms or of the beati four times has been finished, and the arms are not to touch the sides even though there is nothing else to support him.

31) If there be danger of death, the following arreum is a commutation of a year of penance (when accompanied by intense contrition): to chant 365 Paters standing with both arms extended towards heaven and without the elbows ever touching the sides, together with fervent concentrating on God. And the words are not spoken aloud. And to recite the Beati in a stooping position with thy two arms laid flat by thy sides. Or the whole body is stretched out along the ground face downwards and both arms laid flat by the sides. Patrick has recommended this type of vigil and Colum Chille, Maedoc of ferns, Molacca Menn, Bréanainn Moccu Altae, Colum mac Crimthain, Mocholmuc of Inis Celtra. This tradition was deposited with Enda in Aran. The four chief sages of Ireland, viz. Ua Minadan, Cumaine Fota, Murdebur and Mocholmuc mac Cumain from Arran, have recommended its continual practice to every son of life who desires to obtain heaven.

32). A commutation of a year's strict penance which Ciaran son of the wright prescribed for Ennu moccu Laigsi...three days and three nights one is engaged in it in an unlighted house or in any other place where no distraction can penetrate, and the normal allowance for a three-day fast is not consumed but only three sips of water each day. And this is the actual arreum: to chant each day the hundred and fifty psalms standing without staff in the hand, and a genuflection after every two chapters, and reciting Hymnum dicat after every Beati in cross and there is no lying down.....but only sitting; and in addition to this, keeping each canonical hour, and diligent concentration on the suffering of Christ with anguish of heart and perfect contrition to God and calling to mind all the sins he can remember.

32 a) A commutation of a year's strict penance.

-To spend three days and three nights in a grave with a dead body without drinking, eating, or sleeping.

-To make earnest confession to God and man at every hour of the day and night ,

-Together with a vow to abandon all sin under the direction of a pious soul friend (anamchara)

-To chant the three Fifties each day and keep each canonical hour.

-If he cannot read, he prays in his heart with mental ardor and repentance.

33) A commutation of fifty nights of strict penance capable of being performed in a single day which Colum Chill and Mobi Clarenech have laid down with the counsel of the Archangel Michael: to recite Dominus regnavit etc.

REMARKS.

According to this text, these Celtic mortifications of the Culdee Celtic monks were clearly backed by the anatomical knowledge of the ANCIENT druidic medicine.

Example.

" Arreum for rescuing a soul out of hell. 365 Paters 365 genuflections and 365 blows of the scourge every day for a year and a fast every month, this rescues a soul out of hell. For it is in proportion to the number of joints and sinews in the human body that this commutation to save a soul which has merited torments has been devised."

Now this idea (of 365 sinews or joints in a human body) is obviously a concept of druidic medicine. Just like reciting the same prayer 365 times besides.

" They are said there to learn by heart a great number of verses [.....] That practice they seem to me to have adopted for two reasons; because they neither desire [....] nor those who learn among them, to devote themselves the less to the efforts of memory, relying on writing; since it generally occurs to most men, that, in their dependence on writing, they relax their diligence in learning thoroughly, and their employment of the memory" (Caesar, B. G. VI, 14).

These mortifications backed by druidic medical knowledge subsequently played a major role in the Christian piety of the Middle Ages.

The druidic arras were in fact regularly called to replace less severe, but much longer penances: 3 years with on bread and water, 7 years on bread and water, etc. Hence the principle of commutation of penances, the ultimate outcome of it, completely degenerated, it is true, was the practice of Indulgences, that so scandalized the young Luther.

It was not the druids who had the idea of substituting their ascetic practices for the long penances on bread and water inflicted hand over first; but the intellectual guide of Christianity, which were the Irish monks, what amounts to the same thing.

The principle of the commutation of penances is particularly evident in the text of the Second Synod attributed to St. Patrick and in the penitential of St. Columban (VIII, Of Hubris. 25-28). "Some give the ruling that twelve three-day periods are the equivalent of a year, others one hundred days with a half loaf of dry bread and an allowance of water and the penitent shall sing fifty psalms during each night, etc."

The druidic ascetic practices are, indirectly, it is true, at the origin of the Catholic Christian principle of the commutation of penances or indulgences.

(Even though Section V of the Old Irish Table of Commutations places Druidism between brigandage and adultery in terms of reprobation, as we have seen above.)

As St Columbanus wrote very well, " Diversity of offenses causes diversity of penances. Spiritual doctors must treat with diverse kinds of cures the wounds of souls."

The ancient druids were not only doctors, they were also jurists, and the great principle of druidic justice was not that of Talion as in the Bible, it obeyed a double consideration.

- That of compensation, most often by means of a financial composition.

- That of the modulation of penalties according to the seriousness of the fault or the material means of the guilty person (his rank in society: druid, king, great lord, or common people).

This is particularly evident in Welsh canons, which resemble the laws of the time (Howell Dda).

Welsh canons A 63: The owner of an animal is responsible for any injuries it may inflict unless the animal was on his property at the time of the incident.

And in the text VI of the Irish canons, which resemble the Senchus More very much, of which one of the passages was justly devoted too, to the dogs.

The Sages having four good reasons to justify the arras were therefore undoubtedly druids charged responsible for dispensing justice.

The tariffing penalties (more or less heavy punishments according to the importance of the fault, offense, or crime, for example, to put the guilty person for a shorter or longer time on bread and water and varying according to the social status of the guilty party, cleric or lay person) is therefore an idea of druidic origin.

To dispense justice was indeed one of the functions ANCIENT druids.

What is peculiar to Christians in this field is, on the other hand, their obsession with sexuality, or the fact of seeing evil everywhere.

Welsh canons A 61: "He who lets his hair grow in the fashion of the barbarians shall be excommunicated."

The penitential regime in force in these countries, at least since the sixth century, was that of the tariff penance, and a special penance was imposed on the sinner by the parish priest without any solemnity; according to tariffs contained in opuscles called penitentials.

In these penitentials the works of satisfaction are proportionate, in rigor and length to the faults committed. For the most serious crimes: incest, parricide, perjury, etc. they prescribe, depending on

the circumstances, either exile or seclusion in a monastery for life, or for a period of ten, seven, or even three years [Editor's note. It is well therefore the resumption of the druidic customs in the matter of justice. This is obvious in the case of the exile].

The oldest texts seem to originate in Great Britain, as their titles indicate, and also several peculiarities of their contents. These are the *Excerpta quaedam de Libro Davidis*, the canons of the *Synodus Aquilonalis Britanniae*, the *Altera synodus Luci Victoriae*, the *Praefatio de Paenitentia* of pseudo-Gildas, all probably of the 6th century, and the *Canones Wallici*, probably from the first half of the seventh century. All these texts were published by Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, 1869-1878.

The earliest Irish penitential is a collection of the sixth century placed under the name of a certain Vinniaus (sic), which caused it to be sometimes attributed to Finnian of Moville, sometimes to Finnian of Clonard. The later penitentials, that of Columban de Bobbio and that of Cummian, the latter of the seventh or eighth century, proceed from it largely.

It should be noted, however, that the four oldest known penitentials (6th century); the preface of St. Gildas the Wise on penances (the *Praefatio de Paenitentia*), the extracts from the book of St. David (*Excerpta quaedam de libro Davidis*); the decrees of the synod of Northern Britain (*Synodus Aquilonalis Britanniae*, i.e., Lowlands, Strathclyde, Gododdin, and Reghed, the country of Merlin after the battle of Arfderydd / Arthuret about 573); those of the Grove of Victory (*Luci Victoriae*); are nevertheless not Irish, but Welsh. They constitute a mixture of civil laws and religious penances. The Irish canons properly so called are the penitentials of St. Vinniaus (Finnian), St. Colombanus, St. Cummian, as well as the canons of Adomnan or Adamnan.

The penances foreseen in them are generally heavier than those of the Welsh penitentials which inspired them, the Culdee monks of Ireland having apparently hardened these mortifications called *arras*.

The way of life attributed to the monks by the canon XVII of the second synod of St Patrick resembles closely some of the "warrior" trainings in fashion today under the name of survivalism. Living in cold and nakedness; In hunger and thirst, in vigils and fasting . As for spending the whole night in ice-cold water on nettles or nutshells, as recommended by the *arream* 8 of the Old Irish Table of commutation of penalties for simple laymen; this evokes more fakirs and their bed of nails than something else. Revenge or punishment, however, does not seem to be the main aim of druidic mortifications at the origin of these *arras* of Irish medieval Christianity.

And the best definition is perhaps provided by the penitential of Saint Finnian, they had a mental or spiritual goal if we believe the section X of the penitential of this saint. "... Sins can be absolved by penance and by very diligent devotion (*studium diligentius*) of heart and body."

See also section VI of the Table of commutations written in Old Irish.

"The Sages enumerate four reasons why *arras* are practiced:

- For a speedy separation from the sin to which one has been united.
 - For fear of adding to the sin in the future.
 - For fear that one's life be cut short before the end of the penance decided by a "soul friend" (the *anamchara* was a kind of guide or spiritual adviser, of druidic origin).
 - For to be free to approach the Body and Blood of Christ by restricting as much the period of penance.
- As well as its sections 31: "Fervent focusing on God" and 32 "Diligent mental concentration on the sufferings of Christ."

Typically Judeo-Christian contribution to these penitentials.

Obsession with sex. Various dietary prohibitions: illicit beverages (*inlicite bibitionis*) or prohibited foods (horse meat and so on) in the Jewish or Muslim way (principle of kosher or halal food, see about this subject the *Canons of Adamnan*).

PRIVATE OR AURICULAR CONFESSION.

The practice of auricular or private confession, now the rule in all Catholicity, was thus introduced on the continent by the Celtic monks. (The druids were mostly spiritual advisers or doctors of soul / mind.) According to Loening and his supporters, private penance would originally be a monastic practice. It would have been introduced in the secular world in the seventh and eighth centuries under the influence of St Columbanus of Bobbio and the Irish or Anglo-Saxon missionaries, and gradually became a universal ecclesiastical institution.

Rule 28 given to the Culdees by St Maelruain of Tallaght.

"Irksome, truly, is the matter of soul-friendship, because if the proper remedy is prescribed, it is more often violated than fulfilled: while if the soul friend does not prescribe it, liability falls upon him; for there are many who deem it sufficient to make a confession without doing penance. So it is better for the soul friend to admonish them of what is profitable for them, even though he does not demand confessions."

Bigotian Penitential .

Paragraph 2. "Those who take care to heal the wounds of others are to observe carefully what is the age and sex of the sinner, what instruction he has received, what is his strength, by what trouble he has been driven to sin, with what kind of passion he is assailed, how long he remained in sinful life, which what sorrow and labor he is afflicted, and how much he is detached from worldly things. For God does not despise the contrite and humble heart. Wise men, in regulating penance are to look carefully also to this: not to punish with the rod a crime worthy of the sword and to smite with the sword a sin worthy of the rod."

Druidic contribution to these texts, although, as we have seen, section V of the Table of arras written in Old Irish places druidism between brigandage and adultery as regards reprobation.

Penitential of Saint Finian.

"Sins can be absolved in secret by penance by very diligent devotion (studium diligentius) of heart and body."

This is a remnant of Druidism (of druidic medicine of soul/minds or of druidic jurisprudence).

This druidic principle at the origin of the medieval confession is particularly obvious in the penitential of St Columban of Bobbio.

"7. Doctors of the body also compound their medicines in diverse kinds, thus they heal wounds in one manner, sicknesses in another, boils in another, bruises in another, festering sores in another, eye diseases in another, fractures in another, burns in another. Then so also should spiritual doctors treat with diverse kinds of cures the wounds of souls, their sicknesses, offenses, pains, ailments, and infirmities. But since this gift belongs to few, namely to know to a nicety all these things, to treat them, to restore what is weak to a complete state of health.

8. Let us set out even a few prescriptions according to the traditions of our elders, and according to our own partial understanding Diversity of offenses causes diversity of penances."

The popular practice of auricular confession on the monastic model to a spiritual adviser will impose itself to the point of completely eclipsing the ancient ritual of public penance and gradually being admitted by the hierarchy. And as "confessors" quickly find it difficult to know how to give or to dose "penances." For this reason, they will base themselves on the "Irish" penitentials of the Celtic monks.

THE PENITENTIAL (IN THE STRICT SENSE OF THE WORD) OF COLUMBANUS OF BOBBIO.

THE "DE PAENITENTIA."

A.

1. True penance is not to commit things deserving penance but to lament such things as have been committed. But since this is broken by the weakness of many, not to say of all, the measures of penance must be known. A scheme of these has been handed down by the holy fathers, so that in accordance with the greatness of the offenses the length also of the penances should be ordained.

2. Therefore, if anyone has sinned in thought, that is, has desired to kill a man, or to commit fornication, or to steal, or to feast in secret and be drunken, or indeed to strike someone, or to desert, or to do anything else like this, and has been ready in his heart to carry out these sins: let him do penance for the greater ones half a year, for the lesser ones forty days on bread and water.

3. If anyone has sinned in the act with the common sins, if he has committed the sin of murder or sodomy, let him do penance for ten years. If he has committed fornication once only, let the monk do penance three years, if oftener, seven years; if he has deserted and broken his vows, if he repents and returns at once, let him do penance three forty-day periods, but if after a period of years, three years.

4. If anyone has stolen, let him do penance for a year.

4a. If anyone has perjured himself, let him do penance for seven years.

5. If anyone has struck his brother in a quarrel and spilt blood, let him do penance for three years.

6. If anyone has gotten drunk and vomited, or, being overfed, for this reason has vomited the host, let him do penance forty days. However, if he is forced by ill health to vomit the host, let him do penance seven days. If anyone has lost the host itself, let him do penance for a year.

12. The talkative is to be punished with silence, the restless with the practice of gentleness, the gluttonous with fasting, the sleepy with watching, the hubristic with imprisonment, the deserter with expulsion; let each suffer exactly in accordance with his deserts, that the just may live justly.

B.

Diversity of offenses causes diversity of penances. For doctors of the body also compound their medicines in diverse kinds, thus they heal wounds in one manner, sicknesses in another, boils in another, bruises in another, festering sores in another, eye diseases in another, fractures in another, burns in another. Then so also should spiritual doctors treat with diverse kinds of cures the wounds of souls, their sicknesses, offenses, pains, ailments, and infirmities. But since this gift belongs to few, namely to know to a nicety all these things, to treat them, to restore what is weak to a complete state of health; let us set out even a few prescriptions according to the traditions of our elders, and according to our own partial understanding, 'For we prophesy in part and we know in part.'

1. First we must enact concerning capital sins, which are punished even by the sanction of the law.....

Finally, we must deal with the minor sanctions for monks.

26. If anyone has left the enclosure open during the night, let him do penance with a special fast for a day; but if during the day, with twenty-four blows, if others were not following behind when he left it open. If someone has gone immediately in front of himself without permission, let him do penance with a special fast.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE, RECONCILIATION OR FORGIVENESS.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven " (Matthew 16:19).

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:8).

To bind and to loose are notions that fall within the semantic field of magic but the 16th-century theologian Bucer interprets the power of the keys in the sense of the exclusion of the unrepentant sinner ("to bind"), with a view to causing him to change his behavior ("to loose" in this case consisting in admitting him again into the Church).

Private or auricular confession appears to have been practiced by a large number of different religions and to go back to an early antiquity.

People confessed in the mysteries of Bacchus, Venus, and Adonis. The priests who heard the confessions carried a key hanging from their shoulders: it was the symbol of the secret they were to keep. At Samothrace, expiatory sacrifices, a confession according to the law, were previous the admission of the initiate to the Cabeiri mysteries. The priest who presided over it was called Koes (purifier, prophet); he had the power to absolve from murder, but perjury was considered a deadly crime. At Eleusis, it was only after having undergone long and difficult ordeals that you could be initiated into the mysteries of Ceres. A priest was charged with examining and preparing the candidates; those who had been guilty of great crimes were excluded; the priest subjected the others to frequent expiations, and made them feel the necessity of preferring the light of truth to the darkness of error; he exhorted them to suppress all violent passion, to deserve by the purity of mind and heart the ineffable blessing of the initiation. "

The Roman emperors themselves are not exempt from these ordeals and confessions. History tells us that Marcus Aurelius, in associating himself with the mysteries of Eleusis, is obliged to confess to the hierophant.

As for the druids, as arbitrators, they determined the amount of compensation that those who came to confess to them would voluntarily pay their victims. But unlike what the Culdee monks who will succeed as spiritual advisers (*anamachara* in Gaelic language literally means "soul friend"), there were less prayers or mortifications (cf. the *De arreis* edited by Kuno Meyer in 1894) than concrete compensations for the evil committed by them.

Editor's note. *Peccant/peccancy*. From Latin "*peccatum*" (fault, guilty act), is the transgression, voluntary or not, of the divine law and of these commandments but old French understood it also as for a wrong, an injustice, a suffered misfortune, by ascribing it the same value as to the word damage.

In Persia, among the priests called magi, there are those who hear confessions, decide cases of conscience, and clarify the points of the law. The books of the Magi order to forgive him who has offended if he humbles himself and confesses his fault. Besides the *niyayish* that are humble and submissive prayers, and the *afergans* that are prayers in the form of thanks, the books contain some *patets* which are acts of repentance of the sins which have been committed and which constitute a true general confession.

It is a maxim among the Indians that he who confesses his sin will receive forgiveness. They celebrate every year a feast, during which they go to confession on the bank of a river, that their sins may be entirely effaced. The *Nittiakarma*, or ritual of the Brahmins, attributes the virtue of cleaning sins to certain prayers which resemble rather the acts of contrition of Christians. Confession and penance are also part of the observances of the Jain monks.

In Tibet, not only all the monks, but almost all the lay men, have their spiritual father, to whom they generally make the accusation of their sins. As soon as the penitent pronounces this formula: "I have sinned," the spiritual guide makes a prayer on him in order to get for him the forgiveness he asks. Four times a month, on the 14th and 15th, and then on the 29th and 30th of the moon, the lamas assemble

to hear the explanation of their rule. Before appearing in the assembly, the high lama confesses to whom he has entrusted the direction of his conscience; thus purified, he enters the temple and begins to recommend to each one to confess.

In the Chinese, when the emperor, at the head of the nation, fulfills the office of the sacrificer, he practices many ceremonies, among which is the confession: he advances towards the altar, burns perfumes, and then takes the piece of satin on which he has written the details of his actions, good or bad; he reads this writing in a low voice, makes acts of repentance about what he admits to having been evil, lays down this statement of the case in a box and sets it on fire to reduce it to ashes.

In the Old Testament, the scapegoat was an expiatory victim charged with carrying away all the sins of Israel: "The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness" (Leviticus XVI, 22).

Essenian asceticism prescribed a public confession in which the faithful confessed by mortifying themselves to what temptations their continence had led themselves, and unwound verbally under the boos of their co-religionists (catharsis).

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE, CONFESSION, RECONCILIATION OR FORGIVENESS AMONG CHRISTIANS.

In the Christian tradition, this power to bind and loose, that is, to forgive sins, was conferred on the apostles (Matthew 16:19, 18:18); but confession and absolution also rely on the gospel according to John (20: 22-23).

The confession [Latin "confessio" (= own up) from "confiteri, confessum" (= own up)] takes two forms: confession to a priest, which is called auricular or private confession (which can be particular when you accuse only sins committed since a previous confession; or general when you accuse the sins committed throughout your life) and the public confession of an individual before the assembly of the faithful.

The words vary to speak of the sacramental sign of the remission of sins. This uncertainty of vocabulary shows obviously a search, even the unease of a certain number of Christians. The difficulty becomes total disaffection for some, who consider that this making guilty Church is not that of Jesus Christ. Some refuse "private confession" also known as "auricular" which comes from the Celtic monks and regret the recent time when penitential celebrations with collective absolution were of frequent use. Others think that these celebrations represented a flight of the Christians in front of their personal situation as sinners.

This difference of view is not new. Reconciliation and penance have been experienced differently over the centuries. The sacraments have a history!

In the Latin Church, there are three very different ways of living reconciliation; they correspond to three epochs of about six to seven centuries each. Each period is marked by a back and forth movement between the fixing of the sacrament by the ecclesial hierarchy and the practice of the Christian people who will constantly move the established milestones. It is to this history that today Christians are heirs.

The first period lasts from the 1st to the 6th century. There are two stages: the so-called public penance followed by a penitential gap called "the ten remissions."

Here are some elements concerning confession in the early Church.

Ancient penance, presented, among other things, in the Shepherd of Hermas and Tertullian, consisted of a ritualized step that could only take place once in the life of the faithful. It involved many demands, fasts, a separation from the communion of the Church and a deprivation of sexual intercourse; it was followed by the forgiveness and the reinstatement of the penitent, of the lapsi for example, after the first or second of the only real official and universal persecutions from the Roman authorities.

According to Tertullian normal repentance was that which was previous to the baptism; he approaches the official penance step (that he calls exomologesis, in Greek in the Latin text, a word whose meaning is probably well conveyed by the idea of public confession) only with regret, fearing that speaking of penance makes man more ready to sin:

"So long, Lord Christ, may the blessing of learning or hearing concerning the discipline of repentance be granted to Your servants, as is likewise behooves them, while learners, not to sin; in other words, may they thereafter know nothing of repentance, and require nothing of it. It is irksome to append

mention of a second— nay, in that case, the last— hope; lest, by treating of a remedial repenting yet in reserve, we seem to be pointing to a yet further space for sinning.”

Sacramental penance was given only for exceptional faults and could not be received for a whole lifetime. It was intended for those who had publicly denied the commitments of their baptism, those whose behavior was the object of a scandal for the community. Case of lapsi for example. When a Christian had caused a serious public scandal - apostasy, murder or adultery - he could no longer participate in the Eucharist without risking a unanimous protest from other Christians. The sinners, after the public confession in front of the bishop, are placed in the group of penitents for several months, even several years (30 years in some cases). Excluded from the meal of "devogdonion" commensality with God (from the Eucharist), they must practice rigorous fasting, eventually leave their employment and their spouse, or even go to the desert (this is the origin of eastern monasticism) in order to be allowed to return to the community. They are solemnly readmitted into the Ecclesia during the Holy Thursday's ceremony.

The possibility of being forgiven for serious misconduct after baptism seems to have been expressed for the first time in the Shepherd of Hermas in the middle of the second century, we have said higher. Conversely, the pagans seem to join the most rigorous of Christians in considering that certain faults are so serious that they cannot be absolved. Penance was shocking because it seemed an incitement to sin and a crime against the duty of education, a criticism that our time also makes to this sacrament.

For the forgiveness of venial faults, daily prayer and penance have been recognized as sufficient from St. Augustine, and it is possible that the Fathers granted almost sacramental value to the request of the Our Father: and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. With regard to serious faults, the Church considers then that no fault is unpardonable but that remission is not repeatable. As we have already said it, it was gotten by an excommunication of the penitent, and by special prayers of the community for him. Moreover it was the bishop who judged the possibility for the penitent to be again admitted into the communion of the Church, at the time of the annual celebration of the Reconciliation, most often during the night of Easter.

The question of the duration of penance was discussed at the Council of Nicaea, where it was decided that on the threshold of death the penitent could be reconciled in order to receive the Viaticum (Eucharist for the dying persons). It is easy to see that in the early Church the link between sin and Ecclesiality was clearly displayed: serious faults have important consequences for the life of the Church and it is the entire community that entered the application to get forgiveness.

The penitential vacuum or the ten remissions.

In the face of this rigor, sinners ended by having recourse to penance only on their death bed, or even no longer at all. Especially since in the 4th century the emperor had become a Christian, there was no more legal persecution against Christians except those who were considered heretics. And as masses were not heroic, the pitiless style of public penance could only disappear because it had become inadequate. In the Early Middle Ages, we still find the ancient penance made public only once and for all. This penance is often postponed until the eve of death, and if its practical requirements are in theory kept, the penitent is most often dispensed from them on account of his condition. The result was an almost total disaffection as regards the sacrament of penance, even if you had sinned seriously. This period is called the "penitential void" or "of the ten remissions" reported by Cassian: charity, almsgiving, tears, admitting guilt, etc.

At that time, you could not resort to the sacrament of penance even if you had seriously sinned. Saint Augustine, for example, whose life has not always been exemplary, has never confessed. And yet these Christians participated in the Eucharist. So? In fact, other means existed for the remission of serious faults. These means, not sacramental but effective, were called "the ten remissions." Besides baptism and martyrdom, it was fasting, prayer, almsgiving, forgiveness of offenses, compensation pilgrimages, devotion in monasteriesand several internal attitudes that were later referred to as contrition.

Through these ten remissions, therefore, Christians lived an effective and sure remission of sins. Yet bishops did not resign themselves to the giving up of ancient penance. But, in spite of their efforts, the sacrament of penance no longer played any part in the lives of Christians. The form of it was unlivable.

To the communion of saints necessarily corresponds the solidarity of sinners. This practice of penance has perhaps, because of its single character, pushed to delay baptism? In any case, it quickly proved inadequate because it was so inflexible that sinners did not always submit to it and the Christians who had not committed serious faults nevertheless felt the need to do penance for their sins. These two problems found a solution in Celtic practice.

In the churches of England and Ireland (which had not known the public forms of penance) there was a private practice of penance. After the 9th century, this private practice of penance was only changed on particular points as regards the ritual, of course. This new form of penance, which historians call tariff penance, applies to all, including children (who were not yet able to fulfill the demands of the old public penance) and clerics whose status in the Church did not allow an admission into the order of the penitents.

The tariff penance therefore.

We will begin with a remark at the edge of history and theology: when Western Christians began to express their Faith, they used a vocabulary that the previous centuries had bequeathed to them. This passage from the "classical" Latin to the Christian Latin makes it possible to analyze a little what the Fathers meant, the reality covered by the chosen words. In the case of the name of the forgiveness of sins, they have chosen the Latin word *absolutio*, the legal term (the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of Marriage are the two sacraments which have the most links with legal science) designating the recognition of the innocence of an accused at the end of a real trial followed by the execution of the planned penalty. The forgiveness of sins is therefore an *absolutio* not because we would be innocent (because we would not have committed what of which we accuse ourselves before God), but because we have "paid" for our fault.

J.-J. Rousseau (1712-1778). Confession is very good for compelling the hearts sickened by hatred to forgive, and for making the thieves give back what they can have stolen from the neighbor [...] How many returns, compensations, confession does not make among the Catholics!

Let us come to the second period, the time of the "tariff penance" which begins in the seventh century. At that time a restoration of the sacrament of penance appears. It comes not from bishops or from councils, but from Ireland by the Culdee monks of Tallaght first, then by St. Columbanus. In order to avoid the humiliating and dangerous aspect of public penance, they instituted a private celebration, repeatable at will, where the penitential aspect (fasts, alms ...) remained harsh (cf. The De Arreis de Kuno Meyer) but didn't compromise a whole existence. Of course, it was always a question of accusing very serious faults. These faults are confessed to a priest or monk, who gives a penance to perform, up to the sin. The compensation, however, is still the center of the step, the confession is only intended to establish the fault and the extent of the penance to be applied. Absolution is granted only after these penances.

The ritual of the accusation of sins most often took place in the Church, and the penitent could either accuse himself of his sins or answer the priest's questions. There were also long prayers in which the penitent accused himself of all possible sins, but it is not known whether this practice was followed by an accusation of the personal sins.

Thus appeared again the confession, an essential element of the first druidic arbitrations. But confession is not the principal; it is only the information necessary for the priest to indicate "the official rate." During this period, this new practice will be both a chance and a risk for the Church because this practice did not go without some bargaining. See the old-Irish table of commutation of penances compiled in the 8th century in the monastery of Tallaght in Ireland.

The Christian, gravely sinful, had to pay a heavy compensation for the fault committed. He could even accumulate more years of penance than he had years to live. Hence the idea of a commutation of penalties: to replace a long penance by a much more severe BUT SHORTER.

Immediately there appeared the idea that an impossible punishment could be shared with a third party by means of compensation or by making a gift to the Church.

The Celtic uses were then taken over by the Anglo-Saxon Church at the beginning of the eighth century. The penitentials are authorized by St. Theodore of Tarsus (602-690), Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Venerable Bede, Egbert and Alcuin (735-804) will be the apostles of this private confession. This mode of secret and private confession will then spread to the mainland thanks to the Irish missions.

It is generally retained about St Columbanus the introduction onto the Continent of the penitentials. The aim of these books was to help the spiritual guide or "friends of soul / mind" to give to the penitents the means of expiating their sins. Before that, in the Roman Church, the sinner could only receive forgiveness for his sins once in his life, and only by the authority of the bishop. We will return to it.

Ninth century. The spiritual guides use books called penitentials to determine to penances to be made. Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monks import the system of penance on the continent. To each sin was assigned a precise penance consisting mainly of various mortifications, but also in fasting. With the number of sins are added the days, months, years, of fasts. The tariffs are contained in Penitential Books. These penances and absolutions given by the Irish monks, however, were not some sacraments since these monks were not priests.

This system of commutation of penalties (arra), both spiritual and financial, gave birth to the Catholic practice of "indulgences." It is the beginning of the simony (sale of spiritual goods) and the one who can buy a substitute penance or penitent is therefore favored.

As a result, the confession, from simple means of establishing the punishment tariff it was, becomes the whole of the sacrament. So much that it is no longer spoken of the sacrament of penance but of "confession." In addition, the "compensation" aspect of the sin dwindles. It is reduced to a few symbolic prayers.

In 1123, the first Lateran Council "forbids abbots and monks to impose public penances, to visit the sick, to administer extreme unction, and to sing public masses" (canon 17). This care therefore comes down to priests.

The modern practice of penance has its roots in the 12th century, when the tariffs of penance were gradually given up, and that confession was considered as being already a first "humiliation," which had to be perfected by a penitential practice adapted to the situation. It is this disappearance of tariffs which gives rise to "modern penitence." But, at about the same time, the sacramental rite of private penance was stripped from of all right to a liturgy by the scholastic theologians who claimed after St. Thomas Aquinas that the laying on of hands and absolution prayer could not be essential to the sacrament, based on the word of the Gospel according to Matthew: "Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." It was therefore necessary that the form of this sacrament should lie in the verb at the indicative *Ego te absolvo*, and not in a prayer, what was adopted by the Church at the councils of Florence and Trent, without judging for all that the passed forms of this sacrament which, like the Eastern liturgies, had been completely ignorant of this expression. In the Latin rite, we have then passed from a deprecatory shape (type *Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus* etc.) to that we know and which highlights the power of remission that the priest possesses because of his dignity.

It was in the century which was previous the Lateran Council (of 1215) that the form of confession which prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation was born. The Council, in its 21st Canon, prescribes the mandatory practice of the annual confession. Noteworthy novelty, confession constitutes the center and the obligation of the practice, penitential penalties must be accomplished only "according to the means" of the faithful, they are no longer the center of the step. Anyone who avoids the obligation to confess is threatened with exclusion from the Church and the deprivation of Christian burial.

"All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have reached the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own (parish) priest and perform to the best of their ability the penance imposed, receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist, unless

perchance at the advice of their own priest they may for a good reason abstain for a time from its reception; otherwise they shall be cut off from the Church (excommunicated) during life and deprived of Christian burial in death. Wherefore, let this salutary decree be frequently published in the churches, that no one may find in the plea of ignorance a shadow of excuse. But if anyone for a good reason should wish to confess his sins to another priest, let him first seek and obtain permission from his own (parish) priest, since otherwise he (the other priest) cannot loose or bind him. Let the priest be discreet and cautious that he may "pour wine and oil" into the wounds of the one injured after the manner of a skillful physician, carefully inquiring into the circumstances of the sinner and the sin, from the nature of which he may understand what kind of advice to give and what remedy to apply, making use of different experiments to heal the sick one. But let him exercise the greatest precaution that he does not in any degree by word, sign, or any other manner make known the sinner, but should he need more prudent counsel, let him seek it cautiously without any mention of the person. He who dares to reveal a sin confided to him in the tribunal of penance, we decree that he be not only deposed from the sacerdotal office but also relegated to a monastery of strict observance to do penance for the remainder of his life."

In this decision coexist pastoral care, struggle against heresy, social control and will to make the priest able to know his flock; indeed, a minimal contact with the priest is thus imposed.

From then on, it will be sought to make the sins be confessed exhaustively, following lists of sins or the Ten Commandments. Preaching strongly urges to practice confession, by showing the devil fooled by the confession which deprives him from his power over the faithful.

There is also a certain emphasis on contrition, attitude of deep regret for his own sin; in certain doctrines of the confession, it is even considered as a necessary element of forgiveness. Moreover, the custom of the secrecy of confession is made compulsory: the confessor priest, but also the interpreter or the passer-by who has surprisingly discovered a confession, are prohibited from disclosing its content.

From the 13th century, the Church will try to purify the sacrament of penance. It will be, first of all, necessary to wrest penance from mercantilism. It is especially after the separations and the Reformation protesting against Indulgences that the Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent, will try to organize a new practice.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) recognizes seven sacraments: baptism, penance (compulsory confession for mortal sins), Eucharist, confirmation, marriage, orders, extreme unction. They act *ex opere operato*, that is to say independently from the faith or virtue of the priest who administers them. Some religious orders having arrogated the right to confess without the permission of the parish priests, their claims were condemned by this Council which categorically forbade any secular or regular priest, being not charged with the care of souls, to hear the confession of the faithful. But if the religious orders had councils against them, they almost always succeeded in putting the popes on their side; a papal bull by Clement V in 1312 had for example authorized the mendicant orders to confess, on the sole condition that they had asked permission from the bishop, even if he had not granted it. To resist this invasion of the regular clergy favored by Rome, the council of Bordeaux (1614) forbade the monks to confess without the permission of the bishop, and refused the Eucharist to those who would confess outside their diocese without authorization.

Editor's note. Today the penitent is free to choose for his confessor any approved priest.

Pope Pius IV (1559-1565) published an ordinance by which all the women and girls who had been scandalized and seduced by their confessors were ordered to denounce them. A number of the chief officers of the Inquisition were chosen and authorized by the pope to receive the depositions and to punish the culprit. In the end it seemed obvious to the Inquisition court that the number of priests who had used the auricular or private confession to seduce their female penitents was so great that it was absolutely impossible to punish them all..... The investigation suddenly ended.

Following violations of the secrecy of confession in the name of state policy, Clement VIII was to remind, by a writ of May 20, 1594, that it is not allowed to use in the administration what was heard in the confessional.

According to the Code of Canon Law, the secrecy of the confession is absolute. It is without exception.

"Canon 983

§1. The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason.

§2. The interpreter, if there is one, and all others who in any way have knowledge of sins from confessions are also obliged to observe secrecy.

If the priest violates this secrecy, which deals with the sins heard and the sinner's identity, he will be excommunicated. "Canon 1388...

§1. A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; one who does so only indirectly is to be punished according to the gravity of the delict.

§2. An interpreter and the others mentioned in can. 983, §2 who violate the secret are to be punished with a just penalty, not excluding excommunication."

However, this renewed practice will reveal new limits in turn. Accusing venial sins also comprises the risk of an inflexible morality even of enslavement. The community dimension of earlier periods vanishes. The place of penance is no longer the Church but a confessional. Finally, the frequent practice of confession almost completely eliminates from consciousness all other forms of remission of sins.

On February 9, 2011, after the announcement in South Korea of an application for Apple products called "A priest in your pocket," Vatican's spokesman Federico Lombardi stressing that the sacrament of penance requires the presence of the penitent and of the priest, indicated that there can be no confession at a distance.

In Catholic teaching, private or auricular confession is therefore still considered as an essential part of the sacrament of penance. Catholics are obliged to confess their most serious sins to a priest, at least once a year, at Easter.

Confession is also prescribed in the Orthodox, Coptic and Oriental Churches.

The Church of England and the other Anglican Churches have preserved the Catholic doctrine of the confession. But if the practice of auricular confession could experiment a renewal in the nineteenth century during the Oxford movement, many Anglicans prefer the general absolution during the office.

The public and general confession is part of the Lutheran cult and is practiced in certain Pentecostal and fundamentalist churches. Buddhism allows it only in monasteries.

The seven deadly sins are greed, anger, envy, gluttony, lust, hubris and sloth but the Catholic Church distinguishes between mortal sin and venial sin (or peccadillo). With the Orthodox Church it declares that venial sin and mortal sin can be erased by sincere confession and contrition while Protestantism professes that faith and sincere repentance are enough.

THE VIEWS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Religion of fault Christianity paradoxically elaborated a theology of repentance only very slowly. The notion of sin has nevertheless existed at all times and in all religions where it consists in the violation of a "taboo." In the same way, everywhere and since have always existed expiatory ceremonies, trials, ordeals, purifications, fasts, mortifications and pilgrimages ...

REFORMISTS AND CONFESSION.

Luther and Calvin join in rejecting the confession as the Catholic Church of the time practices it and imposes it. The claim to make the absolution of sins lie in the priest's words is vigorously rejected, and the idea of confessing sins exhaustively is deemed unrealistic and cruel. The compulsory nature of confession is also criticized as a tyranny; So Calvin and Luther will not have many scruples in imposing their alternatives. It can therefore be said that the obligation to confess is criticized because confession, as it was practiced at the time, was not fully legitimate. But the fact that the discipline of the Church may require the imposition of certain steps seems accepted.

The other point of agreement between the Reformists lies in the recognition of a certain utility in a step of an individual and secret confession, within an appropriate framework. For all, this step is useful pastorally for the edification of the community and to reassure tormented consciences. Only Bucer denies that the "power of the keys" is linked to the absolution of faults following their confession; the other Reformists still tie down these notions. As for Luther and Calvin, they redefine the role of the parish priest (or brethren) by acting as a mediator or a messenger, deprived from authority in himself to absolve.

Luther and Calvin, on the other hand, differ in their relationship to the practice of the Catholic Church: Luther likes confession "as it is practiced today," but considers that it has been led to the excesses of the papacy of which it is a question of releasing it. Calvin does not hesitate to say that the Reformists abolished confession; so what Calvin institutes is a replacement, not a restoration of it.

Our two great Reformists are also different on the question of the sacramentality of absolution, and this difference, which may seem minimal at the level of the nature of the act of absolution, has some importance as regards its status: in the Reformed vision of the Church defined, among others, by the right administration of the sacraments, a recognized sacrament can hardly fall into oblivion without calling for a questioning; whereas a simply optional practice does not have the same protection.

Not unconnected with this question, Luther and Calvin will differ on how to replace medieval private confession. As we have seen, Luther replaces it with a more general confession, also leading to the examination of the dispositions of faith, with the absolution as the heart of the step. Calvin begins by following an almost similar path in the form of a private pastoral conversation prior to the Lord's Supper, but the evolution of his practice will then lead to the establishment of consistories, practicing a public discipline, also advocated by Bucer. These consistories replace the compulsory confession in the role of watching over the morality of the Church, by reproving scandalous sinners. On the other hand, the practice of the general confession in the liturgy fulfills the role of pointing out the sinfulness of the Christian and the grace of God. The field left to the private confession would be that of the care of souls, of the pastoral work, of the help given to the individual struggle against sin and guilt. Such is well the role that Calvin assigns to it, but, in reaction to the compulsory confession, we perceive in Bucer (and still more in the Helvetic Confession of 1536) a hesitation to encourage its practice, it is never condemned so long as it remains free; its legitimacy is recognized if it is well implemented, but it is not assigned to it a defined place.

The disciplinary role of the consistories has also disappeared, so that almost no trace of it can be seen today. As for the general confession of sins, it tends to focus more and more on human weakness and less and less on depravity or objective and voluntary sin, not to mention all churches far from the Reformist tradition that do not practice it not at all.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST OR THE MYSTERIES OF ANAMNESIS.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is perhaps the most sensitive point in Christian theology. Here is how it is generally presented by the interested parties themselves. According to Andrew McGowan (rethinking Eucharistic origins)

The earliest Christian communities celebrated their sacramental meal in direct imitation of the Last Supper of Jesus, and thus with token use of bread and wine, a universal order or structure, and recitation of the "narrative institution" as the central prayer text. Sacrament and communal banquet were quickly separated - by the later first century - into Eucharist, a morning sacramental ritual, and Agape, a prosaic communal supper. For all its apparent obviousness and its familiarity from use in much scholarly writing about ancient Christianity, this account must be rejected. Each of the elements just stated - causes, chronology, uniformity - is inaccurate at best.

As far as we are concerned, we shall begin with two basic observations. And two comments.

Sacrificing an animal to symbolically offer a part of it to a god AND EATING TOGETHER THE REMAINING IN ITS THEORETICAL COMPANY (or not) is one of the basic elements of any sacrifice.

The other being that such a meal is not ordinary and that it gives by definition to the one who ingests it a strength or an energy out of the ordinary. Otherwise what's the use to be a god ?

We would add that we have no racist contempt for the world of pagan spirituality and therefore we will not be too feverish about studying this central rite of the Catholic faith under the microscope.

It is true that it differs from many others in that the animal in question is supposed to be the god man Jesus, but this is also found in certain myths.

As for the rest, whether or not there is a borrowing from the cult of Mithra is indifferent to us (there are so many other gods) unlike Justin who gets angry at this idea.

First apology.

LXVI. And this food is called among us the Eucharist.... from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do in remembrance of Me, this is My body"; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood"; and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.

Calm down, Justin! Human nature being everywhere the same, there is nothing dishonorable in eventually taking the same emotional or spiritual routes to climb the mountain and get closer to the divinity.

As Justin noted it well in any case "Do this in remembrance of me" is the word of the four gospels that founded the very principle of the Mass and more precisely of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Two schools are confronting each other on this subject.

For some, it is only a question of remembering or having in mind an event of the past.

For others, it is a question of reviving it or of making it revive in a real way, that is to say with concrete physical and mental effects on us.

Discussion.

The efficacy of a sacrament is called *ex opere operato*, that is, through the act itself. In the case of the Eucharist and other sacraments (such as a confession), the "act" that realizes the sacrament includes in its definition the fact that it is performed by a priest. But it remains an act *ex opere operato*, because its realization does not depend on the variations and the moods of the human being who realizes it. A priest who is distracted during the Mass would nevertheless offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Whatever

happens, he is and remains a priest, and the fact that he is so is an integral part of the definition of the "action" which constitutes the Eucharist; he can in nothing influence, by his own variations or weaknesses, the validity of the sacrament. All claim, of course, to hold this practice in direct line of the Jewish world since they know only this one (racism?), whereas it is probably a borrowing from the worship of Cybele and Attis through the intervention of Montanism whose contribution was decisive to the detriment of the Marcionism in the expansion of the future Orthodox Catholics of the first Christianity. Because if there is well a work of the holy spirit having all the appearances of magic it is indeed the change of bread and wine into the blood and flesh of a sacrificed god man. The Eucharist is psychologically speaking a HUMAN sacrifice symbolically combined with an act of anthropophagy or sacred cannibalism.

That consists of incorporating in oneself the strength and virtues of a man (the great Nazarene rabbi Yehoshua).

-Who has allegedly offered himself as a sacrifice to appease the divine anger that might be aimed at his people (for atonement or redemption in Christian terminology).

- Was allegedly delivered as a sacrifice (for blasphemy in Jewish terminology).

Ritual which is psychologically very away from the simple sharing of bread without anamnesis evoked by Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19.

We are lost in conjecture besides about the habits and exact words on this subject of the great Nazarene rabbi, which could be interpreted in this sense in a goy or pagan background.

What did Jesus mean when, during his last meal, after having distributed his bread and wine to his apostles, that he claimed to be his body and blood, he said: " Do this in remembrance [eis ten emen anamnesin] of me)? Did he merely want memories of his death to be commemorated on the occasion of a worship meal, or did he really institute a new type of human sacrifice destined to supplant definitively, by transfiguring them, with such a sublime and incredible accomplishment, the sacrifices of the old Covenant that "can never ... make perfect those who draw near to worship" (cf. Heb 10: 1)?

And if this were the case, did he intend to break completely with the Jewish ritual of his time and with his symbolism, or, on the contrary, did he had prepared everything to keep of it not only the content and the form but also the traditional spirit and symbolism, for a purpose that he alone knew?

The Christian faith, as we know, considers these ultimate gestures of Christ as realizing the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist. It maintains that their repetition, ordered by Jesus himself, has the effect of making unceasingly actual the saving sacrifice of Him whose "flesh" is "the bread ... given for the life of the world" (cf. John 6:51).

Christian theology, on the other hand, attempts to account for the mystery in human words and by analogy. But it has to overcome huge difficulties, the main one being the incredible realism of the food manducation, which is said to be the flesh and blood of Christ.

The propagandists of Christianity are used when they speak of the halo of mystery surrounding this sacrament to refute any rest of magical thinking by referring to the Jewish Passover and insisting on the fact that Jesus and his disciples.... were Jews. But what was in the minds of the Jewish disciples of the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus is one thing AND WHAT WAS IN THE MIND OF THE PAGANS, HEARING THE ANAMNESIS FORMULA : "eis ten emen anamnesis / do this in remembrance of me IS ANOTHER THING ... Which is more relating with what Mircea Eliade tells us about the actualization of myths.

"In religion as in magic, the periodic recurrence of anything signifies primarily that a mythical time is made present and then used indefinitely. Every ritual has the character of happening now, at this very moment. The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made present, " re-presented " so to speak, however, far back it may have been in the ordinary reckoning. Christ's passion, death and resurrection are not simply remembered during the services of Holy Week; they really happen then before the eyes of the faithful. And a convinced Christian must feel that he is contemporary with these transhistoric events, for, by being re-enacted, the time of the theophany becomes actual" (Pattern in comparative religion. § 149 periodic recurrence and eternal present).

Given the extent of the role played by Irish monks in the evangelization of the countryside of the European continent, it will not be useless here to say a few words of their way of understanding the mystery of Eucharist.

Since the time of St. Patrick, the Catholics of Ireland have always held the Eucharist in high esteem. They celebrated it in the little chapels of their island, in their monastic villages, in their cathedrals, and later, during the English persecution, on rocks which served as altars. The earliest Eucharistic hymn we know of is the Sancti venite, which is found in an Irish monastic text of the seventh century, the Antiphonary of Bangor. The famous Book of Kells contains a great variety of Eucharistic images. Closer to us, the icon associated with the appearance of Our Lady of Knox has a Eucharistic motif. This great esteem of the Irish for the Eucharist may be rooted in their ancestors who, like many other peoples, have left impressive signs of their quest for the absolute. For example, the Newgrange monument, which dates from the Stone Age in the Boyne Valley, was erected in such a way as to express their will to celebrate the only thing which they did not see-the annual renewal of the earth by the sun. What was celebrated each year at the winter solstice in Newgrange was, in a way, an intuition (inspired by the Holy Spirit?) at the cosmic level, of the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection.

In general, the Reformist Churches emphasize more the liturgy of the Word, and Catholicism the rite of the Eucharist. But it is enough to look at thirty seconds what became Judaism after the destruction of the Temple (or Islam) to realize that the central rite of Christianity, the Mass, is not spiritually Semitic, to take over the word of Pius XI.

The tendency of Christian intellectuals is always characterized by a sickly obsession for the study of the Jewish cult background, underlying the form taken since the beginning of the Church, by what Christianity calls the "sacrament of the Eucharist."

It is to think nothing, doubtless by unconscious racism, of the fact that...

Firstly, no comparable gesture is performed in today's synagogues.

Secondly, this kind of ceremonies began to develop in pagan circles in the Middle East.

Luke 22:19." And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." But it is only after St Paul, by definition, that this design of the Last Supper will be incorporated into the Gospel according to St. Luke, since the latter is LATER to the letters of St. Paul.

1 Corinthians 11:24. "And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11,25." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The fact that the anamnesis expression appears only in Luke and St Paul shows that it was intended for the goy or non-Jewish world. The question is therefore, what did the Greek word anamnesis mean to the inhabitants of Corinth in the first century of our era?

The somewhat magical design of the Eucharist could only be borrowed from the Eastern pagan religions, such as the cult of Cybele, perhaps through Montanus, who was one of her priests before to pass, with all his cultural knowledge, to Christianity. With the success that we know. This new prophet, supposedly inspired by the Holy Spirit, had a considerable influence on the rites of nascent Christianity. The Marcosians mentioned by Irenaeus at the end of the second century of our era used, for example, magic philters and potions during the Eucharist (according to Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1:13) and Ignatius of Antioch himself, a few years earlier, also considered the Eucharist as a medicine of immortality: *pharmakon tes zoes* in Greek language (at the beginning of the second century of our era).

AELRED ARNESEN AND THE MYTH OF ANAMNESIS.

"Theories of what happens at Eucharist generally depend upon some phrase or word of Scripture taken literally. The medieval doctrine of transubstantiation states that God, acting in the Eucharist, effects a change in the inner reality of the bread and wine. It depends upon the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood,' and was often buttressed by the famous phrase of Ignatius of Antioch, 'the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.' But the modern theory of anamnesis, based on St Paul's addition to the institution narrative, 'Do this in remembrance (anamnesis) of me,' refuses to admit the plain and literal meaning of the word anamnesis! The theory states in general that anamnesis means, 'to "re-call" or to "re-present" before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects.' But in all the dictionaries and lexicons, anamnesis, both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, means only 'remember,' 'recollect.' C. F. Evans, in his commentary on Luke, translates eis t'n em'n anamn'sin as 'have me in mind.'

Linked with this conception of anamnesis as a 're-calling' of an event from the past is the notion that in the five occurrences of the word in the Septuagint it reflects a Jewish sacrificial ritual. So Darwell Stone, after reviewing the evidence, concluded that the word "memorial" naturally suggests, without actually necessitating, the sense of a sacrificial memorial before God; and that in the case of the institution of the Eucharist the probability of a sacrificial meaning for this term is greatly strengthened by the use of the word "covenant" just before. Stone was followed by others in the same vein and noticeably by Stephen Bedale in 1953 who concluded that 'the word anamnesis on each occasion of its use in the LXX has exclusively a "God-ward reference"'. However, D. R. Jones in an article on Anamn'sis in the LXX and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11: 25, at the conclusion of his study of these and other passages says, '... the use of the word anamn'sis in the LXX involves too many ambiguities to provide authority for any particular interpretation of New Testament passages. Jones also adds the comment of Buchanan Grey that 'all attempts to interpret the Jesus' eis t'n em'n anamn'sin in the light of Jewish sacrificial ritual in any case fail to explain the em'n.'

At this point we now turn to Dix because, since the publication of his book about The Shape of the Liturgy in 1945, he has had the greatest influence in the promotion of the theory of anamnesis. Dom Gregory, stating the theory explicitly in his book, gives his opinion that today the words 'remembrance' or 'memorial' have well the meaning only of mental recollection of something that is absent. So he wished to maintain that in antiquity there was a more dynamic understanding, '... we have to take account of the primary understanding then general in a largely Greek-speaking church of the word anamnesis as meaning a "re-calling" or "re-presenting" of a thing in such a way that it is not so much regarded as being "absent," as itself presently operative by its effects.

This is a sense which the Latin memoria and its cognates do not adequately translate.' Dix goes on to apply this meaning to Eucharist, 'It is in this active sense, therefore, of "re-calling" or "re-presenting" before God the sacrifice of Christ, and thus making it here and now operative by its effects in the communicants that the Eucharist is regarded both by the New Testament and by second-century writers.'

Dix gives three texts in support of the anamnesis theory - Numbers 5:15; 1 Kings 17:18 & Hebrews 10:3-4. In these texts Dix wished to translate anamnesis as 're-call' but in fact, the Hebrew lying behind the Septuagint text clearly means 'remembrance' in one form or another. For example, 1 Kings 17:18 is translated by Dix as - "the widow of Sarepta complains that Elijah has come 'to "re-call" to (God's) remembrance her iniquity, and therefore her son has died."

In the NEB it is translated, 'What made you interfere, you man of God? You came here to bring my sins to light and kill my son.' Here the hiphil of the verb zkr is used in a sense apparently meaning 'to accuse' (before God). We may note that Westcott pointed out in his commentary on Hebrews 10:3-4 that anamnesis hamartion meant in that passage 'a calling to mind of sins.'

In the case of the second century writers to whom Dix appeals, it is well known that their expression of Eucharist is quite realist. Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus give clear instances of this usage. So Justin says that the Eucharist '... is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.' But none of the pre-Nicene writers put forward any theory of what they supposed was happening in Eucharist. They were writing in response to challenges from gnostic and pagan authors and were simply concerned to state that the Christian Eucharist was really about worship with the crucified and always living Lord. Neither the Old Testament texts we have reviewed nor the writers of the second century appear to support Dix's theory. Of course he was writing at the beginning of the so-called biblical theology

movement and at the time there seemed nothing strange about constructing a whole theory on a word which was said to have a special meaning for the biblical writers. Then it was believed that there is something called the 'Hebrew mentality', for which our ideas of past, present, and future are inappropriate. Since the work of James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (1961), such an idea has been largely discredited. But unfortunately, the liturgical polemics inherited from the time of the reformation, could not be bypassed in 1945. As we shall see, Dix's advocacy of the anamnesis theory was not unconnected with his view that the Protestant Eucharist was only a personal remembrance of the redeeming work of Christ.

Before we look at the form the anamnesis theory takes today, we need to note two other ways in which it claims support.

First of all, appeal has been made to the work of anthropologists such as Mircea Eliade. One of the ideas put out by Eliade and others is indeed that worship has as its chief aim the renew of the primordial events enshrined in the 'myth.' To recover in reality the primordial time of their beginnings there was the need to re-live or to re-enact the myth in a regular, cyclic rhythm. Most particularly, by the sacred meal the corporate life of the community was expressed and the primordial myth recovered through ritual re-enactment. "In religion as in magic, the periodic recurrence of anything signifies primarily that a mythical time is made present and then used indefinitely. Every ritual has the character of happening now, at this very moment. The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made present, "re-presented" so to speak, however, far back it may have been in the ordinary reckoning.'

We shall see that this approach has little or nothing to do with the presuppositions of the New Testament.

Secondly, it has become common to refer to what is claimed to be a Semitic usage of anamnesis in the first century.....

Editor's note. Since the flight from Egypt has never taken place historically speaking, we shall follow directly upon the continuation of this article by the Anglican or Catholic theologian Aelred Arnese, on Eucharist.

By making anamnesis, it is claimed, Christ, or the effects of his passion, will be actualized in Eucharist. So J. D. Crichton maintained, 'Through making memorial of (the past events of God's saving mercy) we are also asking that their saving power may be made present to here and now. and because we do so according to the command of Christ Christ effectively makes himself present for us in all his redeeming activity.'

Fr George Guiver connects with the idea of primordial myth, 'The full meaning of the Greek word anamnesis is remembrance, done in such a way as to call forth the actual presence here and now of the person and deeds commemorated, in the kind of way that liturgical re-enactment of myths has always done.' Crichton also comments on the work of Dom Odo Casel on the Continent in promoting the view of the Eucharist as 'mystery.' "What then is the particular significance of the use of the word mystery in the liturgy? It is a link between the past and the present, or rather it looks to the past to recover the power of the primordial event and makes its power present in the here and now so that the believer can encounter the redeeming Christ.' More specifically, Crichton writes, '...by the liturgical mystery we are actualizing the past event, making it present'

It does not appear that the anamnesis theory can find any basis in either the semantics of the word or in the Semitic usage of the first century. Nor do the primordial rites of primitive societies have anything to say to Christian faith, which is a direct personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The reformers rejected the transubstantiation theory that the inner reality of bread and wine was changed into the body and blood of the Lord because they said it overthrew the very nature of a sacrament. The theory of anamnesis has a like subversive effect in that it undermines resurrection faith in the Lord who is always there before us and calls us to worship. It is noticeable that in these liturgical theories of what happens at Eucharist, all the writers without exception begin, not from the person of Jesus as the New Testament authors express our relationship to him in discipleship, but from liturgical texts and biblical words forced into a ritual understanding. The result is that Eucharist appears to be something that we must activate, according to a rite, rather than a response to the prevenient action of Christ in the Spirit as we come to respond to the Father in worship. We have to ask, 'What sort of God is it who requires the worship envisaged by the anamnesis theory? Is it the Father of Jesus or a god of abstractions?' As Käsemann says, commenting on Paul's problems with the celebration of the Eucharist at Corinth (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23-34), 'The Apostle is maintaining against every possible magical, metaphysical or mystical misinterpretation that it is the Kyrios himself

in his self-manifestation who is dealing with us; in such a way as to lay hold on our will, lay claim to our obedience and set himself over us as indeed our Lord.'(Friar Aelred Arnesen).

Editor's note. Christians, as usual, claim the benefit of reasoning or justifications that they deny to others (pagan Jews, etc.)

Let us forget for a while that word anamnesis which muddles the trails, and let us say more simply that by the sacrament of Eucharist the Christian priest evokes the person of Christ. The words evoke or evocation designating in the lexicon of magic the operation resulting in making appear before the operator the non-human or superhuman entity whose services he wishes to solicit.

On line Encyclopedia Wikipedia. Evocation is the act of calling upon or summoning a spirit, demon, God or other supernatural agent, in the Western mystery tradition. Comparable practices exist in many religions or magical traditions and may employ the use of mind-altering substances with or without a word.

At Rome the evocatio was the "calling forth" or "summoning away" of a city's tutelary deity. The ritual was conducted in a military setting either as a threat during a siege or as a result of surrender, and aimed at diverting the god's power from the opposing city to the Roman side, customarily with a promise of a better-endowed cult or a more lavish temple. The evocation of spirits was a relatively common practice in Neo-Platonism, theurgy or other esoteric systems of antiquity. In contemporary western esotericism, the magic of the grimoires is frequently seen as the classical example of this practice. Manuals such as the Lesser Key of Solomon (or Lemegeton), the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage and many others provided instructions that combined intense devotion to the divine with the summoning of a cadre of spiritual advisers and familiars.

But let us return to our sheep, and more precisely to our Paschal lamb, for the best way to demystify something is to make the history of it. Nothing better, indeed, but to make the (impartial neutral and objective) history of a phenomenon, to lay it bare. For the king is always naked at the end of such a process.

History of this sacrament therefore.

At the beginning of Christianity, the Eucharist is celebrated at home. This happens, first of all, within meals, then they distinguish (St Paul alludes to it in 1 Cor. 11) the Eucharistic worship properly so called from these usual meals; to avoid at the same time the abuses (even drunkenness) and the inequalities, in order to give the Eucharistic meal its unique character. It was during the 2nd century that this frugal meal, an opportunity to celebrate the memory of the founder, became a "magic" type operation, probably originating in the cult of Attis or Cybele in Asia Minor through Montanism. The Eucharist is also called the Resurrection Sacrament of the Resurrection, because it is necessary for the general resurrection of bodies. Some also call the Eucharistic communion a medicine to have eternal life. See above Ignatius of Antioch: *pharmakon tes zoes* in Greek language (at the beginning of the second century of our era).

But it is also during the same second century that the evangelical narratives and various letters will be read and commented upon during the Eucharist, in the same way as the texts of the First or Old Testament, in accordance with synagogue usage.

Until the beginning of the 4th century, there is no church. Only the bishop presides over the ceremony. But all are involved, at least those who are baptized, for the catechumens are gradually introduced to this mystery: they participate only in the liturgy of the Word, as well as the penitents.

From this period on, the essential part of the proceedings of the Mass is to be found.

The first part.

- The meeting.
- The reading of a text and its explanation or comment.
- A great prayer.
- The bringing of bread and wine.

The second part, from which the non-baptized and the penitents (for instance the lapsi having failed during one of the two single official persecutions) are excluded, includes the Thanksgiving which consecrates this bread and this wine. It is the president of the celebration who says the great Eucharistic prayer, it results from his free inspiration, in line with the Jewish tradition of synagogue prayer. The deacons carry out the service of communion. This communion will be brought to the absentees at the end of the meeting.

The offertory (when bread and wine are offered on the altar) can be practiced in two different ways. Either the already prepared bread and wine are brought processionaly, as the East and Gaul do (this is there besides one of the possible explanations of the success of the Grail procession); or the faithful move forward to offer the bread and wine brought from their homes, as is the custom in Rome.

Around the year 220 or 250, the work entitled "The Apostolic Tradition" (due to Hippolytus of Rome ?) testifies to a liturgy still common to the East and the West. It is not the same in the fourth century, when rites and prayers develop and complicate, change and become enriched.

From the end of the fourth century onwards, it was by the word "mass" (at the end of the celebration, the deacon said : "Ite missa est", "Go, the assembly is dismissed" that people will designate the whole celebration in the West.

In the Catholic Mass, the actualization of the sacrifice results in the consecration of bread and wine, which become the body and blood of Christ; this change bears the name of transubstantiation (bread and wine change by substitutes and not by nature).

The sacrament of the Eucharist is also called communion, because the faithful are invited to share the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. There can be no mass without communion, since the priest necessarily takes communion, but the communion of the faithful is not obligatory. Conversely, communion is possible outside the Mass (for example, for the sick), but the species are necessarily consecrated during a Mass.

In the liturgies of the West (and unlike Eastern liturgies, whether Catholic or Orthodox), the consecrated host is a bread made of unleavened wheat flour. So, the hosts keep well and take up little space. For several centuries, the Catholic Church has been using white wine, red wine risking staining white linen, but the symbolism of the blood of Christ has not survived it.

Communion is valid under one or the other kinds, or in both, and can always be carried out in each of these three forms. Concretely, for practical reasons, communion is usually limited to bread, in the form of a host. Communion with the blood of Christ, in the form of wine, is more complicated and raises questions of hygiene (drinking with the chalice one after the other). There is also the communion by "intinction", for which the priest dips part of the host into the "precious blood" and immediately deposits this host on the tongue of the communicant. Communion under the "species" (in the form, appearance) of the wine is re-established for the faithful in certain ceremonies of exceptional nature (wedding, confirmation, etc.).

After communion, the priest must finish the consecrated wine, and proceed to purify the empty containers to eliminate all traces of consecrated matter. If there are any hosts, they may be placed in a covered ciborium enclosed in the tabernacle. If the priest cannot place the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle, he must consume them (or have them consumed by the faithful).

The dogma of transubstantiation / consubstantiation

This general doctrine is developed in different ways according to the Christian denominations.

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches profess the real presence of Christ, in his body and blood, under the appearances ("species") of bread and wine, the Transubstantiation.

The Calvinists assert that Jesus is present at the Mass but not in the Eucharist itself, in the soul of the faithful, and the Lutherans speak of Consubstantiation.

The question of the "real" or not (only symbolic) presence of the body and blood of Christ was raised as early as the Middle Ages.

At the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the real presence was first proclaimed at a council, in the form of the dogma of transubstantiation, using the Aristotelian term of substance. Thomas Aquinas specifies the dogma in his Summa Theologica.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the sacrificial aspect of the Mass was rejected by some reformers. The dogma was contested and the Sunday celebration took on a more or less different meaning in the various reformist denominations.

The Lutherans retained most of the Catholic liturgy but redefined the dogma, speaking of consubstantiation (under the appearance of bread and wine, there is simultaneously the reality of the body of Christ and of the bread or the blood of Christ and of the wine).

Conclusion: This short essay about the sacraments of Christianity wanted only to point out that the history of the sacraments (and dogmas) is neither simple (what we already knew) nor linear (what we sometimes forget) and that their successive definitions undergo the weight of the mentalities of a society as much as they shape them.

THE "SACRAMENT" OF MATRIMONY.

The quotation marks are necessary because, as for as marriage is concerned, the Church traditionally considers that they are the spouses who confer it upon each other, the priest (or the deacon, even the bishop) being only the compulsory witness.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1623 According to Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of Christ's grace mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church. In the tradition of the Eastern Churches, the priests (bishops or presbyters) are witnesses to the mutual consent given by the spouses, but for the validity of the sacrament their blessing is also necessary.

HISTORY OF THIS STRANGE "SACRAMENT."

The tradition of celebrating marriage in a religious building dates from the early Middle Ages; no text of the Gospels alludes to it. Christ's only intervention in a marriage is that of the Wedding at Cana, where he will not make a blessing, but where he will change water into wine, at the request of Mary, his mother.

During the first centuries of our era, Christians married "like everyone else." Marriage is a celebration - and a decision - family, public, but without other "official" character than the notary (if any). It is very interesting to note that the first intervention of bishops in marriage concerns those who have no legal father, that is to say, slaves and orphans. Marriage being the "decision of the Father," the bishop acts as a father.

It was not until Emperor Constantine the Great that the Church advised Christians to legally protect Christian marriage by Roman civil marriage, which could have two regimes: marriage cum manu and marriage sine manu .

Unlike Christian marriage, Roman marriage was not based on initial consent, but on continuous consent. Without consent, the marriage ceases. It is a private matter, and the public authority does not intervene.

The marriage was then a private ceremony, which took place in the house of the future wife, and gave rise to family re-enjoyments. A blessing was sometimes given, but it was not of official value. Marriage was a mutual, written and signed commitment, which the imperial legislation framed.

The Christianization of the Roman Empire, then the "barbarian" invasions, modified these practices.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, the habit of signing tablets (a writing) disappeared gradually: only witnesses (of the ceremony, or of the conjugal life) could henceforth justify the existence of union.

From the eighth to the ninth century, the Church intervened more. She leaves the law to the emperor and to his legislation and still does not make the marriage. But she proposes a morality. Charlemagne did not lack concubines. But this same emperor dictated to the married, under penalty of fifty blows with a stick, to present themselves to the priest after the weddings, in order to receive a blessing.

It was from the tenth century that the intervention of the Church in the very celebration of marriage will become more precise. From the blessing of the nuptial bed, we pass to the blessing given at the portal of the church and then to the mass in the church. It was therefore at this time that the church, by her registers of baptism and marriage, became the only known civil-status officer.

The notion of sacrament, fuzzy at the beginning, asserts itself in the 12th century. The marriage appears for the first time as one of the sacraments, alongside the Eucharist, penance and baptism, in a decree of Pope Lucius III against the heretics in 1184. In 1215, at the Fourth Council of the Lateran , held under Innocentius III, marriage is more codified by the Church which integrates it within the sacraments being defined. The Catholic Church continues her regulation of marriage by treating for the first time the question for the whole Latin Church.

The main conditions for religious marriage are....

-At least one of the two spouses must be Catholic.

- No spouse must be bound by a valid previous marriage.
- They must be really free in their consent (freedom).
- The man and the woman commit each other definitively (indissolubility).
- They accept the responsibility of being parents (fertility).

The first necessary condition is therefore to be baptized in the Catholic Church.

However, it is possible that a Catholic marries a person who is not.

In this case, if the non-Christian person is in agreement with the essential elements of Christian marriage and commits to respect the faith of one's spouse, it is possible to ask the bishopric for a "dispensation for disparity of cult."

If no partner is a Christian, it is not possible to get married in a Church, for you must be baptized to receive a sacrament. If you wish to get married in a Church and you are not baptized, you can undertake a move to catechumenate.

Widowed people can be again married in a Church because the marriage bond is a commitment for earthly life, the marriage bond no longer exists in the eternal life.

7TH AND LAST BIG MAGICAL OPERATION OF CHRISTIANITY: THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK.

But the Lord did this once for all, and did not also wish us to do it. In the same way, also, the apostles laid their hands, agreeably to that time at which it pleased the Lord that the graces of the spirit should be dispensed in answer to their prayers; not that posterity might, as those apes do, mimic the empty and useless sign without the reality.....where did they get their oil which they call the oil of salvation? Who taught them to seek salvation in oil? Who taught them to attribute to it the power of strengthening?" (Calvin. Institutes of the Christian religion).

Epistle of James 5:13-20. "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

And the prayer offered in faith will make (sosei) the sick person well; the Lord will raise (egerei) them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful, etc."

This passage from the Epistle of James is intriguing for several reasons.

- 1) Because it seems to promise unconditionally the fulfillment of the prayer (like John 14: 13-14).
- 2) Because it involves a bodily healing.
- 3) Because the Catholic Church bases on this passage two of her sacraments (private confession and sacrament of the sick).
- 4) Because anoint with oil can seem like a very exotic practice.

Four interpretations have been given of this oil anointing:

1) This is a merely medicinal practice. Olive oil was used for wounds, skin diseases, sciatica and for severe headaches. This presence of oil (that strangely Matthew and Luke suppress in their parallel narrative: Mt 10: 1-15, Lk 9: 1-6) does not have another meaning than medicinal, according to the Catholic commentator himself! We have to remember the therapeutic virtue of the oil, recognized by the whole Antiquity. The Hebrews used it to heal the wounds and to soothe the sufferings and Jesus points out this practice in his parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34). Friction, when it is not with perfume but oil, is therefore a remedy. One of the interpretations of this passage would mean therefore that it is necessary to use the best medicine of one's time and to pray God to make it effective.

2. The oil is the sacrament of extreme unction. This sacrament is called since Vatican II: "the anointing of the sick," it is generally accompanied by a general confession before death. God will "save" the sick (from his sins) and raise him (i.e., will resurrect him).

3. The oil was used to psychologically strengthen the faith. It was an adjuvant like the cake of figs of Isaiah (2K 20: 7) or the handkerchiefs of Paul (Acts 19:12). But neither Isaiah nor Paul recommended these practices as James recommends the anointing with oil.

4. The anointing of oil falls into the category of symbolic gestures, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper. The oil was used as a symbol of divine favor, as a sign of the life-giving presence of God. The anointing of oil on the head was an ancient ritual of the Jews to invest prophets (Is 61: 1), priests (Ex. 29: 7) and kings (1 Sam. 10:1).

The order of the various elements seems to be the following: 1. The patient calls the elders. 2. The elders inquire about his past sins and insist that the sick person repent. 3. The ancients anoint the head of the sick with oil in the name of the Lord. 4 They pray for healing by believing that God will grant it.

As everything depends on the meaning of this passage of the letter a few words therefore on this subject to present it.

The Epistle of James, in spite of the beginning which is like a letter (1: 1) is not a true letter. It has no systematic and regular structure. It is in no way a development or a defense of a doctrine, but rather an exhortation to live concretely the gospel (the relations between faith and works).

The epistle of James is perhaps the least read in all the New Testament epistles. Why ? No doubt because of its rough, cut, energetic style, marked by many imperatives (60 out of 108 verses), many questions (about twenty), multiple themes ... therefore a text difficult to summarize, often critical, little systematic, rare in mentions of Jesus, only two (in 1:1 and 2:1, and, moreover, without direct reference either to his incarnation, his crucifixion or his resurrection). It is a sapiential text, which cannot be exactly dated, nor localized, nor attributed to a known author. That his author is James "the brother of the Lord" is only a hypothesis, and the specialists trace it back to a date between 70 (terminus a quo) and 130 (terminus ad quem).

As we have already had the opportunity to say in our chapter devoted to the putting together of the canon, its only interest perhaps is to contain a passage which can justify the existence of the sacrament of the sick, once called extreme unction.

We have in this epistle a glimpse of the nature of the Christianity experienced by Jews converted or by pagan-Christians but still living under a very strong influence of the O.T. This book did not receive the marks of Paul's Epistles.

As mentioned above, the passage which concerns us is made up of verses 14 to 16 in chapter 5. The whole problem comes from the Greek words *astheneo* and *sosei* or *egerei* which can both mean bodily... or spiritual, healing.

The whole question, therefore, is to know whether it is a question in these verses of bodily illnesses or of spiritually weaknesses?

"Is anyone among you in trouble?" The Greek word *kakopatheo* literally means suffering from a disease, the word is used without a prefix in 2 Timothy 2:9, 4:5 and, with a prefix, in 1:8 and 2:3. In these texts of the NT, it is certainly bodily suffering.

"Is anyone among you sick?" The Greek word *astheneo*, lit.: weak, frail, is used to describe a bodily illness in John 5: 3-7 and elsewhere. In Romans 5: 6; 8: 3 and 26, to speak of moral weakness.

My former pen friend in Celtic history, F. Vouga, points out the difference between the two verbs used in this passage: to save and to raise. To save is used by James in 4 passages:

- 1:21: '... accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (*sosai tas psuchas humon*).
- 2:14: ' What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? '
- 4:12: ' There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy'....' *sozo* is opposed here to *apollumi*.
- 5:20: ' Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them (from death) and cover over a multitude of sins."

In these four passages, *sozo* has a soteriological and eschatological significance, and it can be concluded that whatever the value of the futures *sosei* and *egerei*, this is the meaning to be given also to it in 5:15. In the same way that James, who uses here *sozo* about the fulfillment of the prayer for the sick, while it would be logical to find *iaomai* (to cure), conversely uses *iaomai* in the verse 16, in which it would be logical to have *sozo*. This reversal of the use of the verbs is determining. It indicates:

1. That the prayer of the elders on the sick does not have his cure as the main goal, but his salvation. In other words, in affirming that the prayer offered in faith will save the sick, James says his absolute confidence in the eventual fulfillment, i.e., in the fidelity of God who accompanies the brother in his sickness and suffering.

2. This first affirmation is commented upon by the second: 'And the Lord will raise them or' resurrect them'. By keeping the ambiguity of *egerei*, James leaves God free in the way he will respond: will it be by healing, or by giving the patient to live his illness differently? James leaves this question open-ended.

In an article of *Bibliotheca Sacra* of July-September 1981 (pp. 258-266), Daniel R. Hayden examined this passage. His thesis is that it does not relate to physical illnesses, but to the spiritual recovery of discouraged or depressed people.

Hayden draws our attention to the uniqueness of this piece of advice throughout the NT: there is no mention of this duty of the elders in Paul's epistles - which nevertheless mention the gift of healing. Since this gift of healing existed in the early Church, why James did not ask for a brother who had this gift? The function of the elders is to encourage the members of their Church. Weaker members must call the elders, who are stronger, to be encouraged and to pray for them. The mention of a sin to be confessed and forgiven confirms that these are spiritual problems this passage of James refers therefore to the healing of psychasthenic and discouraged people and not to that of the bodily sickness.

Hayden's plea does not lack originality but his arguments are not convincing; in particular his interpretation of the oil anointing as a simple sign of encouragement

Of course, the verb *asthenein* is sometimes used to refer to something other than bodily illness, for example a religious, moral, psychological or even economic weakness, but this is not the case here. The author really uses it to talk about a bodily illness. Several corroborating clues establish this.

The verb *sozein* has several meanings, the main ones being: a) to avoid natural dangers or to shield from distress (sickness, possession); B) to save from eternal death, from judgment and from what leads to it: to preserve from sin.

The author of the letter does not promise: "The prayer offered in faith will heal the sick." He says, "The Lord will raise them up." This raising can be done by a (immediate or gradual) healing, or by a new strength to face one's patient's condition and to bear one's suffering.

And he adds: "If they have sinned, they will be forgiven." The order to confess one's to each other comes directly afterwards.

What does mean the sentence: "The Lord will raise them up"?

Marc Luthi tells us that the verb translated as 'to raise' (*egerei*) is very frequently used to talk about the resurrection ... On several occasions, Jesus gives the man he heals the order to stand up (Matthew 9:5; Luke 7:14, 8:54, John 5:8). They are always sick or disabled, bed-bound or on the ground, and they are re-established. Thus, in this illness background; determining for the choice of the meaning "He will raise them up," we must understand a promise of salvation for the body. What distinguishes it from the previous promise is the emphasis put on the restoration, that is to say the return to an active life.

It is clear that James deals with physical healing, not spiritual preparation for death, and that it is the action of the Lord that performs the healing, not oil, the laying on of hands, nor the power of the elders.

Question now. Why this practice advocated by James has not been taken more seriously in the history of the Church?

This is the question asked by Mark Luthi. He gives it three answers.

1) The disaffection of which the Epistle of James suffered throughout the history of the Church (delays in admitting it into the canon, dispute about the name of his author and his apostolicity).

2) The nature of his message, which lies more on the periphery of the Gospel and does not mention the central themes of faith. Discredit brought on the Epistle by Luther because of his insistence on works.

3) Evolution of the understanding and of the application of James 5:14-16 over the centuries.

a) During the first 8 centuries, the faithful's attention was directed towards the healing of the body. The anointing of the sick was regarded as a supernatural, quasi-magical remedy.

b) Until the eve of the Reformation, the anointing was intended to prepare the faithful for death ("last rites").

c) As early as the 16th century, James's text was related to spiritual gifts, which were considered as being time limited (for the time of the apostles). Calvin in his famous lampoon devoted to the institutes of the Christian religion even went so far as to speak of antics to deal with the practice of extreme unction. "But the Lord did this once for all, and did not also wish us to do it. In the same way, also, the apostles laid their hands, agreeably to that time at which it pleased the Lord that the graces of the spirit should be dispensed in answer to their prayers; not that posterity might, as those apes do, mimic the empty and useless sign without the reality.....where did they get their oil which they call the oil of salvation? Who taught them to seek salvation in oil? Who taught them to attribute to it the power of strengthening? Was it Paul, who.....? (Calvin. Institutes of the Christian religion).

Alec Motyer recounts briefly the steps that led the Catholic Church to apply this text to the last rites. Around the 3rd century was introduced the habit of making "consecrated" by the bishop, the oil used for the anointing of the sick.

Around the 10th century, it was more and more a consecrated priest who carried out the anointing of the sick.

Around the 12th century, the expressions "extreme unction" and "sacrament of the departing" appear.

The name of Extreme Unction was not generalized in the West until the end of the twelfth century, and never became common in Eastern Christianity. This sacrament was previously known by all kinds of other names as "holy oils," "anointing of the sick," "anointing of God" etc.

In the Eastern Churches the technical name to designate this sacrament was subsequently *euchelaion* (the prayer-oil prayer); but other names have been and are still in use, for example *elaion hagian* (holy oil) etc.

In the 13th century, the anointing ceremony was recognized as one of the "seven sacraments" instituted by Christ himself, so that the Council of Trent (from 1545) could anathematize anyone who denies that extreme unction is a sacrament instituted by Christ ... promulgated by the Blessed Apostle James or denies that the unction confers grace and forgives sins or who thinks that the elders to whom Jacques refers are not priests ordained by a bishop.

The term Extreme Unction has nevertheless almost disappeared from the vocabulary of the Church. It is replaced today by "sacrament of the sick."

Some theologians also explain the origin of its former name by the fact that this anointing was considered the last in the order of the sacramental or almost-sacramental unctions, the first three being baptism, confirmation, and ordination; but in view of the situation at the moment when the name appears, it is much more probable that it was an anointing for those who were at the point of death, especially as the corresponding name, *sacramentum exeuntium*, came into common use at the same time.

Others increase this explanation and call it thus

-On the one hand because it is the last of the rites that a Christian can receive, after those of baptism and confirmation, and for the clerics that of ordination,

-On the other hand, because it is a sacrament which helps us to die well; the Christian receives it at the end of his life.

The very definition of this sacrament is therefore not univocal: sometimes "anointing of the sick" or "or of the disabled," sometimes "sacrament of the departing" or "of those who pass from this life to the other."

One of its difficulties, therefore, comes from the fact that the opinions of theologians diverge in time and space, and sometimes seem to contradict one another.

The books of theology, of conscience guiding or the sermons of the beginning of the 17th century do not systematically allude to the fear felt by the sick facing Extreme Unction. The fear of death exists, but it seems accepted as "normal"; the sacrament reassures rather and opens a hope. On the contrary, this dramatized fear became omnipresent at the end of the seventeenth century and especially in the

eighteenth century, where it was found to be mentioned even in rituals, which are in principle disciplinary and liturgical works in which the "psychological" would not interfere. It sometimes forces the pastors to take into account "superstitious," but become dominant, collective attitudes.

Many people do not want to receive Extreme Unction because they imagine that after you have received it, it is not allowed to make your conjugal duties to eat flesh, etc. This fear is probably rooted in the Celtic old penitential practices which compelled those who were subjected to it to a particular way of life, including abstinence from eating meat and conjugal relations. Widespread until the fifteenth century, though fought by the Church, this idea led the faithful to postpone the receipt of the sacrament when they did not entirely reject it.

Among the superstitions denounced by Thiers, there are some whose origin, less obvious, remains linked to the surrounding culture. Thus, the refusal to stand at the foot of the bed of the sick, while they are given Extreme Unction because they die earlier because of that, evokes an image prevalent at the end of the Middle Ages. A priest stands at the bedside of the departing, while the demons bide their time and the family prays around; the death waits patiently, by sitting at the foot of the bed. To sit in this place it is therefore perhaps to play her part *de facto*. Lastly, the prohibition of spinning into the room of a patient who would have received the Extreme Unction, because he would die if you stop spinning or if the thread breaks, is not without evoking the action of the triad of mother goddesses supposed to watch the destiny of human beings in the ancient world.

The ambiguity of the Extreme Unction in modern times thus proceeds from the variations of its meaning since antiquity. After his healing function had been somewhat made disappeared, the emphasis was more and more put on the forgiveness of sins. This insistence on the relation to penance combined with the vagueness of the Epistle of St. James and with the nuanced wordings of the Tridentine decrees, making possible a plurality of opinions, provokes other divergences between the theologians on the effects of this sacrament.

A question arises, indeed: if sins are erased by the Extreme Unction, what is the use of the previous sacrament of penance ? Besides, does it clean all sins, even mortal? Prudent, the Council of Trent did not decide: " the anointing cleanses away sins, if there be any still to be expiated," which takes into account the sins forgotten or not confessed in time and thereby frees the faithful from their main fear: die in a state of deadly sin.

As for the restoration of bodily health, it seemed an obvious expectation in antiquity; but this sacrament was progressively given not for the bodily healing of the patient, but for the preparation of a Christian for death. At the beginning of the modern age, it was still admitted that anointing could promote healing, but without automatism. The Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566) suggests a more moral explanation, in order to explain why the sick who receive this sacrament are not all better: " this is to be attributed, not to any defect of the Sacrament, but rather to the weaker faith of a great part of those who are anointed with the sacred oil, or by whom it is administered (sic)".

THE RE-ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD: THE SACRAMENTALS.

Sacramentals are not sacraments, they are signs objects, words or actions such as the sign of the cross, holy water, etc...especially known in Catholic Christianity and to a lesser extent in Orthodox Christianity.

No one claiming, unlike the sacraments, that they were instituted by Jesus Christ the question is: where do they come from?

ESSAY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE by John Henry Newman (Oxford University).

There is a virtue or grace in the Gospel which changes the quality of doctrines, opinions, usages, actions, and personal characters when incorporated with it, and makes them right and acceptable to its Divine

Author, whereas before they were either infected with evil, or at best but shadows of the truth. This is the principle, above spoken of, which I have called the Sacramental. " We know that we are of God, and the whole

world lies in wickedness," is an enunciation of the principle ; or, the declaration of the Apostle of the Gentiles, " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

Thus it is that outward rites, which are but worthless in themselves, lose their earthly character and become sacraments under the Gospel.

In like manner when the Jewish exorcists attempted to " call over them which had evil spirits the Name of the Lord Jesus," the evil spirit professed not to know them, and inflicted on them a bodily injury....

In like manner Celsus objects that Christians did not " endure the sight of temples, altars, and statues "; Porphyry, that "they blame the rites of worship, victims, and frankincense "; the heathen disputant in the Octavius by Minucius asks, " Why have Christians no altars, no temples, no conspicuous images ? " And " no sacrifices "; and yet it is plain from Tertullian that Christians had altars of their own, and sacrifices and priests. And that they had churches is again and again proved by Eusebius who had seen " the houses of prayer leveled " in the Diocletian persecution ; from the history too of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, nay from Clement. Again, St. Justin and Minucius speak of the form of the Cross in terms of reverence, quite inconsistent with the doctrine that external emblems of religion may not be venerated.

Tertullian speaks of Christians signing themselves with it whatever they set about whether they walk, eat, or lie down to sleep. In Eusebius's life of Constantine, the figure of the Cross holds a most conspicuous place ; the Emperor sees it in the sky and is converted ; he places it upon his standards ; he inserts it into his own hand when he puts up his statue.

Wherever the Cross is displayed in his battles, he conquers; he appoints fifty men to carry it ; he engraves it on his soldiers' arms and Licinius dreads its power. Shortly after, Julian plainly accuses Christians of worshipping the wood of the Cross, though they refused to worship the ancile. In a later age, the worship of images was introduced.

Editor's note. In fact, it is a little more complicated than that !

The principle of the distinction, by which these observances were pious in Christianity and superstitious in paganism, is implied in such passages of Tertullian, Lactantius, and others, as speak of evil spirits lurking under the pagan statues. It is also intimated by Origen, who, after saying that Scripture so strongly " forbids temples, altars, and images," that Christians are " ready to go to death, if necessary, rather than pollute their notion of the God of all by any such transgression," assigns as a reason, " that, as far as possible, they might not fall into the notion that images were gods." St. Augustine, in replying to Porphyry, is more express ; " Those," he says, " who are acquainted with Old and New Testament do not blame in the pagan religion the erection of temples or institution of priesthoods, but that these are done to idols and devils... True religion blames in their superstitions,

not so much their sacrificing, for the ancient saints sacrificed to the True God, as their sacrificing to false gods."

To Faustus the Manichean he answers, " We have some things in common with the Pagans, but our purpose is different," And St. Jerome asks Vigilantius, who made objections to lights and oil, " Because we once worshipped idols, is that a reason why we should not worship God, for fear of seeming to address him with an honor like that which was paid to idols and then was detestable, whereas this is paid to Martyrs and therefore to be received ? "

Confiding then in the power of Christianity to resist the infection of evil, and to transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon worship to an evangelical use, and also feeling that these usages had originally come from primitive revelations and from the instinct of nature, though they had been corrupted ; and that they must invent what they needed if they did not use what they found ; and that they were, moreover, possessed of the very archetypes, of which paganism attempted the shadows; the rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction the existing rites and customs of the populace, as well as the philosophy of the educated class.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus supplies the first instance on record of this economy. He was the Apostle of Pontus, and one of his methods for governing an untoward population is thus related by St. Gregory of Nyssa. " On returning/ 7 he says, " to the city, after revisiting the country round about, he increased the devotion of the people everywhere by instituting festive meetings in honor of those who had fought for the faith. The bodies of the Martyrs were distributed in different places, and the people assembled and made merry, as the year came round, holding a festival in their honor. This indeed was a proof of his great wisdom ... for, perceiving that the childish and untrained populace were retained in their idolatrous error by creature comforts, in order that what was of first importance should at any rate be secured to them, viz. that they should look to God in place of their vain rites, he allowed them to be merry, jovial, and gay at the monuments of the holy Martyrs, as if their behavior would in time undergo a spontaneous change into greater seriousness and strictness, since faith would lead them to it ; which has actually been the happy issue in that population, all carnal gratification having turned into a spiritual form of rejoicing." 6 There is no reason to suppose that the license here spoken of passed the limits of harmless though rude festivity ; for it is observable that the same reason, the need of holidays for the multitude, is assigned by Origen, St. Gregory's master, to explain the establishment of the Lord's Day also, and the Paschal and the Pentecostal festivals, which have never been viewed as unlawful compliance ; and, moreover, the people were in fact eventually reclaimed from their gross habits by his indulgent policy, a successful issue which could not have followed an accommodation to what was sinful.

The example set by St. Gregory in an age of persecution was impetuously followed when a time of peace succeeded.

In the course of the fourth century two movements or developments spread over the face of Christendom, with a rapidity characteristic of the Church ; the one ascetic, the other ritual or ceremonial. We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees ; incense, lamps, and candles ; votive offerings on recovery from illness ; holy water ; asylums ; holidays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields ; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.

The eighth book of Theodoret's work *Adversus Gentiles*, which is "On the Martyrs," treats so largely on the subject, that we must content ourselves with only a specimen of the illustrations which it affords, of the principle acted on by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. " Time, which makes all things decay," he says, speaking of the Martyrs, " has preserved their glory incorruptible. For as the noble souls of those conquerors traverse the heavens, and take part in the spiritual choirs, so their bodies are not consigned to separate tombs, but cities and towns divide them among them ; and call them saviors of souls and bodies, and physicians, and honor them as the protectors and guardians of cities, and,

using their intervention with the Lord of all, obtain through them divine gifts. And though each body be divided, the grace remains indivisible ; and that small, that tiny particle is equal in power with the Martyr that hath never been dispersed about. For the grace which is ever blossoming distributes the gifts, measuring the bounty according to the faith of those who come for it.....not coming to them as to gods, but beseeching them as divine men, and asking their intercession. And that they obtain what they ask in faith, their dedications openly witness, in token of their cure. For some bring likenesses of eyes, others of feet, others of hands ; some of gold, others of silver ; and their Lord accepts even the small and cheap, measuring the gift by the offerer's ability ...

Philosophers and Orators are consigned to oblivion, and kings and captains are not known even by name to the many ; but the names of the Martyrs are better known to all than the names of those dearest to them. And they make a point of giving them to their children, with a view of gaining for them thereby safety and protection....

Nay, of the so-called gods, so utterly have the sacred places been destroyed that not even their outline remains, nor the shape of their altars is known to men of this generation, while their materials have been dedicated to the shrines of the Martyrs. For the Lord has introduced His own dead in place of your gods ; of the one He has made a riddance, on the other. He has conferred their honors.

For the Pandian Festival, the Diasia, and the Dionysia, and your other such, we have the feasts of Peter, of Paul, of Thomas, of Sergius, of Marcellus, of Leontius, of Panteleemon, of Antony, of Maurice, and of the other Martyrs ; and for that old-world procession, and indecency of work and word, are held modest festivities, without intemperance, or revel, or laughter, but with divine hymns, and attendance on holy discourses and prayers, adorned with laudable tears." This was the view of the " Evidences of Christianity " which a bishop of the fifth century offered for the conversion of unbelievers.

The introduction of Images was still later, and met with more opposition in the West than in the East. It is grounded on the same great principle which I am illustrating ; and as I have given extracts from Theodoret for the developments of the fourth and fifth centuries, so will I now cite St. John Damascene in defense of the further developments of the eighth. " As to the passages you adduce," he says to his opponents, " they abominate not the worship paid to our Images, but that of the Greeks, who made them gods. It needs not therefore, because of the absurd use of the Greeks, to abolish our use which is so pious. Enchanters and wizards use adjurations, so does the Church over its Catechumens ; but they invoke devils, and she invokes God against devils. Greeks dedicate images to devils, and call them gods ; but we to True God Incarnate, and to God's servants and friends, who drive away the troops of devils.

Again, " As the holy Fathers overthrew the temples and shrines of the devils, and raised in their places shrines in the names of Saints and we worship them, so also they overthrew the images of the devils, and in their stead raised images of Christ, and God's Mother, and the Saints. And under the Old Covenant, Israel neither raised temples in the name of men, nor was the memory of man made a festival ; for, as yet, man's nature was under a curse, and death was the condemnation, and therefore was lamented, and a corpse was reckoned unclean and he who touched it ; but now that the Godhead has been combined with our nature, as some life-giving and saving medicine, our nature has been glorified and is trans-elemented into incorruption. Wherefore the death of Saints is made a feast, and temples are raised to them, and Images are painted... For the Image is a triumph, and a manifestation, and a monument in memory of the victory of those who have done nobly and excelled, and of the shame of the devils defeated and overthrown.'

.....

It is quite consistent with the tenor of these remarks to observe, or to allow, that real superstitions have sometimes obtained in parts of Christendom from its intercourse with the heathen ; or have even been admitted, or all but admitted, though commonly resisted strenuously, by authorities in the Church, in

Consequence of the resemblance which exists between the heathen rites and certain portions of her ritual. As philosophy has at times corrupted her divines, so has paganism corrupted her worshippers ; and as the more intellectual have been involved in heresy, so have the ignorant been corrupted by superstition. Thus St. Chrysostom is vehement against the superstitious usages which Jews and Gentiles were introducing among Christians at Antioch and Constantinople. " What shall we say," he asks in one place, " about the amulets and bells which are hung upon the hands, and the scarlet woof, and other things full of such extreme folly ; when they ought to invest the child with nothing else save the protection of the Cross ? But now that is despised which hath converted the whole world, and given the sore wound to the devil, and overthrown all his power ; while the thread, and the woof, and the other amulets of that kind, are entrusted with the child's safety."

After mentioning further superstitions, he proceeds, " Now that among Greeks such things should be done, is no wonder ; but among the worshippers of the Cross, and partakers in unspeakable mysteries, and professors of such morality, that such unseemliness should prevail, this is especially to be deplored again and again." And in like manner St. Augustine suppressed the feasts called Agapae, which had been allowed the African Christians on their first conversion.

"It is time," he says, " for men who dare not deny that they are Christians, to begin to live according to the will of Christ, and, now being Christians, to reject what was only allowed that they might become Christians."....

in like manner it certainly is possible that the consciousness of the sanctifying power in Christianity may have acted as a temptation to sins, whether of deceit or of violence ; as if the habit or state of grace destroyed the sinfulness of certain acts, or as if the end justified the means.

It is but enunciation, in other words, the principle we are tracing, to say that the Church has been entrusted with the dispensation of grace. For if she can convert heathen appointments into spiritual rites and usages, what is this but to be in possession of a treasure, and to exercise a discretionary power in its application ?

Oil had various uses, as 'for healing the sick, or as in the rite of extreme unction. Indulgences in works or in periods of penance, had a different meaning, according to circumstances. In like manner the Sign of the Cross was one of the earliest means of grace ; then holy seasons, and holy places, and pilgrimage to them; holy water; prescribed prayers or other observances ; garments, as the scapular, or coronation robes ; the rosary ; the crucifix.

And for some wise purpose doubtless, such as that of showing the power of the Church in the dispensation of divine grace, as well as the perfection and spirituality of the Eucharistic Presence, the Chalice is in the West withheld from all but the celebrant in the Holy Eucharist.

Warning to the reader. At many times in the text below, completely imbued with pantheism or the will to re-enchant the world, his author, a convinced Catholic (his main sources are Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Action, Origin, Development, Interpretation*, Ed. Du Cerf, 1999. Domenico Sartore, Achille M. Triacca, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Liturgy*, Brepols, 1992-2002) Insists on the fact that these sacramentals have nothing to do with magic. That is his right. As for ourselves, we shall refer our readers to the automaticity which is linked *ex opere operato* to some of these sacramentals of Christianity, which cannot in this case depend on the dispositions or the (good) will of those who RECEIVES THEM, and here we think especially of the blessingOF THE THINGS. OR OF THE DEAD.

DIVERSITY OF FORMS OF SACRAMENTALS THEREFORE.

If we try to list these various signs, we realize that it is always a ritual of intercession, which itself falls into three categories: the blessing (the main and most widespread category), the exorcism and lastly the procession. An exhaustive list of the sacramentals cannot be found, but we can refer to the enumeration drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§ 1671-1673):

1. Blessings-Consecrations:

A) persons: abbots, abbesses of monasteries, consecrated virgins, monks, readers, acolytes, catechists.

B) places and objects: dedication of a church, consecration of an altar, blessing of holy oils.

2. Other benedictions: Blessing of persons (depending on the situations and circumstances of life) and of human realities or of the riches of creation.

3. Exorcisms and supplications.

4. Liturgical Processions: Presentation of the Lord, Palm, Easter Vigil, Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

5. Eucharistic exposition, procession and benediction.

6. Celebrations of the Word: for instance the non-sacramental penitential celebration.

7. Prayers for the dying and ritual of the funeral.

The sacramentals may include celebrations such as funerals, liturgical actions at a time of the year such as the blessing of candles, ashes, palms, the procession of the day of the Presentation of the Lord or of the Palm; the washing of the feet, on Holy Thursday; the veneration of the Cross, the Good Friday.

It may also be considered that these sacramentals formed particular rites during a sacramental action. Thus for baptism: signation, holy water, exsufflation, laying on of hands, the salt, the anointing of the catechumens, the candle, the christening robe.

But this approach does not seem satisfactory. It is preferable to see the sacramentals as actions that help to better understand the place of the sacraments. Otherwise, there is a risk of confining oneself to the sacramentals and

forgetting the sacraments from which they are drawn: e.g., the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside the reference to the celebration of the Eucharist.

Likewise, sacramental elements are considered to be used for individual and domestic use in the daily life: for instance holy water, sign of the cross, palms hanging on the cross, ashes, candles. These signs prolong and remind in the ordinary life of persons of what has been signified, recognized in the liturgical community celebration. Their sometimes strange, or even "magical," use is not enough to put into perspective the relevance of the practice of these private practices which seek to support and express the faith.

The Consecrations - Blessings

They are deprecatory prayers on persons and things, destined to draw upon them the protection and benefits of the Deity. Through prayer, the Church inserts effectively in the mystery of the salvation of Christ the realities and persons, that as creatures are already under the protection of God. The blessing of things, which has as its background the action of the Divine one in history, aims to contribute to the development of the true good of the person, in conformity with the measures taken by God.

Blessing represents both the language of every prayer – to speak well of God - and the primary and essential form of the sacramentals. Indeed, blessing expresses man's gratitude to God, for it is he who blesses man first. Everything is grace, everything comes from God. The blessing is, first of all, an act of faith, an attitude of the man who, before God, knows he is indebted to Him. To bless is to turn to God, to name him, to praise him, to ask him to manifest his presence. He is the source of all blessings, of all good.

In Christ, God blesses us and we bless Him. So the blessings that are fulfilled in particular celebrations belong to the life of all the baptized. They are of two kinds:

- The first affect permanently certain people in their lives. They also concern certain places and objects by wanting to mark thus a destination.

They are called "blessings" or "consecrations." In the act of consecration, persons and things are removed from the free disposition of man. He may no longer do what he wants with them. Through her prayer, the Church entrusts them to God through Christ, who is the high liturgy of the Church. In this category we may place the consecration or dedication of a church or altar, of a chalice, the blessing of an abbot, the consecration of virgins, religious or monastic profession of faith.

These blessings consecrations are, in principle, reserved to the bishop, or additionally to the priests. They are the object of particular rituals.

-The second, the most numerous, and the most frequent, signify that all the circumstances of men's lives can be lived with God. They develop the believing consciousness, direct existence towards the Divine one. They have levels of ecclesiality linked to action, persons or objects. According to this degree, the ministers may be the bishop alone, the bishop or a delegate priest, a priest or a deacon, an instituted layman (acolyte, reader) or another secular man or woman.

The best known blessing at this level is the Benedicite, prayer before the family or community meal. The ritual of blessings distinguishes five types of blessing: that concerning persons, human activities, objects for worship and devotion, and lastly various blessings. When it is a question of the blessings of objects or material realities, they are always in relation to man, with the use of things, with the destination of the creation and its becoming as for the salvation of man. Among the blessings, for example, there are some of them which are perceived as liturgical actions. They call for community celebrations that include the proclamation and reception of the Word, the prayer of the Church (praise, supplication and intercession, prayer for blessing and prayer of blessing often accompanied by a gesture). This gesture is not always the sign of the cross. It may be the sprinkling holy water, the hands raised, extended or joint. This gesture cannot be a blessing in itself, in order to avoid superstitions * and to favor the participating celebration (Ritual of Blessings, § 27). So blessing can be a sign and a means by which man hears the Good News of Jesus Christ and his victory over evil, recognizes God in the core of all the realities of life, and celebrates God with the Church and by her.

Exorcisms.

Another category of sacramentals, the exorcisms. They have always been attested throughout history. This third type of sacramental is the one that presents the most difficulties for contemporary man. The latter regards the intervention of the devil in human affairs as highly problematic. Let us simply say that in carrying out exorcisms, the Church, following the example of Jesus, asks for the protection of God in her struggle against Satan.

In a simple form, they are found in the sacrament of baptism. In the ritual of the Christian initiation of adults, they take place during the three scrutinies. By them is notified the salvific action of Christ who delivers us from the power of evil. Often, holy water as a reminder of baptism will notify it. In his prayer to the Father, the Lord never ceases to ask, "Deliver us from evil." Lastly, out of baptism, solemn exorcism, called great exorcism, can only be practiced by a priest authorized by the bishop. Its ritual was promulgated in 1998. We will return to this later.

The processions.

Some celebrations in the year are preceded or followed by a procession: thus the Presentation of the Lord, the Palm, the Paschal Vigil, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. They aim to do the memorial (anamnesis) of the mystery symbolically celebrated in time and space. There are also extraordinary processions, prescribed locally: such a walk displaying a statue of the Virgin ** or the relics of a saint. The ceremonial of bishops devotes to it a chapter (XXI). Pilgrimages belong to the same symbolism. It's about getting started to change something in one's life.

The ritual celebration accompanies this path. It is a move to a revered place (sanctuary) that symbolizes the path of Christian life and even can heal the body (healing sanctuaries like Lourdes). It makes possible to experiment a communion with God, with the Church, through the venerated place or object. Other devotions are added to the pilgrimage and shape it: procession, way of the cross, litanies and rosaries, candles, veneration of relics or images. The traditional program of the pilgrimage is organized on the basis of these available, not necessarily all used, elements, making the pilgrim step a movable and adjustable practice. The persons in charge of pilgrimage today seek to offer other forms: catechesis and meetings, celebrations of sacraments or sacramentals (celebration of the Word, penitential celebration), in order to guide a devotional approach that can become a liturgy. Often in the past, these devotions received recognition, approval, even recommendation from church leaders. Other sacramentals.

The prayers for the departing and the ritual of the funeral: prayer at home - holy water, candles; closure of the coffin; prayer at the cemetery. If indeed the sacramental is determined by what is not typically sacrament, we can understand that in the fourteenth century the celebration of an office of

praise and today the celebrations of the Word (including the Sunday assembly when there is no priest) and penitential (non-sacramental) celebrations can be considered as sacramentals. These various celebrations are real liturgical actions that fall within the sacramental experience of the Church, according to the renewed understanding proposed by the Conciliar Constitution on the Holy Liturgy in § 7: "Christ is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But they are not strictly speaking, in the eyes of the Church, some sacraments.

The Christian community welcomes in its liturgy the whole history of the world. It makes all the events places where man lives of Christ and his history. Such is the ground where the sacramental is rooted. The blessing results from this faith. It is nothing but a praise and an invocation that overflows from it, those of a community moved by the conviction that God is manifested in the history of men. It is not a question of para-liturgy, but of a liturgical space that prepares, awakens, educates, makes live for God and sanctifies. These celebrations can be lived with children or adults who are not yet ready to celebrate the Eucharist or receive sacramental forgiveness. They can also be lived in circumstances that do not necessarily require the Eucharist: ecclesial gathering linked to a manifestation of the State, commemoration, public event, pilgrimages, etc. Moreover, in the absence of an ordained minister prevented from celebrating the sacraments of the Eucharist, penance and reconciliation, these celebrations really make us able to be in communion with the mystery of God.

For its part, Eucharistic worship, in many respects, includes sacramentals, such a blessing or procession, signs experienced in line with Eucharist.

In fact, if the word "sacramental" remains often foreign, the realities it represents make us discover the whole life of man, since they form the field of the Word of God, of the blessing, of the celebration of the New Covenant. All human and cosmic realities are called to open themselves to the holiness of God and to glorify Him. The sacramentals are thus a special way of evangelizing by inserting the sacraments throughout life. They announce the Word and cause conversion. They take part in the Salvation pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

The world sacramentals raises many questions. The believer, in order to understand them, must wonder what is the sense of the world and the relation it has with the latter. It is called to be a cosmic liturgy. He needs profound faith, centered on Christ, in order to introduce into history that divine dynamism that will enable mankind to move towards its full realization. He never ceases to feel towards the world a large charity. At the same time, he must build the world by freeing him from the slavery of sin and its consequences. Moved by his Easter faith, he builds the world, by striving to liberate it.

This renewed presence of the Divine one, brought by the celebration of the sacramental, revitalized as much as possible in the Eucharistic mystery, gives man the hope that enables him to enter the temporal one, to transfigure the world, to give it this Paschal dynamism of the resurrection which will have its full realization in eschatology.

Editor's note. The re-enchantment of a world today well dead!

* Vain wish by definition.

** In the time of St Symphorian (3rd century) it was a statue of the Celtic goddess renamed Cybele in interpretatio graeca.

THE SIGN OF CROSS.

Nowadays it is in the Catholic Church that the practice of the sign of the cross is most widespread, but it is also practiced among the Eastern Orthodox and the Episcopalians.

The first symbol or token of recognition of Christians was historically speaking fish because of its graphic proximity to the name of Christ in Greek language. The Greek word *Ichthys* could indeed be considered as the first letters of the expression *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter*, that is to say, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

In general, before the 3rd century, the early Christians used only a few figurative symbols such as the lyre, the anchor, a windward boat, the praying woman, the *criphorous* (cf. the image of the good shepherd) the dove or the fish therefore. We also find the use of symbols derived from Roman iconography, such as palm or laurel.

We wonder well therefore why the symbol of the cross has ousted it. One explanation, because the latter was better known, strong and "magical."

For the symbol of the cross was well regarded as being magical by the pagans (and therefore by the future Christians) according to the letter written by Tertullian to his wife.

We find this sign many centuries before the Christian era in the inscriptions left different civilizations: Mesopotamian, Elamite, Amerindian. As our friend Mircea Eliade says in his encyclopedia of religions: "The cross is everywhere : in pre-Vedic civilization ; in the Elamite world and Mesopotamian iconography, in the vast area of Aryan migrations and the cultures to which they gave birth, in China, in pre-Colombian and American Indian civilizations, among nonliterate people who are our contemporaries."

The first mention of an "intensive" use of the sign of the cross are in the works of the Montanist Tertullian, who was supposed to have a good knowledge of it because he was born a pagan and probably also died a pagan.

The most interesting text is found in this appropriate writing, in which the participation of Christians in military service is discussed. Tertullian took the defense of a soldier who refused to put a laurel wreath on his head as the ceremonial prescribed. This tract generally dated from 211, and therefore from the semi-montanist period of the author, who reproaches the future Catholics for rejecting the Paraclete and his prophecies, and their bishops for being "lions in peace, deer in the fight ... making ready their luggage, and equipped for flight from city to city "during the persecutions.

The author uses an unwritten Christian tradition to demonstrate that it is contrary to the principles of bearing a crown. The more general question raised is this: Are there in the Church practices to be observed which are not mentioned in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament? Among these practices common among Christians is the following one: "Ad omnem progressum atque promotum, ad omnem aditum et exitum, ad vestitum, ad calcitum, ad lavacra, ad mensas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia, quaquumque nos conversatio exercet, frontem signaculo terimus" (De Corona Militis 3.4) (

At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on the couch, on the seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign (of the cross)....

Its magic nature, at least in the minds of the pagans, is recognized in another text by Tertullian.

Tertullian wrote three tracts on the marriage and second marriages, one at each of the major stages in the evolution of his beliefs. The first, "To His Wife," written between 200 and 206, therefore during the Catholic period, is the best. By a kind of spiritual testament, he gives his wife some opinions to observe when he will have left this world. He decides clearly against remarriage. But in case his wife would not agree to remain alone, he beseeches her to promise that she will choose a Christian. A pagan spouse, even tolerant, can only be a danger to faith and morality. The author enumerates on this subject some common ways of doing things:

" Your pearls are the distinctive marks of even your daily conversation. The more care you take to conceal them, the more liable to suspicion you will make them, and the more exposed to the grasp of Gentile curiosity. Shall you escape notice when you sign your bed (or) your body (*latebisne tu, cum lectulum, cum corpusculum tuum signas*); when you blow away some impurity; when even by night, you rise to pray? Will you not be thought to be engaged in some work of magic? (*Ad Uxorem*.)

Christian esotericism, therefore, had already had to take over the scheme used centuries (even millennia) earlier for other more ancient deities who die and revive such as Dionysus, Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz. The Christlike cycle was then to be analyzed in four stages revolving around a vertical axis and a horizontal axis separating the earth from the sky:

- 1 - The Incarnation: The Word of God descends from heaven on the face of the earth (birth, life of Jesus).
- 2 - Death: the Christ of flesh dies. He is buried and descends in the Hell.
- 3 - The Resurrection: on the third day, he comes back to life, that is to say, he ascends to the surface of the earth in a glorious body.
- 4 - The Ascension: Christ ascends to heaven, to the Father, that is to say there from where he descended. The circle is closed around the cross.

It was nevertheless, from the fourth century onwards, that the so-called Latin cross became the emblem and symbol of Christianity, after the adoption by the emperor Constantine I of the chrism (in fact, a sun wheel or a little sun wheel). It was from this period, and especially from the discovery or invention of the relic of the True Cross by the emperor's mother, that its worship spreads, and in the fourth and fifth centuries it began to decorate the religious buildings. From the sixth century, the cross is regularly combined with the representations of Christ.

Catholics who want to know only Jewish culture (racism towards other civilizations?) find the justification for the sign of the cross mainly in their many years of Church tradition and also in Exodus 17: 9-14 and Revelation 7: 3, 9: 4, 14: 1 Although these passages actually speak of a sign on the forehead for protection against God's judgment, they must, of course, be interpreted in the light of their background. And when this background is considered, there is no reason to believe that one of these verses prescribes the sign of the cross.

Until the seventh century, the sign of the cross generally remained a gesture performed on the forehead with the thumb. The way of signing then evolved over time and the schisms that separated the Christian Churches, in a wider gesture and integrating other symbolic ones.

From the seventh century, Christians in the East (the Byzantine world) and in the West (the Latin world) cross themselves with three fingers, exactly, as the Orthodox still cross themselves today. From the twelfth century onwards, and the schism between Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Catholicism makes the sign of the cross evolve (people cross themselves no longer with their three fingers but with their hand). The Orthodoxes continue to cross themselves with their three fingers.

In the Catholic world, there is a certain tolerance for crossing oneself from top to bottom and then from left to right. Some writers criticize this development, but the hierarchy of the Catholic Church does not condemn it. Even better, little by little, the practice of crossing oneself from left to right imposes itself, and it becomes the norm.

Although it is also difficult to say exactly when the transition from the small cross on the forehead to the modern practice of making a larger one from the forehead to the chest and from one shoulder to the other was done; we know that the change took place in the eleventh century, since we meet in the "Prayer Book of King Henry" (eleventh century) a direction (in the morning prayers) to mark with the holy Cross "the four sides of the body." And there is a good reason to suppose it was already the large sign with which we are now familiar.

An English book written about 1160 (the *Ancren Riwle*) besides also expressly recommends the nuns to make a GREAT CROSS like for the Deus in adiutorium meum.

The English Reformists then judged that the sign of the cross should be left at the individual's discretion, as it is written in the Book of Prayer of King Edward VI: "Kneeling, crossing, holding up of hands, knocking upon the breast, and other gestures, they may be used, or left, as every man's devotion serves without blame."

Editor's note. But the Reformists generally regarded this sign as a tradition without basis in the Scriptures, or even as idolatry, and so it was given up by most of them.

THE MAJOR EXORCISMS.

As we have already seen above, exorcism is not a sacrament, but is part of the sacramentals instituted by the Church. These are sacred signs that Church wanted to give to Christians in order to sanctify certain circumstances of their lives. These sacred rites include prayers of blessings to which are added the sign of the cross and other signs, such as the sprinkling of holy water. These blessings are very useful because they place us under the protection of God and help us to act for his glorification.

Medically speaking, possession appears as a dissociative state as it is described in schizophrenic psychoses; but the response which is to be brought to this challenge is never unambiguous and should not be dissociated from the cultural context in which it appears.

Thus the history of the possessed of Loudun for example, may be related to schizophrenia (or collective hysteria) having affected all the nuns of the same convent in the 1630s and used by Cardinal Richelieu. The death of Urbain Grandier did nothing and can be considered as a useless human sacrifice.

Apart from its particular theological (or cultural) significance, as well as the possible parapsychological phenomena which might be associated with it, the crisis of possession is not distinguished from a crisis of hysteria in the meaning of Charcot or of phenomena of spasmophilia, of trance.

A state of calm and a state of crisis can be distinguished. The state of crisis results in contortions, fits of rage, impious and blasphemous words. During the period of calm, everything is generally forgotten and the behavior becomes well adapted, even very pious. But the image that we may have of it is far from being univocal and probably does not resemble that kept by William Friedkin in his movie of 1973 (the exorcist). It is more interesting, to get an idea of it, to read the writings of Peter Janet. (1859-1947).

But if it is well a magic operation by definition in Christianity, it is nevertheless the major exorcisms. From a religious point of view, the exorcism aims at expelling the demons or releasing from the demonic grip, and this by the spiritual authority that Jesus entrusted to his Church. The most well-known entity supposed to provoke possession is the force that Christians call Satan or the Devil.

The word comes from the ancient Greek: exorkismos, from ex-orkizein: "to make take an oath, to make someone swear by the Lord"; it will pass directly into Latin: exorcismus, exorcizare.

At the origin of this Christian practice, there is the example and commandment of Christ: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons" (Matthew 10: 8).

Exorcism is a religious ritual intended to drive out an evil spiritual entity that would have seized a (human or animal) living being and, more rarely, inanimate (object). We find the practice in the primitive societies for which it constitutes a response to the possession by demon (s), or even more simply to disease.

Therefore it is found in the Old Testament: a scapegoat charged with the sins of the Israelites and sent to the desert (Leviticus 16: 20-22). What the archangel Raphael prescribes to his companion Tobit (removing the heart and liver of the fish) is destined to perform exorcisms ("You burn the fish's heart and liver, and their smoke is used in the case of a man or woman plagued by a demon or evil spirit; any such affliction disappears for good, leaving no trace.") Justin, in his dialogue with Trypho, speaks of it as part of Judaism.

"But though you exorcise any demon in the name of any of those who were among you--either kings, or righteous men, or prophets, or patriarchs--it will not be subject to you. But if any of you exorcise it in the name of the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, it will perhaps be subject to you. Now assuredly your exorcists, I have said, make use of craft when they exorcise, even as the Gentiles do, and employ incense and incantations" (Justin, Dialogue with Trypho. Chapter 85).

On the other hand, the synoptic gospels (not John's) show us Jesus practicing exorcisms on several occasions. From the beginning of his ministry indeed, in Capernaum, Jesus appears as a healer.

"There was a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit, he cried out:

"What do you want with us, have you come to destroy us? I know who you are..."

Then Jesus threatened him, saying,

"Be quiet and come out of him."

The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek "[Mark 1:23 & Luke 4:33]

"After sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was... Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed....he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons" (Mark 1:32-39).

In his book on Jesus, the filmmaker Paul Verhoeven, a specialist in historical reconstructions, assumes that all this was to result into very impressive scenes. These exorcisms were to be accompanied by violent emotions, with shrieking possessed on the one side, and an also bellowing Jesus on the other....Jesus's behavior at exorcisms was so extreme that his mother and brothers thought he had "gone out of his mind" and Mark says that they traveled all the way from Nazareth to Capernaum to "restrain him ." The Gospels according to Matthew and according to Luke, later, will erase any allusion to the bodily explosion of Jesus.

P. Verhoeven points to the fact that for the healing of the man with leprosy (Mark I, 40-43) two versions of the text exist: in a Greek manuscript (the Codex Bezae), Jesus is "angry" when he touches the man; in other manuscripts Jesus is "compassionate" (this is the generally accepted version).

However Jesus does not become angry against the man with leprosy, but against the demon of leprosy that he drives out. The behavior of Jesus at the time of the exorcisms was so extreme that his family and the scribes thought he was out of his mind* : the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and, "By the prince of the demons He drives out demons." (Mark 3:21).

One case focuses all reductive discussions. It is that of an epileptic child brought to Jesus by a father at bay ...

After the transfiguration, Jesus comes down from the mountain with Peter and John and finds the other nine disciples with doctors of the law and ... "a large crowd."

Mark 9: 14-29.: What are you arguing with them about? he asked.

"A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not. You unbelieving generation, Jesus replied, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.

So they brought him.

When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father:

-How long has he been like this?

-From childhood, he answered. It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.

-If you can'? said Jesus. Everything is possible for one who believes.

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed:

-I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit:

-You deaf and mute spirit, he said, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.

The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said:

-He's dead!

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately:

-Why couldn't we drive it out?

He replied:

-This kind can come out only by prayer."

The Canaanite daughter (Matthew 15: 21-28).

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out:

-“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed [possessed by an impure spirit says Mark] and suffering terribly.”

Jesus rejects her, but she insists in a touching way that he "drives the demon out of her daughter" and Jesus praises her faith by saying to her:

-Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.

And her daughter was healed at that moment....

The significant characteristic is that it is here a freeing at a distance, as many exorcists still do, today.

The man with the pigs ...

More disconcerting, but very significant is the exorcism of the Gerasenian possessed, on the other shore of the lake.

Then Jesus and the impure spirit enter a surrealist conversation.

- "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

The demon speaks by the mouth of the possessed whom he uses as an instrument. This fact, repeated several times in the Gospel, has survived to this day in the daily experience of the exorcists ...

By the voice of the possessed, the demon implores, resists, negotiates ... Jesus does not argue with him, He commands .

He asked him:

-What is your name?

-My name is Legion for we are many.

And he begged Him again and again not to send them out of the area.

Legion" negotiates his departure: " Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."

Some current priests find again this name and this aggressive horde in certain of their exorcisms. "

The mute demon ...

Matthew mentions also briefly the exorcism of a man possessed by a mute demon .

"“A man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Him. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke.... "(Matthew 9:32)

Luke applies the term "mute" to this demon, but as we have seen, the demons are often talkative (by the mouth of the possessed).

He also evokes many other exorcisms: "At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind" (Luke 7:21).

The Gospels have related only these exorcisms. But they mention many others. In the first place, Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had driven out seven demons.

Lastly, the apostles too, exorcise, even during the very life of Jesus.

Jesus indeed sends his disciples on a mission several times in order to announce the Good News with the signs of his power: heal and exorcise ...

" He called the twelve and gave them authority over unclean spirits ..."(Matthew 10).

For the mission of the 72 , the words of Jesus does not specify the mission to exorcise or to heal, but it is well presupposed since they say on their return:

"-“Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

And Jesus replied:

- " However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Given the efficacy of the exorcisms of Jesus and of the disciples in his name, there were besides imitators. The Apostle John rebukes them and says to Jesus:

-“Teacher, we saw someone else driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not accompany us.”

But Jesus replied:

“Do not stop him. No one who performs a miracle in My name can turn around and speak evil of Me. For whoever is not against us is for us...”

According to Mark 16:17, before leaving his disciples, Christ gives them the mission of exorcising until the end of the world:

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well....."

In the acts of the apostles, the struggle against Satan also presents itself willingly as a struggle against magic: Simon Peter victoriously confronts the great philosopher Simon of Samaria , whom Philip seemed to have converted. But the thaumaturge wants to buy him the power of the Holy Spirit.

After the departure of Christ, the apostles indeed continue to exorcise:

"Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed."

Similarly for Philip in Samaria:

"For unclean spirits came shrieking out of many who were possessed."

There follow exorcisms which clearly and unambiguously recur in the Acts of the Apostles:

" A slave girl was a soothsayer [...]this girl started following Paul and the rest of us and shouting:

-‘Here are the servants of the Most High God; they have come to tell you how to be saved!

She did this day after day until Paul was exasperated and turned round and said to the spirit:

-I order you in the name o. Jesus Christ to leave that woman.

And the spirit went out of her then and there."

Not forgetting the ..." God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them."

CONCLUSION.

The story of the healing of the possessed of Capernaum (Luke. 4: 31-37) as well as that of the healing of the Gadarenian demoniac (Luke 8: 26-39) are clearly accounts of "magic duel": A fight between an exorcist and a demon, where we find on both sides the use of orders, violence, attack and defense as well as the use of the respective names, the fact for example that the demon names Jesus by saying to him in the case of the possessed of Capernaum: "I know who you are, the Holy One of God" (Luke 4: 34).

Marcel Mauss explains in his A general theory of magic that in a magical duel, to know and to say the name of the adversary give a power over him. Naming the spirit obliges him to obey.

But despite the use of this traditional weapon of the magic system, and traditionally effective, the demon of the possessed of Capernaum fails, Jesus threatens it, and silences it.

For the account of the exorcism of a Gadarenian demoniac, where the demon named "Legion" is seen to leave the body of the possessed and then to enter a herd of pigs, Luc recovers an account [Mark 5, 1-20] deeply rooted in the mentalities of the Jewish world and not of the Greek world. The rite of exorcism which consists in driving a demon out of a man towards an animal is indeed well known in the Assyrian-Babylonian world. That the demons can be numerous to the point of being compared to a legion, appears in a Syriac incantation [from Nippur in Iraq] that protects "against all legions."

No exorcism is mentioned in the Gospel of John, but Jesus, as Muhammad will be in the Quran six centuries later, is accused of being possessed; and he stigmatizes his adversaries as "son of the devil," "father of lies ..."

In a simple form, exorcism is practiced during the celebration of baptism. According to the Catholic Church, when the Church publicly and authoritatively asks in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or an object is protected from the hold of evil and got out of his control, it is spoken, on the other hand, of public or major exorcism.

This solemn exorcism is addressed to baptized, conscious and willing persons who are "obsessed," or "possessed" by the devil. In no case can an exorcism be practiced by force. It is spoken of demonic oppression when the person is suffering from physical torment (strange noises, displacement of objects, repeated incidents ...) and psychic disorders (despair, risky behavior, temptations).

The solemn canonical exorcism, called "major exorcism," can only be practiced by an exorcist priest and with the permission of the bishop. Canonically, it is the bishop who, as the successor of the apostles, receives authority from the Church to practice exorcisms. More often, he delegates this authority to subaltern priests: the exorcists. Pope John Paul II, as the bishop of Rome, could perform three exorcisms during his pontificate.

Exorcism is the exercise of a charisma that requires dispositions and qualities to which the bishop pays particular attention before appointing a priest to this ministry. Not only sanctity, prudence, but also gifts of discernment, authority, contact and influence.

The private exorcism can be practiced by any priest and even by all faithful, without any authorization from the bishop. This is the common doctrine taught by theologians who have studied this question, even among the most famous of them. It is then distinguished from the solemn exorcism that only an exorcist named by the bishop can perform.

Private exorcism could be accomplished by "the faithful in a state of grace." This statement confirms it, exorcism passes through particular prayers, but also and above all by faith, mercy (towards the possessed) and love that the officiating priests when they recite them. These elements ensure that the demon will be driven out forever and not only during the reading of prayers. The exorcism must, in the mind of the priest, consist in driving the demon, but also in saving the possessed.

For Catholic theologians, the difference between mental illness and diabolic possession has long been based on the existence of paranormal phenomena. Some theologians and priests insist on the real and profoundly harmful nature of satanic influences of all kinds (infestation, obsession, possession). According to the traditional theologians, there are signs that lead to the diagnosis of possession. The Roman ritual states three essential symptoms among others which would have a similar value.

- To show a strength, unexplainable by the bodily habitus of the person considered (but this can be explained by the hysterical state).

- To talk or understand an unknown language (glossolalia).

- To discover distant and secret things (clairvoyance).

These marks of the devil, for the Church in the Middle Ages, were not limited to the three signs now mentioned by the Roman ritual; she even gave priority to other symptoms, such as levitation and especially areas of anesthesia, some abnormally insensible points of the body (for the modern neurologist, it is a symptom of leprosy at its beginning, of some neurological diseases or of a hysterical phenomenon. It is to note especially that the person speaks often alone).

For example, the case of Carmen Trasfi, a young Cerdan serving the parish priest of Llívia (Catalan enclave in the French department of the Pyrenees-Orientales), possessed for four years from 1868, presented several of these symptoms: she took the names of various demons, spoke with voices that were not her own and in languages unknown to her, she was the victim of convulsions and hysteria, was insensitive to the bites of nails and did not bleed, Swallowed many pins or matches that left her unscathed and that she spat out when she was given holy water.

To overcome these possessions the Catholic priests generally propose:

The general confession (relating to the whole of past life).

The fast.

The prayer.

The communion.

The blessed objects and especially holy water (whose ritual says it drives out the demon).

Lastly, the exorcism, which consists, in the name of Christ, in Intimating the demon to give his name and then to leave the possessed.

In orthodoxy, this phase goes through a long ritual and the repetition of impressive special prayers comparable to those of William Friedkin's movie.

Let us insist once again on the fact that the Catholic Church has very clearly revised her position in this field. For example, in the *Praktisches Bibellexicon*. Given the striking resemblance between possession and the phenomena described by parapsychology, today the most extreme reservation is essential. What was once regarded as the sure sign of the authenticity of a possession can no longer be considered as such without further examination.

* The same accusation will be made against Muhammad 6 centuries later because of his attacks of epilepsy.

THE OPINION OF TODAY'S PHYSICIANS.

In psychiatry, possession is no longer regarded as a devilish phenomenon, but as a form of delirium in which the patient feels inhabited by a supernatural being who speaks by his mouth, moves his tongue in spite of himself and directs his movements.

Such a personality disorder is defined by the coexistence, in the same individual, of two or more distinct states of consciousness, either they have a specific memory, specific behavioral modes and their own styles of social relation or that they share a part of these different items. The two minds fight in the same field which is the body, and the soul is as divided. This type of personality disorder begins to set in from childhood, but is most often noticed by clinicians much later; they are almost always girls (60 to 90%).

The passage from one personality to another is usually abrupt (a few minutes). Transition is dependent on the relational background. Transitions can also occur when there is a conflict between different personalities or when they have developed a common plan. The personalities can be diametrically opposed in their characteristics and differ even in psychological and physiological tests: they may require, for example, different corrective lenses, react differently to the same treatment and have different IQs. There can be possible complications, such as suicide, self-mutilation, attack, rape, drug abuse, etc.

Schizophrenia can also lead to the feeling of being possessed. In this case, the entourage discerns more easily that it is a personality disorder and not of a supernatural phenomenon.

Today the paradox * is that the Vatican invites to go and consult first a psychiatrist. Since psychiatry exists, we know that the devil is no longer necessarily at the origin of the psychic disorders that can affect man. In the eyes of the Church, he who claims to be possessed is not necessarily so, and often needs the help of a psychiatrist rather than of an exorcist. Father Gabriele Amorth, the Vatican's main exorcist, says now that in order to know whether a person is actually possessed or not, you must first see a psychiatrist and then only after practice exorcism.

The new ritual of exorcism besides warns against the imagination of men that may lead them to believe that they are the prey of the devil. In any case, it must be verified that the one who claims to be possessed by the demon is really so. The text recommends the distinguishing between a real diabolical intervention and the credulity of certain faithful who think they are the object of evil charms or curses. We must not deny them a spiritual help, but we must not perform an exorcism at all costs.

The document adds that the priests should only embark on an exorcism "only after diligent inquiry and after having consulted experts in spiritual matters and, if felt appropriate, experts in medical and psychiatric science who have a sense of spiritual reality."

While showing great caution, the Church does not exclude the power of the devil on certain persons. She distinguishes between the minor exorcism, made of prayers, and the major exorcism, which consists of a liturgical celebration. It is the most impressive, the one from which are generally inspired horror movies. The new ritual has simplified it somewhat. Thus, the prayers speaking to the demons have disappeared. The rite includes a sprinkling of holy water, various prayers, the laying on of hands, the presentation of a crucifix to the possessed and an imperative formula that is addressed directly to the devil and orders him to leave. This spectacular rite is seldom used. Ecclesiastical authorities often prefer to create listening structures and provide psychological support to those in difficulty.

* Paradox because Jesus does many exorcisms in the gospels and the apostles too.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHIZOPHRENIA.

If the ordinary deceased, or at least their remembrance, "remind us of their existence," it is by visions that we have in a dream, or awakened, but plunged into certain "altered" states of consciousness; in the form of images in all respects similar to those we can get from the living in the same circumstances. The souls /minds of the dead, when they appear, for example to persons overwhelmed by sorrow, give them the illusion of being present. While in reality they are in another world and, of course, don't know whether someone or not sees their image.

The night after his death, the shade of Patroclus visited Achilles in his sleep, begging his friend to burn and then bury his corpse as soon as possible, so that he may cross the Styx and pass forever through the gates of Hades.

Mourning and funeral must in no case constitute the essential part of a man's life, must in no case be sumptuous or luxurious, nor be the object of excessive expenditure; but should neither be neglected nor reduced to zero. The human body is not a vegetable peeling.

Regarding the dead, however, Christians will have very early a paradoxical attitude.

At the very beginning, because of their certainty that the end of the world or of the times, therefore, the resurrection of bodies, is very close, Christians will neglect burials.

But then a real traffic of the relics of saint closer to paganism developed gradually.

Nothing in the Old Testament or in the Jewish mentality predisposed to the cult of saints, quite the contrary.

Gospel according to St. Luke Chapter IX, verses 59-60.

He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

"Nor do we dislike the temples less than the monuments: we have nothing to do with either altar, we adore neither image; we do not offer sacrifices to the gods, and we make no funeral oblations to the departed" (Tertullian *De Spectaculis*).

With Christianity not only disappears all the pomp of the funeral, equated with a deification of the dead.

One even comes to despise all mortal remains. Christian anthropology assigns to the body of flesh, corruptible and mortal, an impossible place with regard to the spiritual body, the only one truly living.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

By proclaiming the lapse of (Jewish or pagan) rites in favor of the interiority, of the secret of the intention which alone makes acts pure; Christianity tends towards a desacralization of the world - they do not respect anything, say their pagan opponents - who becomes critical in the field of the relation to the dead, around a body at once despised and made sublime.

Individual Christian eschatology is not original. According not only Christians and Jews, but also many other Greeks and Barbarians, writes Origen, the human soul lives and subsists after its separation from the body; and it is established by reason that the soul pure and not weighed down by the lead masses of the vice, rises to the celestial regions of the pure and ethereal bodies, leaving here the bodies and their defilements. On the contrary, the wicked soul, pulled to the ground by its sins, and unable to recover breath, roves here below and wanders, this one around the tombs where one sees the phantoms of souls as shadows, that one around the earth." An idea that will emerge again under the denominations of "astral body," "perispit," or other entities of this kind, under the pen of the neo-druid Allan Kardec and of spiritists in the nineteenth century.

"Mortui et dii unum sunt: gods or demons and dead are one" (Tertullian still). The confusion of the god-or-demons and of the dead is an accusation which constantly returns in the writings of the early Christian thinkers. Beyond the condemnation without appeal of the deification of the ancient heroes and the adoration of the dead matter of the statues (but what is the pagan thinker who believed really that a piece of wood could be God?) we find also in their writings the idea that "the gods are. And that the demons, who like to haunt the effigies erected in honor of the dead, often take the appearance of the deceased, even to mislead Christians plunged into mourning.

Gods, devils, fatal deaths, all this indicates well in this new religion a rather problematic relationship with its departed; that it will be necessary to release from the horde "truly infamous and unclean spirits, which are regarded as earthly and muddy, who always incline towards that which is low; And which revolve around tombs or funerary monuments, near which they are seen fleetingly. "

Clement of Alexandria repeats almost word for word the description of the soul that Plato gives in *Phaedo*. "The soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because she is afraid of the invisible and of the world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchers, near which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible.....And these must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, which are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life."

Particular reasons that popular fervor does not explain were therefore necessary to overstep all the taboos relating to the corpse, to the impurity of the dead, and to the fear of the hereafter, since nothing in the literature of the Old and New Testament encouraged or allowed the appearance of this tropism. In a configuration so unfavorable at the outset to the appearance of a cult of relics, where the elements of doctrine, the factors of belonging, as well as the social background in favor of its non-existence, how to understand, if we reject the notion of "spontaneous generation," the emergence of this morbid drive? There is in this appearance something like the trace of a symptom that the contextual variables do not make possible to clear up. Its emergence corresponds to a function, perhaps latent, buried, but which is not the reassuring, legitimating role, to which the Church has assigned it later.

For we must distinguish the level of the justification, a time of secondary elaboration, of the narrative and of the explanation, from the level of the formation, a time of rise, of acting out, of rupture. It is necessary to dissociate the content of the affect.

Nothing will be said of the relic, of its nature and of its function, so long as we remain on the level of the justification to analyze it.

When relics are evoked in terms of "metonymy," "object of memory," "participation," or "holiness," we never do anything but take over the operative concepts that, as early as the fourth century, the best theologians were already developing. The dominant discourse of the Catholic Church is restored, a discourse which, by justifying a posteriori the practice of this use, has imposed itself as the obviousness that it was not. So that the relic assumes the function of memory object, it was necessary to insert it as a sign in the meaning chain of the theological discourse. But to promote relics as a sign is not a simple rhetorical operation. It is first and foremost a political maneuver.

The Church has given no counter-argument to the development of the fascination for relics; she has not also tried to curb it. No condemnation, no exhortation, no call to order. This do-nothing policy straightened out in the policy of restrictive control exercised by ecclesiastical authority over its subjects is significant. It was neither the justifications nor the means of action which were lacking. Let us conclude from it say that, in order to tolerate and make acceptable such a subversive practice in the midst of her social organization, the Church had to find in it an advantage.

It is quite clear that the devotion to the body of the saints originated in the multiple and repeated exactions committed by the executioners on the bodies of Christians.

They were frequently mutilated, humiliated and even deprived of burial, contrary to the legal provisions in force on this point. The Roman jurisprudence indeed foresaw that, at the end of the execution, "the bodies of those who suffer capital punishment are not to be refused to their relatives [...]. The bodies of those condemned to be burned can also be sought so that the bones and ashes can be collected and handed over" (The Digest of Justinian).

But, through increased zeal or hatred, executioners often refused to effect the restitution because this final insult, as the account of the martyrs of Lyons (St. Blandina 177) tells us, was to deprive the deceased of any resurrection.

"For those that were suffocating in the prison, they cast to the dogs, carefully watching them night and day, lest any should be buried by us, and then also cast away the remains left by the beasts and the fire, howsoever they had either been mangled or burned. They also guarded the heads of the others, together with the trunks of their bodies, with military watches, for many days in succession, in order to prevent them from being buried [...] among our brethren, matters were in great affliction for want of liberty to commit the bodies to the earth. For neither did the night avail us for this purpose, nor had money any effect to persuade, nor could any prayers or entreaties move them. But they guarded them in every possible way, as if it were a great gain, to prevent them from burial[...]The bodies of the martyrs after being abused in every possible manner, and thus exposed to the open air for six days, were at length burned and reduced to ashes by the

wretches, and finally cast into the Rhone that flows near at hand, that there might not be a vestige of them remaining on the land. These things they did as if they were able to overcome God, and destroy their resurrection, as they themselves gave out, ' that they might not have any hope of rising again."

The duty of burial, thus flouted in disregard of the law, gives a better idea of the obstinacy of the Christians in getting the mortal remains of their co-religionists. But the boundary that separates the collection of the remains of the deceased in order to bury them from the honorary devotion paid to these same remains is thin. In hagiographic narratives, moreover, it is not always easy to disentangle one from the other, even less to interpret the nature of the gestures performed by the faithful. Confusion seems possible at any moment. The total uncertainty that hangs over the lot of the corpse is largely explained by the fact that there was no code established to direct the behaviors. In this period when the Church does not give instructions concerning the burial of her martyrs, the maneuver of recovery of the bodies is dictated only by the affect of the protagonists and their sense of duty. It happens then that they cannot resist the temptation to withdraw the still smoking remains of the victim to steal them; perhaps to pay them the last honors in a more intimate or personal way. But these shadows which haunt the execution sites in search of the martyr's bones and ashes, when they steal them, soon return to a more adequate attitude: "The faithful came in the night, extinguished the fire with wine and took out the half-burned bodies. Everyone carried some part of their remains home with them, but being admonished from Heaven, brought them back and laid them in the same sepulcher" (Acts of St Fructuosus, bishop of Tarragona).

The relic is therefore inseparable from the funerary element itself. It accompanies the process of mourning and is confused with it when it comes to going to bury the dead. These actions seemed natural in the eyes of the faithful who, to remove the bodies, bribed their guardians. Inscribed in the line of the care due to the dead, they did not depart from ordinary ceremonial gestures.

In 258, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, after having begun by fleeing a first wave of persecution, is warned (by whom?) of the imminence of his arrest. Knowing therefore that his end is close, this time he orders his people "to give twenty-five gold pieces" to the executioner in order to corrupt the guards. By this request, Cyprian shows that he wishes to be buried, to rest in a consecrated place, but is it known if he is aware that his burial will be venerated? When, spontaneously, his companions "hold out pieces of cloth and handkerchiefs" to receive the blood of the martyr, Cyprian does not disapprove of it. When his brethren take away his remains, their responsibility consists in first hiding them from the "indiscreet eyes of the pagans": it is important for them to preserve the dignity of the dead from the insults of the crowd. It is only at night that the body is removed "with lighted flares and torches" to be laid down in its last abode. Where in this narrative the funerary element does stop, where does the religious element begin? Again, the borderline is tenuous. It is reasonable to suppose that, for those men who were anxious to accomplish their duty, it was not less so. Let us only observe that the bishop lives his passion without sharing the emotion of his brethren, that he remains withdrawn, passive, indifferent perhaps to his earthly becoming.

Throughout the second half of the second century and the first half of the following century, the Church therefore left her faithful free to invent the gestures of devotion which, repeating themselves, would become ritualize. She allowed the development of attitudes to which, in retrospect, she would give a Catholic foundation.

We are too much informed about the unrest which prevailed in the prisons of the Empire at the moment when the appetite for the relics is developed in order not to be tempted to make the link. The most plausible hypothesis is that the relics appeared at a given moment in history as an advantageous substitute to the spreading of the Christian message by confessors or martyrdom. Why advantageous? Because in times when the stability of the Church was threatened by the growing number of those who "fell," the lapsi, the relics had the power more effectively than confessors and martyrs could do, to put the latter back in the right track. By being too liberal in their giving out indulgence (by signing some notes of the kind : "Let such a one be received to communion along with his friends") the martyrs have put the unity of the Church in danger: how to manage the voice of martyrs? How to make their "divergences of attitude and doctrine" toe the line? How not to be reached by division? The challenge was of importance given the Donatist schism that will ensue.

The remarkable audience which the martyrs had gotten had caught out the ecclesiastical hierarchy in reverse; the undesirable effects of their success had not been anticipated. This is why the Church had to react by defusing this latent crisis. In this sense, the cult of relics made it possible, at an opportune

moment, to focus the attention of the believers on neutral medium, some empty signs which only wanted to be meaningful, to fulfill a function within the religious signifying chain. Therefore the Church could only be interested in the getting of this medium insofar as, in media terms justly they proved to be more effective than the voice of her confessors or martyrs. By directing the honor due to the martyrs onto its commemorative slope, the Church therefore played the security against the risk of dissidence. Basically, it was because the voice of her champions of the faith began to become difficult to be controlled, if not impossible to be controlled, that the ecclesiastical power had seized this highly reliable means in order to promote her policy of establishment and expansion. Custom made according to the standards and needs of the Church, this means of communication was to replace advantageously, for a long time, oral testimony, a source of mistakes, divergence, even dissidence.

By inventing for this purpose a function in her liturgy, by finding it a vocation, the Church fixed on a medium emptied of all deadly connotations the attention of the believers, a support from which it could manage the use from one end to the other of the chain. The relic has the advantage, once introduced in the religious grammar, of being malleable according to the political will it serves. This calibration operation, which consisted in accommodating in its system an extrinsic element in order to integrate it into its code, was not made with much publicity but in the shadow of some great minds refining the notions of "participation" and "grace," thus paving the way for what would be a thought of the relic, a setting of grace descended on the martyr, and only waiting for the moment of becoming masters of this instrument of control, capable of subjecting the consciences of the believers who await miracles and healing from its power. By getting over the deadly part of the relic to change this somatic element in a repository of sanctity, in a symbol of faith, they made it enter a value system idealized, since without a signifier. This change of state of the medium, which suddenly from human remains became pure gold, reversed both the mindset of belonging and the signs of recognition deployed by them, opening the door of Christianity to objects of veneration of all kinds Where the images as well as the matter were rejected as a sign of community rallying, it was from now on possible, because the medium had changed its value system, to venerate images in the same way as relics.

VENERATION OF SAINTS OR DULIA WORSHIP?

For more details on the subject see the work of the well named (it is a pen name) Peter Saintyves 1) entitled "The Saints, Successors of the Gods: Essay about Christian Mythology" (1907).

The dulia cult is the worship reserved for the saints, as opposed to the worship of latria, reserved for God, and the hyperdulia, reserved for the Virgin Mary. The word comes from ancient Greek *doulos*, "slave, servant."

The dulia worship takes two forms: the reverence: testimony of the respect due to a saint; the invocation: requests for intercession in order to get a particular advantage.

This cult of dulia is, of course, criticized by the Reformist churches as well as by the other two monolatrous religions (Judaism, Islam) as a compromise with the principle of the one God (*tawhid*).

Alongside the church and holy objects, the statues of saints hold an important place in the contemplation of believers. They are the object of devotion and particular religious practices marked by the importance attached by the faithful to the statue. The veneration of saints is an integral part of religious practice, even more marked in ethnic communities and conservative societies. The materiality of the statue is very important since it embodies the saint in the church, and it is not just any saint, it is a specific one. Thus, it makes it possible to the believer to worship this saint by delimiting a place on which he can express himself by praying, lighting candles. The statue of the patron saint of the parish or of the city is often more venerated, because people retain even more his presence because of the existence of his simple name attached to the church or the parish.

The cult of dulia is defined by a time of prayer and meditation in front of the statues of saints (or of the Virgin Mary in the case of hyperdulia) and can be marked with a physical gesture like the lighting of a candle.

This religious practice also has the peculiarity of being both individual and community. Indeed, to gather oneself and pray is an individual and intimate act, on the other hand, to see that many people do the same thing on the same place, towards the same saint, around a crowd of lighted candles, shows that this practice is common to many other people, the latter forming a religious community venerating the same saint. Finally, if the practice is immaterial, the statue is material and remains in time, it spans generations, what creates a point of attachment for the faithful who can hand over this practice to the future generations.

We shall deal more lengthily with the subject only in the third part of this brief account of the Christian religion, but we can already indicate that, in view of the conditions under which the questioned "dulia" appeared (for a long time there was no centralized official "canonization"; 2) the worship of Christian saints may have been the avenue for the recovery of certain gods or goddesses of local religions or of their attributes.

Neither the cult of the saints nor that of the relics which "actualizes" their presence, nor that of the images which represent them - the three being strongly linked- are indeed novelties in history but the criteria revealing holiness have varied according to the epoch : sometimes more asceticism (at times closer to "martyrdom"), sometimes more charity or purity.

Here are some testimonies of the feelings of the doctors in that period. Instead of asking martyrs and saints to intercede for the living, the Church prayed for them. The formulas of most of the ancient liturgies attest to this fact, which persisted even after the evolution of the Holy Spirit on this subject. It is enough to quote some of these formulas.

Generally, Christian funeral rites have largely borrowed from pagan practices. Until the beginning of the Early Middle Ages, according to Ramsay MacMullen, people placed near the dead their favorite objects or even the "Charon's obol." People continued to celebrate banquets on the graves of the martyrs, as the ancient Romans did to honor their dead.

But as early as the 2nd century, Christians also venerated the "remains" (*reliqua*) of the martyrs, who are the first "saints" recognized as such. Among the first to have been thus honored: Ignatius Bishop of Antioch († 107 or 113) devoured by wild beasts, and Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna († 155 or 167) burned alive.

For more details on these two martyrs, notably that of Polycarp or on the role of the “apostate” bishop Eudemon in Smyrna, see also our attempts to disentangle the truth from the false in all these persecution stories , appearing in our two previous booklets (the problems of authenticity concerning not only the number of writings but also their content).

The most devout men and especially the most devout women even went as far as to pray near the relics of the martyrs, and to bring offerings there. Such a faith naturally engendered visions, dreams, and miracles. These phenomena were especially multiplied and intensified in the enthusiastic multitude by the excitement produced by the discovery or acquisition of corpses that people claimed to belong to martyrs.

All these things tended to change the simple veneration of memories and relics into a true worship paid to the martyrs and to the saints who were equated with them, and to make them invoked as protectors and intercessors, autonomous from the supreme god of the Bible.

The Christians who had recently left paganism were particularly predisposed to it, especially since the conversion of Constantine had pushed into the Church little or not converted crowds 3). Not only their former religion multiplied the gods and semi-gods, adapting their figures and functions to most of the needs, desires and curiosities of human beings; not only it had thus endowed all the places, all nations, all cities, all corporations, all professions and all situations, with tutelary genies, protectors and patrons; not only it deified heroes but it attributed to the manes of the dead a beneficent or evil power over the living.

The dazzling expansion of this worship was even stigmatized by Libanius around 350 and by the philosopher Emperor Julian wrote in 363 in his treatise against the Galileans (perhaps the cause of his assassination): "

"You keep adding many corpses newly dead to the corpse of long ago. You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchers, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honor. You have gone so far in iniquity that you think you need not listen even to the words of Jesus on this matter. Listen then to what he says about sepulchers: "Woe unto you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whitewashed sepulchers; outward the tomb appears beautiful, but within it is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." If Jesus said that sepulchers are full of uncleanness, how can you invoke God at them?"

Locally, locally (for example, in the worship of certain saints), there has also been on the Christianity in the making, the influence of certain other conceptions of the divine one or recovery of some of its attributes.

In fact, many worships were the object of a recovery of their most spectacular characteristics.

At Catania, in Sicily, the worship of Isis became similarly that of St. Agatha, whose very name evokes the goddess-or-demoness, or fairy, so-called (Agathoe daimon), and her ample bosom

The martyrdom of Saint Agatha is indeed more than suspect like many others (arrested then tortured in the year 251 by a Roman proconsul obsessed by her body ...) and seems more to match male or female fantasies than to something other.

What is undeniable in any case is that the famous flammeum of St Agatha makes much think of the famous veil of Isis covering the statue of the goddess taking center stage in the park of the Herbert Hoover National Historic Center.

The great Irish saint of Kildare, noiba Brigid is only the ultimate avatar of the Celtic great goddess-or-demoness, or fairy if you prefer the word, of the time. Brigitte, our Blessed Virgin to us, the Gaels say. Kildare (cill-dara, that is to say, the church of the oak) was a druidic sanctuary where men, and women like the Roman vestals, kept a perpetual flame.

1) Emil Nourry 1870-1935.

2) The recognition of the holiness of an individual was the result of a popular choice (the famous *vox populi*), confirmed by the local bishop. As a result, certain recognitions of holiness have been accomplished very quickly.

3) The Church may have tolerated these "superstitions" to facilitate the conversion of the pagans who remained attached to these practices but their principle was well nevertheless a part of her doctrine, and this easy-to-understand reasoning has even been theorized. As early as the fourth century, various Fathers of the Church saw in the homage that the faithful paid to the remains of the saints an action that went beyond simple prayer in their memory. The relics are pieces of the saint's virtue. The virtue of the saint lies in the least parcel of his body. For Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, the bodies of martyrs have the same power as their holy souls, whether they are touched or venerated. On this borrowing from magical thinking see above the essay on the development of the Christian doctrine by John Henry Newman (Oxford University).

THE CULT OF RELICS.

Let's be clear ! There are male saints or female saints to whom no relic is linked, but there are no relics linked with ordinary women or men like you and me. On the other hand, there are no relics which are not linked in a way or another one with a saint. In the Western world, relic is inseparable from the martyr of which it prolongs existence. In what mode it prolongs it? To understand this, we have to distinguish the body of the saint from the man who lives in a state of sanctity.

The saint is not his body that he willingly yields to men and their justice, but a repository of sanctity. In the image of a cover too heavy, loaded with matter, the saint gets rid of his body to reach the hereafter. But, on the contrary, his body remains holy and, if it happens that it is cut out to be shared, each morsel of the holy body preserves the holiness of the saint. The body may be divided, grace remains entire, proclaim theologians, and this tiny piece of relics has a power equal to that he whole martyr would have if he had never been shared. Yet, saying this, nothing was said. Nothing but what the Church already spoke of the time of confessors. But by broaching the question through tools invented by the Church itself, there is a great risk of obscuring the view point of little believers, new converts seeking meaning, undecided or shameless profiteers, for the Church's view point doesn't contemplate the material conditions in which the martyrdom and the behaviors connected with it have appeared.

To take, divide, segment, and hoard human remains in order to worship them is not an ordinary gesture, still less spontaneous. This practice remained problematic long after the rise of the cult of the relics BECAUSE IT FELL OBVIOUSLY WITHIN THE MAGIC THOUGHT (see besides what the Reformist in Wittenberg said on the subject).

The philosopher emperor Julian was even shocked by that according to this quotation due to his pen: "You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchers, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honor."

Tertullian and the Montanists were the first to consider martyrdom as the guarantee of a posthumous heavenly glory, and therefore to equate with an angelic future the suffering of the persecutions aroused by their fanaticism. The cult of martyrs ranked as saints will enter both a tactic of appeasing conflicts between their families (usually Montanists or Donatists like Lucilla in Carthage) and those who had survived, the lapsi (like Bishop Mensurius) but also a proselytizing perspective.

The first documents concerning the honors paid to the relics of the martyrs refer to Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna.

Haut du formulaire

Ignatius had been thrown to the beasts (mode of execution common at the time) between 107 and 115. According to the Acts of his martyrdom, what the lions had left of his body was collected by the Christians, and transported from Rome to Antioch .

As for Polycarp he had been sentenced to be burned (between 155 and 169). The fabulous account of his public execution has been reported to us by an author designated under the name of Marcian or Marcionus in our text 1).

"The centurion therefore, seeing the opposition raised on the part of the Jews, set him in the midst and burned him after their custom. ...You indeed required that the things which happened should be shown unto you at greater length: but we for the present have certified you as it were in a summary through our brother Marcionus. When then ye have informed yourselves of these things, send the letter about likewise to the brethren who are farther off that they also may glorify the Lord, who made the election from His own servants.

Moscow manuscript colophon.

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 2), 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."

Notwithstanding the Marcion problem, the letter clearly indicates the feelings which drove these men, since they announce that they will meet in the place where the remains of the martyr will be laid, in order to celebrate with exaltation and joy the day of his birth to everlasting life, both in memory of those who have already fought the fight, and in training and preparing those who will come after them.

"And so we afterwards took up his bones which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and laid them in a suitable place; where the Lord will permit us to gather ourselves together, as we are able, in gladness and joy, and to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom for the commemoration of those that have already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those that shall do so hereafter."

Speaking of the Jews, who had urged the proconsul not to let the Christians take Polycarp's body away lest, abandoning the Crucified, they would adore him, they say: They did not realize that it is impossible for us to abandon Christ who suffered for the salvation of the world, or to worship any other. For Him indeed, as being the son of God we adore; but the martyrs, as disciples and followers of the Lord, we worthily love on account of their extraordinary affection towards their King and Master." They further declare that of the twelve martyrs of Smyrna, Polycarp is the only one to be celebrated. It is only question here, to perpetuate the remembrance of the heroic fidelity of a martyr, and to devote to his memory a kind of monument, to make of it an unceasing exhortation to the admiration and imitation of his virtues.....

The faithful spent in the church which contained the remains of the martyrs, the night before the anniversary of their death, changing, as Chrysostom says, the night by into days, by these holy vigils.

Nevertheless, these holy vigils were forbidden, on account of the disorders of all kinds, which were introduced in them. But originally they had had to overhear the fervor of the faithful.

Other causes had to act in the same direction, on the true faithful. The idea had begun to spread among them that the martyrs could, through their intercession, cause sins to be forgiven. Perhaps because of the fact that sometimes churches had admitted lapsi to reconciliation on the recommendation of faithful who had suffered for the faith. Tertullian had nevertheless rigorously condemned this opinion by saying: "Who permits man to condone which are to be reserved for God? Let it suffice to the martyr to have purged his own sins." (De pudicitia, XXII), but other theologians were more indulgent towards those who had "failed" during the two real persecutions that had affected the Empire.

Another encouragement to pay a true cult to saints came from the speculations of theologians on the feelings of saints and martyrs in heaven. Around the middle of the third century, Origen, while presenting his opinion as an assumption, taught that saints are interested in living human beings and pray for them or rather with them. "And if he had us to seek the favor of others after the Most High God, let him consider that, as the motion of the shadow follows that of the body which casts it, so in like manner it follows, that when we have the favor of God, we also have the good will of all angels and spirits who are friends of God. For they know who are worthy of the divine approval, and they are not only well disposed to them, but they co-operate with them in their endeavors to please God: they seek His favor on their behalf; with their prayers they join their own prayers and intercessions for them. We may indeed boldly say that men who aspire after better things have, when they pray to God, tens of thousands of sacred powers upon their side. These, even when not asked, pray with them, they bring succor to our mortal race, and if I may so say, take up arms alongside of it: for they see demons warring and fighting most keenly against the salvation of those who devote themselves to God, etc." (contra Celsum, VIII, 64).

In short, it is the principle of the communion of saints or the intercession of the saints (especially on each November first) rediscovered by the druid Allan Kardec and the spiritists in the 19th century.

The turning point seems to be in the first half of the third century.

Neither Irenaeus of Lyons nor Clement of Alexandria seem to recognize the invocation addressed to the saints: " It is the extremest stupidity to ask of them who are no gods, as if they were gods." It is therefore the Church which seems to pray for the saints, not the saints for the living.

But about the middle of the third century, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, said to the members of his clergy about the martyrs: " Take note of their days on which they depart, that we may celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs.....and there are celebrated here by us oblations and sacrifices..."

And in the fourth century St. Basil will add: "Whoever touches the bones of a martyr on account of the eminent grace of the body will become a partaker of the sanctification."

The cult of the relics was therefore established in connection with that of the martyrs, around their graves and its liturgy took over practices previous to Christianity, not exempt from magical thought.

Some great Christian authors, such as Augustine or Jerome, have even been blamed in this field by pagan authors reproaching the Christians for arousing, through the cult of the saints, "new idols." 3). The lightning expansion of the cult was stigmatized by Libanius around 350 and the philosopher Emperor Julian wrote in 363 in his tract against the Galileans (which was perhaps the cause of his assassination).

" This evil doctrine did originate with John; but who could detest as they deserve all those doctrines that you have invented as a sequel, while you keep adding many corpses newly dead to the corpse of long ago? You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchers, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honor. But you have gone so far in iniquity that you think you need not listen even to the words of Jesus of Nazareth on this matter. Listen then to what he says about sepulchers: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitewashed sepulchers; outward the tomb appears beautiful, but within it is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."If, then, Jesus said that sepulchers are full of uncleanness, how can you invoke God at them?

In the West, Ambrose wrote (377): " The angels must be entreated for us, who have been to us as guards; the martyrs must be entreated, whose patronage we seem to claim for ourselves by the pledge as it were of their bodily remains. They can entreat for our sins, who, if they had any sins, washed them in their own blood; for they are the martyrs of God, our leaders, the beholders of our life and of our actions. Let us not be ashamed to take them as intercessors for our weakness, for they themselves knew the weaknesses of the body, even when they overcame "(De Viduis, IX, 55).

After him Jerome praises (about 390) a holy woman named Constantia who was accustomed to spend her nights at the tomb of St. Hilarion, and who conversed with him as if he were present.

Both of them were overwhelmed by Saint Chrysostom, who went so far as to write: " The bodies of the saints are a stronger protection for our city than any adamantine and impregnable fortification. They repulse the onslaughts, not only of those enemies which can be seen and heard, but also the attacks of the invisible demons, repelling every device of the devil "(St. Chrysostom Homily on the Egyptian martyrs.). The capture of the Syrian city of Bosra in 632 by the Muslims will nevertheless prove that no.

"Miracles" occurred therefore on their graves or at their contact, increasing the faith in their power of intercession. This power of intercession will become individualized during the Middle Ages. Some healing saints for example, were assigned by popular belief therapeutic specializations, sometimes according to the simple sound of their names, such as St. Mamertus for breast ailments, St. Clarus who cares for the eyes (but also guarantees the sun for weddings), St. Odo against deafness or Saint Eutropius for dropsy and children who limp (in Occitan, Eutropius is pronounced Estropi).

Among the notorious adversaries of this cult, we find, from the beginning, Vigilantius (end of the fourth century); after him, the Greek iconoclasts; Claude of Turin (died in 839); Guibert of Nogent (11th century), with his book *De Pignoribus Sanctorum*; the Cathars; Wyclif (died in 1384).

In the sixteenth century, the proliferation of relics, and even the multiplication of the copies of the same relic, led to have doubts about the authenticity of some of them, in spite of the ceremonies of "authentication" by the bishops seeking their "traceability ." Moreover, a real "traffic" (paying or of courtesy) even took place at some point, between the Roman catacombs and the bishop or princely courts: relics were offered as gifts (in 1518 in Wittenberg there were 17443 relics). Luther attributes to the Antichrist himself the invocation of the saints and the abuses which have resulted from them. He attacks especially the relics, on account of the bones of dogs and horses which were found venerated in this capacity during the first movements of the Reformation. About healing dogs see our article on St Guinefort or St Gelert in Wales.

"The relics, in which there are found so many falsehoods and tomfooleries concerning the bones of dogs and horses, that even the devil has laughed at such rascalities, ought long ago to have been condemned, even though there were some good in them; and so much the more because they are without the Word of God; being neither commanded nor counseled, they are therefore an entirely unnecessary and useless thing" (The Smalcald Articles II, 2, 22).

The polemic with the reformists brought us an excellent Treatise on relics by John Calvin (1543). Calvin shows the difficulties that can cause an excessive practice of their veneration that the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 had forbidden without the consent of the pope, and which constituted as an appendix linked to the cult of the saints: " Instead of observing their lives in order to imitate their examples, it (the world) directed all its attention to the preservation and admiration of their bones, shirts, sashes, caps, and other similar trash" Calvin denounces the proliferation of certain relics, the authenticity of which was questionable: for example, he counts, in various places, no fewer than 14 nails of the "true Cross"; we could add tons of wood from this same "true Cross," plus some "holy foreskins," etc.). And the very principle of the relic - probably because of the risk of making it a talisman - seems to him idolatrous. " It would be most important to abolish from among us Christians this pagan superstition of canonizing relics, either of Christ or of his saints, in order to make idols of them."

In the sixteenth century, therefore all reformist churches rejected the cult of saints. The memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling [.....] But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator" (Augsburg Confession, art 21).

The second Helvetic Confession says: We acknowledge them to be living members of Christ and friends of God who have gloriously overcome the flesh and the world. Hence we love them as brothers, and also honor them; yet not with any kind of worship but by an honorable opinion of them and just praises of them. We also imitate them."

The old Confession of faith of La Rochelle (1559), with its usual roughness, states: as Jesus Christ is our only advocate.....And as it is not lawful for us to pray except in accordance with the model God hath taught us by his Word, that all imaginations of men concerning the intercession of dead saints are an abuse and a device of Satan to lead men from the right way of worship (art 24).

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) will be necessary to bring everyone to Reason. In its XXV session, by a decree entitled *De invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis sanctorum et de sacris imaginibus*, the council summarized the doctrine of the Roman Church on these matters.

Its decree justifies the veneration of the body of the martyrs, the relics, and the honors paid to the images of Christ, of the Virgin or of the saints, for " by the images....before which we prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear....

The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops that they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honor paid to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid

(and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Savior; but that they think impiously, who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular is idolatry; or that it is repugnant to the word of God; and is opposed to the honor of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally, or mentally, those who reign in heaven."

To this the Reformists like Calvin reply that Jesus himself had categorically prohibited every kind of worship, homage, or religious service, attributed to anyone who is not God, when he replied to the Tempter: "For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only' (Matthew 4: 10, Luke 5: 8).

These words of Deuteronomy, having to have in the mouth of Jesus the same meaning as in the book from which he borrowed them, and as in the understanding of the Jews, to whom they had been originally addressed.

According to the reformists therefore, the difference alleged by the Second Council of Nicaea (787) between the cult of latria (adoration) and the cult of dulia (service, homage) is only a nominal distinction, intended to disguise a breach against the divine law. It is contradicted by the facts; because when human beings pay a cult to creatures, this worship usually ends by obscuring and eclipsing the worship due to God. It is very difficult indeed not to divinize those to whom invocations are addressed, and who are expected to assist, when they no longer live on earth. To this difficulty are connected the following questions: How do the saints know the prayers sent to them? How do the effects of their intercession take place?

As they were to have a very particular affection for the human species of which they had been a member, and probably a sincere indulgence for the weaknesses which they themselves had experienced, it was natural that men spoke to them more willingly than to God; so that they became new mediators between God and human beings, mediators to whom was paid a worship more assiduous and more fervent than to Christ himself. The more widespread was the practice of addressing prayers to the saints, the more the people unreservedly admitted that they heard these prayers.

But, whether we like it or not, to believe that a saint can more effectively than our simple prayers, inflict the will of God, his anger against us, his sense of justice, in order to make him more sensitive to our lot, our requests, in a word more indulgent towards us, is indeed a typically pagan idea!

Hugh of Saint- Victor appears to be the only one who has reproduced St. Augustine's hesitations on this subject, asking that the question should be left undecided, as being of no practical importance.

Like St. Augustine, he observed that, apart from our requests for intercessions, the saints constantly pray for us. Now, God hears our prayers, he can, of course, grant the intercessions of the saints, which are in harmony with our prayers, but he hears first and foremost our prayers. This view, implying only a general intercession, excludes the idea of a true patronage, that is to say, of an individual and direct relationship between the saint and the faithful who invoke him.

The golden legend of the bishop of Genoa, Jacobus da Varagine, will spread the cult of the saints through a series of popular narratives suitable to feed the sadomasochistic imagination of the faithful, but largely derived from the pagan myths or worship in these regions.

From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (and beyond), in France, the cult of the saints has nevertheless remained very lively, particularly in the countryside, through practices of agrarian protection. In town, it gave rise to the creation of brotherhoods, all the more alive as they were the place of a network of solidarity and conviviality, for example in professional brotherhoods around a "patron saint."

For a long time, there was no centralized "canonization." Recognition of a man's sanctity was the result of a popular motion (the famous *vox populi*), confirmed by the local bishop. As a result, some recognitions of sanctity were accomplished very quickly. Over the centuries, to avoid anything, a more or less lengthy procedure was put in place.

As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, it was formalized with Pope Urban VIII in 1634, with a meticulous investigation in various stages. Today, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, founded in 1969 by Paul VI (By duplicating the Sacred Congregation of Rites established by Sixtus V in 1588), which manages all the procedures (heroicity of virtues, holiness of life, examination of possible writings, miracles performed, etc.) leading to beatification and then to canonization . Recently, it is noted that a certain popular or media "pressure" can be felt, as it was the case for Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Pope John Paul II ("santo subito!"), beatified in record time for our epoch: 6 years for both, whereas it took nearly five centuries for Joan of Arc.

MARIOLOGY.

Blessed Virgin, Blessed Mother, Mother of God, Spouse of Christ, Spouse of the Spirit, Queen of Heaven. Who is this emblematic figure who has obtained such high titles and such a unique position in heaven? Where did she come from, and how did she pass from the human to the quasi-divine? On what are the dogmas that relate to her based, and how can we understand the fervent devotion that has been accorded to her over the centuries?

One of the best answers has been provided by the Doctor of Philosophy Stephen Benko (1924-2014) and his book "The Virgin Goddess." His studies avoid unnecessary polemics with Catholicism (so you won't get angry with your grandmother).

"Christianity," notes Benko, "did not add a new element to religion when it introduced into its theology such concepts as 'virgin' and 'mother' rather, it sharpened and refined images that already existed in numerous forms in pagan mythology."

In order to understand the phenomenon of Mary in Catholicism, it is first necessary to establish what the Catholic Church has used as a basis, and then to examine the set of images that has developed.

The cult that had the greatest influence on ancient Christianity was, according to Benko, that of the Great Mother (Magna Mater). Known in Asia Minor as Cybele, she would later become the model for Mariology. Throughout the region, many priests of the new Christian religion were recruited from among the educated pagan classes, naturally bringing their Greek philosophical ideas. Thus the Stoic and Neoplatonist concepts of the great mythological goddesses were projected upon Mary and slightly adapted: the admirers of Cybele regarded her chiefly as a chaste, beautiful, and lovable goddess; her worship was centered on salvation, and her cult advocated baptism, not in water but in the blood of a freshly sacrificed bull. The cult also enlisted single priests (who sometimes castrated themselves) and virgin priestesses.

Fernand Lequenne, in his book entitled *THE GALATIANS* (Evreux 1959) even attributes precisely to the Gauls of Asia Minor the rise of the Marian cult in Christianity. I quote him.

"We are in Constantinople. The clumsiness of a priest [in 428?], who, when speaking from the pulpit about Mary, maintains that the term *theotokos* (Mother of God) was not appropriate and that it was necessary to say only "mother of Jesus" is enough. The scandal broke out. Ordered to disavow his priest, Patriarch Nestorius claimed responsibility for the incident because, he said, Jesus Christ possesses two persons, that of the man Jesus, that of God...Nestorius responded by urging the emperor to summon an ecumenical (world) council. It was agreed to convene it at Ephesus. Ephesus!...And it is in the double basilica of Jesus and Saint Mary that the council will meet. We are in the year 431.

Bishops are coming from everywhere. Saint Cyril, charged by the Pope to represent him, presides. One of the most prominent Fathers and who figures in the place of honor is Galatian Theodotus, Archbishop of Ancyra...Also in a good place as metropolitan was the Bishop of Pessinus...Sessions follow sessions. Outside the crowd, huge, demonstrates all day long. The fervor for Mary was so immense that the neighboring bishops came accompanied by other crowds. All were shouting: "Theotokos, theotokos! ». Among them a considerable number of Galatians...The council multiplied the questions: how can one speak of Mary without speaking of Jesus, and of the Word without speaking of the Spirit? And of the Trinity? How can we speak of Mary?? »..

And to support his thesis, our author takes care to remind of the fact that out of the ten principal priests of the cult of Cybele, five were for the Galatians, five for the Phrygians; and that "seniority allowed each one to accede one day to the supreme title of Attis. In the same way, in Ankyra particularly, one day we will see Galatian women become priestesses of Artemis. And there will be druids in the cult of the Magi" (page 121).

Protestant historians generally take great pleasure in asserting or suggesting that the hyperdulia cult dedicated to Mary in the Catholic Church is merely a continuation of the cult of Cybele and that there

is nothing like it in the Holy Scriptures. But this sola scriptura is no better than the "pot calling the kettle black" type of reasoning.

It is certain that as far as the form the symbolism and the images are concerned there must have been many borrowings.

It is certain that in the region of origin of the cult of Cybele, which partially overlaps with that corresponding to the cradle of Christianity, the influence on the content must also have been felt. The cult of Cybele must have pushed the ancient pagans who became Christians of this reign of the world to give the mother of Jesus Christ an importance, an interest and a role beyond that of a mere mortal. All the more so since the Christian current at the origin of the future Catholics, which made them able to assert themselves between Gnosticism and Marcionism, namely Montanism, was precisely founded by a former priest of Cybele: Montanus. However, Catholics are only moderate Montanists (especially with regard to martyrdom).

On the other hand, the further away we get from the Middle East, the less our Protestant friends are right. The lack of culture OTHER THAN GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE has indeed resulted in the first Christians of the West that they saw Cybele or Jupiter everywhere.

When this was not the case.

Take for example the case of Saint Symphorian of Autun. If he had taken a little interest in the culture of his host country, he would have immediately understood that the Cybele in question was only the interpretatio graeca or romana of a great Celtic goddess of fecundity or soil fertility: Rose-Martha.

Given the predominance of Greco-Roman names in the diatribes of these followers of the religion of love against the peasant customs of the West, we can therefore doubt the relevance or profundity of their thoughts in the field of the popular religion.

Protestant historiography is therefore wrong to see only Cybèle behind the cult of hyperdulia that was developed around the person of Mary.

But there is nevertheless a basis of truth in the equation it unfolds.

Many contradictory myths surround Cybele. She is sometimes considered a nymph because of her links with nature. Originally she would have been a hermaphrodite and the Gods would have castrated her to make her a woman. Legend has it that she fell in love with her son-lover Attis, who cheated on her. Cybele took her revenge by having the tree on which his partner's life depended cut down. His great sorrow made him mad, pushed him to castrate himself and put an end to his life. Cybele, moved by his pain, turned him into a pine tree.

The installation of the statue of Cybele in Constantinople is a perfect example of her evolution.

According to Zozime, the emperor Constantine would have had a statue from Cyzicus in the Propontide come but would have had it changed.

Or more exactly Constantine would have built a temple dedicated to the goddess Tyche next to Saint Sophia and for the statue having to ornament it he would have had a statue of the goddess Rhea-Cybele changed. "His contempt for religion [caused him] to remove the lions that were on either side [of the goddess] and changed the position of her hands; whereas she once seemed to be holding the lions, she now seems to be praying, looking out over the city to protect it.

This is more in keeping with Christian iconography concerning the Mother of God.

Five centuries earlier in 204 before our era Cybele had entered Rome with no change in her person but with changes in her priests, and the Romans had gone and taken her from their Gallic enemies in Pessinus (now Turkey) so that she helps them to win the war against Carthage. In any case, the arrival in Rome of the deity represented by the sacred black stone * "the betylus" coincided with the victory!

In those ancient times many deities were introduced to Rome, often brought back by soldiers returning from their expeditions. The difference with Cybele was that she was officially introduced. She arrived in Rome in April 204 before our era through the Tiber. She was brought in procession to the shrine of the Victory on the Palatine. A temple is built in her honor.

New priests, the Archigalles, are chosen from among the Roman citizens. They are not eunuchs. The cult of Cybele evolves in favor of Attis with the emphasis on death and resurrection. The cult of this great Goddess spreads in several Roman sanctuaries. The image of the goddess is present in all the Roman Empire until the end.

The mixture of different doctrines, called syncretism, was not new, but rather recurrent, in the religions of the Mediterranean basin. Like the mixing of pagan images and ideas towards other pagan religions, this mixing began to take place towards Christianity in what Benko calls "the unctioal equivalency." The first centuries of this era, during which the early Christian religion was embraced and modified by

the different cultures of the Hellenistic world, was a period of particularly rapid syncretism. The images of different distinct goddesses merged to the point that they could no longer be distinguished.

Benko also mentions Artemis, Astarte, Caelestis, Ceres, Cybele, Demeter, Diana, Ishtar, Isis and Selene.

He concludes his essay by saying: "e. I propose that there is a direct line, unbroken and clearly discernible, from the goddess-cults of the ancients to the reverence paid and eventually the cult accorded to the Virgin Mary."

"In this way, Mary was eventually declared to be "Mother of God," which is a wholly pagan term filled with new Christian meaning. Did Mary become a goddess when this declaration was made?

Christians' answer was, and still is, an indignant

No! — but in fact Mary assumed the functions of pagan female divinities and for many pious Christian folk she did, and does, everything the ancient goddesses used to do.

* Like in the kaaba of Mecca.

DOCUMENT.

THE RULE OF ST COLUMBANUS OF BOBBIO.

I.OF OBEDIENCE.

At the first word of the senior, all on hearing should rise to obey, since their obedience is shown to God, as our Lord Jesus Christ says: "He who hears you hears Me." (Luke 10,16). Therefore if anyone hearing the word does not rise at once, he is to be judged disobedient.

II. The rule of silence is decreed to be carefully observed, since it is written: "the nurture of righteousness is silence and peace." (Isaiah 32.17). And thus, lest one be apprehended as guilty of much talking, it is needful that he keep silence except for things profitable and necessary, since according to Scripture: "in many words sin will not be lacking." (Proverbs. 10.19). Therefore the Savior says: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12.37).

Justly will they be damned who would not say just things when they could, but preferred to say with garrulous loquacity what is evil, unjust, irreverent, empty, harmful, dubious, false, provocative, disparaging, base, fanciful, blasphemous, rude, and tortuous. Therefore we must keep silence on these and kindred matters, and speak with care and prudence, lest either disparagements or swollen oppositions should break out in vicious garrulity.

III. OF FOOD AND DRINK.

Let the monks' food be poor and taken in the evening, such as to avoid repletion, and their drink such as to avoid intoxication, so that it may both maintain life and not harm; vegetables, beans, flour mixed with water, together with the small bread weighing a paximatis (200 grams???), lest the stomach be burdened and the mind confused. For indeed those who desire eternal rewards must only consider usefulness and use. Use of life must be moderated just as toil must be moderated, since this is true discretion, that the possibility of spiritual progress may be kept with a temperance that punishes the flesh. For if temperance exceeds measure, it will be a vice and not a virtue; for virtue maintains and retains many goods. Therefore we must fast daily, just as we must feed daily; and while we must eat daily, we must gratify the body more poorly and sparingly; since we must eat daily for the reason that we must go forward daily, pray daily, toil daily, and daily read.

IV.OF POVERTY AND OF OVERCOMING GREED.

Since this is so, we have need of few things, according to the word of the Lord, or even of one." For few things are true necessities without which life cannot be led, or even one thing, like food according to the letter. But we require purity of feeling by the grace of God, that we may understand spiritually what are those few gifts of love which are offered to Martha by the Lord.

V. OF OVERCOMING VANITY.

Let no large word proceed from a monk's mouth, lest his own large labor perish.

VII. OF THE CHOIR OFFICE.

But concerning the synaxis, that is, the office of psalms and prayers in canonical manner, some distinctions must be drawn, since its observance has been variously bequeathed to our remembrance by different authorities. Thus, in accordance with the nature of man's life and the succession of the seasons, the same will be variously suggested by me also in writing. For it should not be stereotyped in view of the mutual changes of the seasons; for it is fitting that it be longer on the long nights and shorter on the short ones. Hence, in agreement with our predecessors, from the twenty-fourth of June, while the night increases, the office begins to grow gradually from twelve chants of the shortest measure on the night of the Sabbath or the Lord's Day, up to the beginning of winter, that is, the first of November. Then they sing twenty-five antiphonal psalms [of twice the same number] which always follow third after two chanted, in such a way that within the two aforesaid nights they sing the entire total of the psalter, while they modify the remaining nights for the whole winter with twelve chants. At winter's end, gradually each week throughout the spring, three psalms are always dropped, so that only twelve antiphons remain on the holy nights, that is, the thirty-six psalms of the daily winter office, but it is twenty-four throughout the whole spring and summer and up to the autumn equinox, that is, the twenty-fourth of September. Then the fashion of the synaxis is like that on the spring equinox, that is, the twenty-fifth of March, while by mutual changes it slowly grows and lessens.

Thus we must weigh our watching according to our strength [.....]

However, as I have said, the true tradition of praying is that the capacity of the man devoted to this work should be realized without wearying of his vow, whether the excellence of his capacity allows this, or whether his mental grasp or physical condition could allow it, considering his limitations, and that it should be realized as far as the zeal of each demand, if he be unhampered and alone, or as far as the scope of his learning requires, or the leisure of his position, the amount of study, the type of occupation and the difference of ages permits, although this is to be reckoned as the excellence of a single work in such various ways, because it alternates with labor and circumstance. And thus, although the length of standing or singing may be various, yet the identity of prayer in the heart and mental concentration that is unceasing with God's help will be of a single excellence.

VIII. OF DISCRETION.

How necessary discretion is for monks is shown by the mistake of many, and indicated by the downfall of some, who beginning without discretion and passing their time without a sobering knowledge, have been unable to complete a praiseworthy life; 'since, just as error overtakes those who proceed without a path, so for those who live without discretion intemperance is at hand, and this is always the opposite of virtues which are placed in the mean between each extreme. Its onset is a matter of danger, when beside the straight way of discretion our foes place the stumbling blocks of wickedness and the offenses of various mistakes. Therefore we must pray God continually that He would bestow the light of true discretion to illumine this way, surrounded on every side by the world's thickest darkness, so that His true worshipers may be able to cross this darkness without error to Himself. So discretion has got its name from discerning, for the reason that it discerns in us between good and evil, and also between the moderate and the complete. For from the beginning either class has been divided like light and darkness, that is, good and evil, after evil began through the devil's agency to exist by the corruption of good, but through God's agency Who first illumines and then divides (Genesis 1, 364). Thus righteous Abel chose the good, but unrighteous Cain fell upon evil (Genesis 4, 1-8) .

[Editor's note. Let us remind, with due respect to noibo Columbanus, that nothing, but then nothing, in the biblical text, indicates that Cain was impious BEFORE being a victim of the divine discrimination which one knows. If he became impious, it is after, without confessed reason, being rejected by God, finally at least by the god-or-demon, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].

God made all things good that He created (Genesis 1, 31), but the devil sowed evils over them (Matthew 13 , 24-30) by cunning craftiness and the sly inducement of a perilous design (Genesis 3, 1-5) . What things then are good? Doubtless those which are untouched, and have remained in the undefiled state of their creation; "which God [alone] created and "prepared", according to the Apostle (Ephesians 2. 10), " that we should walk in them; [which are] the good works in which in Christ Jesus we were created," namely goodness, innocence, righteousness, justice, truth, pity, love, saving peace, spiritual joy, together with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5 , 22). All these with their fruits are good. But to these, the evils are opposed, namely wickedness, seduction, unrighteousness, injustice, lying, greed, hatred, discord, bitterness, together with their manifold fruits, things which are born from them.

For countless are the things that are produced from the two opposites, that is, from goods and evils. But what departs from its established goodness and innocence is the first evil, which is the pride of primal wickedness; the opposite of which is the lowly esteem of a righteous goodness that acknowledges and glorifies its Creator, and this is a rational creature's first good. Thus the rest also has gradually grown to a huge forest of names in two sections.

Since this is so, the good must be firmly held by those that have God's help, which is ever to be prayed for in prosperity and in adversity, lest either in prosperity we be lifted up to pride, or in adversity be cast down to despair. Thus we must always restrain ourselves from either danger, that is, from all excesses by a splendid temperance and true discretion, which cleaves to Christian lowliness and opens the way of perfection to Christ's true soldiers, namely by ever discerning rightly in doubtful cases, and everywhere dividing justly between good and evil, whether between both in external acts, or between flesh and spirit in the inner life, or between good works and character, or between action and contemplation, or between official duty and private devotion.

Therefore the evils are to be equally avoided, hubris, ill will, lying, seduction, unrighteousness, wicked transgression of morality, gluttony, fornication, avarice, wrath, dejection, inconstancy, vainglory, boasting, slander; the goods of the virtues are also to be followed, lowliness, kindness, purity, obedience, temperance, chastity, liberality, patience, cheerfulness, constancy, zeal, persistence,

watchfulness, silence, which through an enduring courage and sobering moderation, as in some weighing balance of discretion, are to be weighed in the performance of our customary work, according to the capacity of our endeavor, if everywhere we seek sufficiency. For it is doubtful to none that the man to whom sufficiency is not enough" has overstepped the measure of discretion, and whatever oversteps the very measure is clearly a vice.

Thus between the little and the excessive there is a reasonable measure in the midst, which ever recalls us from every superfluity on either side, and in every case posited provides what is universally fixed by human need, and spurns the unreasonable demand for superfluous desire. And this measure of true discretion, weighing all our actions in the scales of justice, in no wise allows us to err from what is just, or to suffer a mistake, if we ever follow straight behind it as our leader. For while we must always restrain ourselves from either side, according to that saying "Keep yourselves from the right and from the left," (cf. Deut. 5. 32) we must ever proceed straight forwards by discretion, that is, by the light of God,

while very often we say and sing the victorious psalmist's verse, "My God, enlighten my darkness, since in You I am rescued from temptation"(Ps. 17. 29-30). For "temptation is the life of man on earth" (Job 7. 1)

IX. OF MORTIFICATION.

Thus there is a threefold scheme of mortification: not to disagree in mind, not to speak as one pleases with the tongue, not to go anywhere with complete freedom. Its part is ever to say to a senior, however adverse his instructions, "Not as I will but as thou wilt," (Matt. 26. 39) following the example of the Lord and Savior, Who says, "I came down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him Who sent Me, the Father (John VI , 38).

THE END.

Bobbio manuscripts add a paragraph.

X. OF THE MONK'S PERFECTION.

Let the monk live in a community under the discipline of one father and in company with many, so that from one he may learn lowliness, from another patience. For one may teach him silence and another meekness. Let him not do as he wishes, let him eat what he is bidden, keep as much as he has received, complete the tale of his work, be subject to whom he does not like. Let him come weary to his bed and sleep walking, and let him be forced to rise while his sleep is not yet finished. Let him keep silence when he has suffered wrong, let him fear the superior of his community as a lord, love him as a father, believe that whatever he commands is healthful for himself, and let him not pass judgment on the opinion of an elderly person, to whose duty it belongs to obey and fulfill what he is bidden". As Moses says, "Hear, O Israel and be quiet" (Deut. 27. 9).

DOCUMENT.

THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT OF NURSIA AS FOR CLOTHING.

Chapter 55.

Let clothing be given to the brethren¹⁾ according to the nature of the place in which they dwell and its climate; for in cold regions more will be needed, and in warm regions less. This is to be taken into consideration, therefore, by the Abbot.

We believe, however, that in ordinary places the following dress is sufficient for each monk, a cowl ²⁾ thick and woolly for winter, thin or worn for summer, a tunic ³⁾, a scapular ⁴⁾ for work, stockings and sandals to cover the feet.

The monks should not complain about the color or the coarseness of any of these things, but be content with what can be found in the district where they live and can be purchased cheaply. The Abbot shall see to the size of the garments that they be not too short for those who wear them, but of the proper fit.

Let those who receive new clothes always give back the old ones at once, to be put away in the wardrobe for the poor.

For it is sufficient if a monk has two tunics and two cowls, to allow for night wear and for the washing of these garments;

more than that is superfluity and should be taken away. Let them return their stockings also and anything else that is old when they receive new ones.

Those who are sent on a journey shall receive boxer shorts ⁵⁾ from the wardrobe, which they shall wash and restore on their return. And let their cowls and tunics be somewhat better than what they usually wear.

These they shall receive from the wardrobe when they set out on a journey, and restore when they return.

For bedding let this suffice: a mattress, a sheet ? A woolen blanket and a pillow.....

In order that the vice of private ownership may be cut out by the roots, the Abbot should provide all the necessary articles:

cowls, tunics, stockings, sandals, belt, knife, stylus, needle, handkerchief, writing tablets; that all pretext of need may be taken away.

1) What the primitive Benedictine costume could well resemble ? Everything considered, it seems that it hardly differed from that of the farmers of the time.

2) The cowl was the outerwear: it consisted, seems it, in a coat equipped with a big hood.

3) The tunic, or underwear, was worn in Rome for a long time by everyone; at the time of saint Benedict, it had lengthened and had handles. It was tight at the waist by a belt, which was also used to hike the tunic up, in order to work, or to walk. It was therefore in fact a kind of shirt of it.

4) The scapular was an additional clothing which one wear only to facilitate work. It was to consist of a kind of strip which, slipped around the neck and crossed on the chest as well as the back, tightened the more or less floating tunic.

5) The wearing of boxer shorts on a journey is explained by a reason for decency, the travelers being accustomed to hike very high their dress at certain times (crossing of a river, etc.).

6) At that time was generally used for writing a stylus with which you traced characters on tablets (tabulae) coated of wax.

CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM.

Etymologically, the monk is the one who lives alone, but the word has taken on a broader meaning and applies to all ascetics, who withdraw from society to devote themselves to prayer and meditation, whether they live alone (hermits and anchorites) or in groups (cenobites). In this sense, the first known institution of monasticism is that of the Buddhist noble sangha more than twenty-five centuries ago.

As a result of various historical developments (Christians having gradually been eliminated from the Middle East, Westerners having done nothing to help them, and Christianity now being equated to the West) we shall therefore devote this chapter to Western monasticism.

Alexander BERTRAND *Our Origins Religion etc...* 1897.

"In the West, convents, monasteries and communities, abbeys, whatever their name, are not an institution of Christian origin.

The Count of Montalembert wrote in his eloquent work, *The Westerner monks*: "The most accredited opinion established the regular constitution of the monastic order at the end of the first century. Egypt was chosen to be the cradle of this new world"; and further on: "Monastic life was founded in the East, like the Church, but like the Church it only acquired a real strength in the West."

Montalembert is wrong. Cenobitic life, life in common for intellectual, moral and religious interests was known and widely practiced in the pagan world, not only in Egypt and Upper Asia, long before the Christian era, but in India and Asia Minor...

The primitive hive is in the Middle East ; from there all the swarms of which the Christian convents are the survivors started. The spirit was changed, the organization remained almost the same.

The role of the religious and industrial Fraternities, consortia sodalicia, was considerable in antiquity. In a remarkable dissertation that opened the doors of the Institute before him, a dissertation entitled: *The Metals in Antiquity* J.-P. Rossignol demonstrated that Greece owes to the associations, to the religious corporations known as cabeiiri, corybantes, curetes, dactyls and telchines the development of metallurgy intimately united to certain religious rites, the members of these various corporations being unanimously presented to us not only as skillful metallurgists, but also as enchanters and magicians, grouped in Phrygia around the temple of the Great Goddess of Ida.

"There [around the temple]," said the author of the *Phoronides*, "the enchanters of Ida, the Phrygians, mountain men had settled their abode...."

Strabo. "In this Antitaurus are deep and narrow valleys, in which are situated Comana and the temple of Enyo, whom the people there call "Ma." (Cybele). It is a considerable city; its inhabitants, however, consist mostly of the divinely inspired people and the temple-servants who live in it. Its inhabitants are Cataonians, who, though in a general way classed as subject to the king, are in most respects subject to the priest. The priest is master of the temple, and also of the temple-servants, who on my sojourn there were more than six thousand in number, men and women together. Also, considerable territory belongs to the temple, and the revenue is enjoyed by the priest. He is second in rank in Cappadocia after the king."

We will complete the list of Alexander BERTRAND with a last example located at the other end of the Roman Empire but which has its place in it.

Diodorus of Sicily Book II chapter XLVII: ". And there is also on the island both a magnificent sacred precinct of Apollo and a notable temple [Stonehenge?] which is adorned with many votive offerings and is spherical . Furthermore, a city is there which is sacred to this god, the majority of its inhabitants are players on the cithara; these continually play on this instrument in the temple and sing hymns of praise to the god, glorifying his deeds".

Christine Mohrmann, University of Nijmegen.

THE ROLE OF MONKS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE LATIN HERITAGE

My first impression when I reflected on the problem I was going to study, that of the role of monks in the transmission of the Latin heritage, was that I should move away from the framework of the ancient monasticism in which Saint Martin lived, to find the first traces of an activity that should one day become one of the glories of Western monasticism. But, entering into the phenomenon of transmission, I saw that it was thanks to special features of the oldest Western monasticism - features that appeared

from the moment when asceticism, in its various forms, was imported into the West - that the monks of a later period were able to play the role of custodians and transmitters of the Latin heritage.

From the beginning Western asceticism is more moderate, more nuanced dare I say, than Egyptian and even Syrian asceticism. What is imported from the East is an ascetic ideal, and it is this ideal that is realized in the West in very diverse ways: as much by a flight from the world and a life of ascetic austerity, as by pastoral activities combined with an ascetic life, and even by a life that combines scientific and literary activity with an ascetic ideal. Asceticism spreads, from the very beginning, in the cities as well as in the countryside.

It was a phenomenon which undoubtedly had more contact with a pre-Christian, ancient tradition, in the East than in the West. This circumstance could partially explain the obvious fact that asceticism took root more easily in the East than in the West. For Westerners it was more difficult - it seems - than for Orientals to find a definitive form of the ascetic ideal. This is proved by the very history of the term "asceticism" in the West...

.....

In the way the West has interpreted the ideal of Eastern asceticism, so austere, so radical, so bizarre at times, there is a lot of moderation, but we also see, as it appears from the way the term askesis is rendered, a lot of hesitation as to the very content of the ideal in question. As for the most austere forms of Egyptian asceticism, they are rarely practiced in the West. From the beginning there is a tendency to Pachomian cenobitism rather than absolute anchorism. This cenobitism appears, quite early on, in a form that is a prelude to Benedictine monasticism.

In spite of these Egyptian tendencies, the tradition of Lerins did not reject pastoral work, and the foundation of Saint Honoratus will become a bishop's hothouse.

We can see, therefore, how in the West asceticism appears in very diverse forms: ascetic life does not exclude literary and scholarly activity, nor pastoral work. Most often it is a very open monasticism: there were monks who were literate, there were bishops who led a monastic life, the great monastic centers like Marmoutier or Lerins gave bishops to many dioceses....

The Latin West was a literate society: books, secular and Christian literature belonged to the normal equipment of culture. The monk, withdrawing from the world, partially renounced this equipment; but by the very fact of his Christianity, a religion in which books and written texts play an important role, he did not lose interest in literary culture. But, as long as there were still schools, the monks were not interested in teaching literature. And even when the traditional teaching disappears in Gaul, it was rather the bishops (coming, it is true, often from a monastic background) than the monks who took care of the teaching, now private. It is quite probable that during these centuries already, monks copied the liturgical books they needed, as well as the texts of the Bible. Let us think of the scriptures mentioned, as we have seen, by Sulpitius Severus for Marmoutier. But the very fact that this work was exclusively entrusted to young people proves that we are still far from the tradition of the monastic scriptoria in the Middle Ages.

.....

In any case, the foundation of Cassiodorus, the first attempt at a scholarly and humanistic monasticism, in the line of the Maurists, is no longer heard of after his death.

When, in the course of the same century, Benedict organized Western monasticism in a more or less definitive way, according to principles which reflect rather the moderate Western tradition - which has been emerging since the middle of the fourth century - than the austerity of the Egyptian monks, it cannot be said that he gave an important place to letters, nor that he seems to be worried about the literary tradition. The Rule of St. Benedict still reflects a literate society in which books and reading have their normal place. In Benedict's monastery, books are there, the existence of a library is considered normal and the majority of monks can still read. But there is no indication of any particular care for the Latin heritage. And nothing in the Rule reminds of the organization of the Cassiodorian community, all devoted to the study of letters. On the other hand, several monastic sources of the 6th century emphasize manual work, especially the work in the fields. Cassiodorus himself does not reject manual work, although he considers it less important than philological and literary activity.

Monastic work in the West was fundamental not only in the spiritual field, but also in the economic, cultural and charitable fields. This monasticism is, moreover, almost as old as Eastern monasticism. Nevertheless, it took three centuries for it to spread to the Latin-speaking part of the Roman Empire.

One of the first founders of monasteries in Ireland is said to have been Saint Kieran, born in Ireland at Corca-Laighde, son of Laighne, a nobleman from the kingdom of Ossory and Liadan. After years of research as a hermit he would have built the monastery of Saighir (Saighar) in County Offaly, where he would have died in 530.

Tradition nevertheless considers Saint Enda of Aran (also died around 530) to be the true father of Irish monasticism.

Bangor Abbey in Northern Ireland was founded by Comgall of Bangor in 558 or 559. It was known in the Middle Ages as an important training center for missionaries and earned the nickname "light of the world." At the time of Comgall's death in 601, 3,000 monks were studying there. The Celtic monk of the time was a great walker. On the day of his departure he was equipped with a solid stick, a pilgrim's staff of course (cambutta or bacall), a small bell (clocca) and a leather shoulder bag (tiag lebair) in which he carried a copy of the gospels, a psalter or the objects of worship essential for the celebration of a mass. Columban of Bobbio had been one of them before leaving around 580 to evangelize Europe. He landed in 590 on the Armorican coast, between Saint-Malo and Cancale, with twelve companions, and built a triple monastery, Luxeuil-Anegrays-Fontaines, in the Vosges forest.

Then, driven out by Brunhilda, he finally reached Bobbio, south of Milan, where he built a new abbey and died almost immediately in 615. After Columban's death, more than ninety others adopted his rule. But little by little, the rule of St. Benedict, slowly discovered, was substituted to them. As early as 628, in most of the monasteries of Luxeuil, a mixed rule was formed, associating articles of the Benedictine rule with those of the Columbanian rule. The most famous were the congregations of Saint-Wandrille, Jumièges (founded by St Philibert), Saint-Amand.

At the same time, the monk Augustine, prior of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Andrew of Rome, sent by Pope St. Gregory the Great to convert the Anglo-Saxons, founded the first Benedictine monastery in England and became Archbishop of Canterbury (597). In a century more than a hundred others were added. In 610, the Council of Rome, summoned by Boniface IV, confirmed the rule of St. Benedict for all the monasteries in England. And in 745 the National Council of the Franks, presided over by St. Boniface, Archbishop of Mainz, ordered the submission to this rule of all the monasteries of their kingdom.

The flourishing of Western monasticism continued under the protection of Pepin the Short, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. But it was soon the victim of two plagues which caused its decline. The first was the monopoly of the abbeys by laymen, who managed the lot and properties of the monks. The other was the invasion of the Muslim Saracens * and before of the Pagan Normans, who wrecked the majority of the monasteries and massacred a large number of monks (Lindisfarne 793).

After the collapse, the revival of the monastic life was the work of Cluny. Initially, in 909, this modest formation, the work of William I of Aquitaine, went almost unnoticed. But the thirst for religious life was such that Cluny, in two centuries, created or gathered twelve hundred monasteries. The novelty of its government was a centralization which placed all the houses of the order under the authority of the abbot of Cluny. It was, therefore, the personal value of the latter that determined the respect of the rule and the impulse of fervor in the whole order. After the first abbot, St Bernard (909-927), this period went on increasing: St Odo directed for fifteen years, St Aymard for twenty-three years, St Maiolus for twenty-nine years, St Odilo (994-1049) fifty-five years, St Hugh (1049-1109) for sixty years.

After the death of this monastic giant, Cluny began to give signs of decline. The torch was taken over by Cîteaux. This abbey, in Burgundy like Cluny, was founded in 1098 by Saint Robert, abbot of Molesme, who wanted, with some companions, to live intensely the Benedictine life in toil and deprivation. His successors at the head of the young abbey, St Alberic (1099-1109), St Stephen Harding (1109-1133), Raynard (1133-1151), were worthy of him and developed the order throughout Europe.

But the most effective artisan of the monastic boom was St. Bernard, first abbot of Clairvaux.

He founded sixty-nine monasteries, which in turn created more than a hundred. A man of the Church, he was a zealous servant of the papacy; preacher, he left more than four hundred sermons; theologian, he was placed among the doctors of the Church.

In the thirteenth century, the begging orders aroused enthusiasm and attracted a multitude of recruits. It was certainly, numerically, to the detriment of the monastic orders; but those kept largely their fervor.

It was otherwise when, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, two events dealt them an irreparable blow. One, external, was the Reformation, which in half of Europe confiscated the monasteries, drove out or massacred the monks; the other one, internal, was, in 1516, the Concordat of Bologna between Leo X and Francis I., which left to the King of France the appointment of bishops and abbots in his kingdom, where there was the greatest number of monasteries. The king, evidently, did not appoint the holiest prelates, but the most ambitious and most devoted to his person, and a decline of the monastic institutes followed.

A revival appeared in the seventeenth century thanks to the creation of new congregations, but this rise was fought in the eighteenth century by the governments of the countries in southern Europe, and annihilated in France and Italy by the Revolution. The restoration movement of the nineteenth century could rebuild these ruins only in a small part.

* As far as Muslims are concerned, we can attribute to them the destruction of the second monastery of Monte Cassino in 883, the first abbey having been destroyed by the pagan Lombards in 589.

THE PILGRIMAGES.

Pilgrimage is an almost universal phenomenon in anthropology. The pilgrimage is a journey made by a believer the pilgrim, to a circumscribed place held sacred according to one's religion because supposed to be in direct connection with a deity through a relic, a spring, a tree, an apparition and so on..

This movement of men and women, usually on foot, to places where they come into contact with the sacredness is a practice that appears very early in the history of mankind, for example at Stonehenge from 2400 before our era.

Pilgrimages are often an important source of income for the region in plays. But beyond the only economic aspect, the circulation of curious people led by an ideal also creates interactions God at opening and strengthening at the same time the identity of the cultures concerned (in places of origin, arrival and transit).

The ancient pilgrimages were generally centered on a sanctuary, a spring, a cave or a well. It was often accompanied by a divinatory rite, generally consisting of sleeping near these places to get, in the form of a dream, the advice of a healing god (as in Grand the most beautiful temple in the world according to the Romans).

In the 3rd century, Christian pilgrimages have as their destination the principal holy places mentioned in the Gospels and the Old Testament. Origen seeks to identify them. They are multiplied especially from the fourth century onwards with the "discovery" or "invention" of the Holy Cross by the mother of the Emperor Constantine I and the rather disordered development of the tombs of martyrs. The primary purpose of the pilgrimage in this case is the possibility of "touching" the relics which, besides the financial or material sacrifice which it supposes, ensures greater efficiency than the prayer at a distance of the saint.

The oldest written description of Christian pilgrims and pilgrimages in the Holy Land is the Anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux, a narrative that tells how an inhabitant of Bordeaux went to Jerusalem in 333.

The Fathers of the Church are wary of these first pilgrimages, sources of dissolution and abuse such as the sin of gluttony, of lust. The pilgrimage is then a pretext for husbands or young men to separate from their families and "to adventure. The maxim of the monk Thomas a Kempis "Who multum peregrinantur, raro sanctificantur" : "Those who travel much are rarely sainted" confirms these fears.

Christian pilgrimages in the Middle Ages, unlike Muslim pilgrimages to Mecca , rarely attract crowds of people traveling only by piety (penitential pilgrimage or jubilees) on well-marked roads, but most often solitary or in small groups travelers (mainly men) mixing many traders, on mule roads. These small groups are driven by pious or less pious reasons: faith, repentance, challenge, business, "pilgrimage by proxy" sometimes in order to separate from one's family, from one's professional environment, sometimes with an aim with touristic dominant feature (discovery of new monuments, cooking, people). The distant shrines are the destination of those who have the resources ("long-distance pilgrimage"). The Middle Ages is not the golden age but the mythical age of the pilgrimage, the crowds of that era belonging to the popular imagination.

The case of the voyage of Saint Brendan proves it. This hybrid work, born of a hitherto unpublished crossing between hagiography and novel, is situated on the border of the two genres which have been the most read and the most distributed throughout the Middle Ages. The *Nauigatio Sancti Brandani*, taken from an extract of the *Vita Sancti Brandani*, become an autonomous work in the 10th century and gets a first formatting at the beginning of the twelfth century, under the pen of a certain Benedeit. In the rewriting in vernacular language as in the Latin text, the spiritual and edifying aims of the hagiographic genre are united with the imperatives of the quest and of the adventure: the Irish Abbot Brendan goes to visit the paradise and goes with his monks into a true odyssey, in which God appears through a series of signs, trials and "wonders." This border work, situated at the junction of the sacredness and on the secular one, of the hagiography, of the novel and of a certain variety of druidic forms and genres (imrama, *lorica* *), had everything it needed to find an important success. As early as the twelfth century, it became an indispensable reference. Widely distributed in its Latin version, there are more than 125 manuscripts all over Europe.

These accounts nevertheless had such an impact on the populations that they led some people to take part in journeys this time very real, after them. Or more exactly, Christianity obliges, to Iona,

Rome, or elsewhere. What was not at all the same thing, we will admit it. This great movement of expansion by means of pilgrimages, however, soon found its limits, as it is evidenced by the somewhat disillusioned verses probably written by an Irish hand on a sheet of manuscript of the ninth century, reproduced below.

Techt do Róim,
mór saítho, becc torbai;
in Rí con-daigi i foss,
manim bera latt ní fhogbai.

To go to Rome
Is little profit, endless pain;
The king that you seek there
You find at home or seek in vain.

Editor's note: this Irish quatrain is on the folio 23 of the Boernerianus codex of the royal library in Dresden.

On the other hand, during the Carolingian period, the legal protection of the pilgrim developed, and a pilgrim order (*ordo peregrinorum*) as well as a pilgrim's law (*lex peregrinorum*) were gradually created, constituting a germ of pilgrim's status. It was also in the Middle Ages that were organized the great pilgrimage sanctuaries like Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain, which played a religious and cultural role but also match an economic necessity (production and sale of souvenirs, offerings, reception structures that ensure significant revenues to the sanctuary). It is also the time when the pilgrims will be gradually framed (board and lodging) because of the dangers that lurk travelers but also to avoid that some use them as an alibi to be separate from their original environment.

It is to be noted that one of the causes of the first Christian jihad of the 11th century was the protection of the holy places and of the pilgrims going there. One of the canons of the Council of Clermont summoned by Pope Urban II went so far as to promise a plenary indulgence to all those who would go to Jerusalem since from 1071 Turks forbade access to it.

The first jubilee officially organized by the papacy was that decreed in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII, inviting Christians to go to Rome to benefit from the plenary indulgence previously granted to the Crusaders.

From the 14th century, the pilgrimage will decline because of the movement that favors the spiritual pilgrimage, interior, and of the insecurity of the roads. From the sixteenth century onwards (when the Reformation condemned pilgrimages, a pretext for vagrancy or idolatry, and where centralized states wanted to control the movement of the persons), regional or local pilgrimage, controlled by the clergy, will be privileged ("pilgrimage in quest of assistance" favored by the accounts of miracles linked to local sanctuaries, expiatory and judicial pilgrimage).

In the eighteenth century, the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which criticized the traffic of relics and indulgences from which the pilgrim could benefit, was also partly responsible for the decline of the "long-distance pilgrimage," while those local continuing.

Many current pilgrimages are no longer the doing of practicing people with a rigorous religious approach, but are performed in order to get a divine favor (propitiatory pilgrimage), particularly a healing, or in thanks for a grace got (gratulatory pilgrimage with of votive offerings), or to make a spiritual retreat coupled with hiking.

The main Christian pilgrimages are Jerusalem, Rome, Lourdes (healing sanctuary), Santiago de Compostela, Our Lady of Fatima. In Mexico Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the province of Quebec Sainte-Anne de Beaupré. There are also orthodox pilgrimages such as to St. Sergius of Radonezh near Moscow.

* The *loricae* or private prayers, together with the litanies, are one of the great specialties of Irish Christianity, probably of druidic origin.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION.

Religious feasts have gradually emerged in the history of Christianity: first Easter (from the second century), then the whole of the Pascal cycle from Lent (3rd century) to Pentecost (4th century), Christmas 4th century), the Marian days and those of the great saints (4th-5th centuries).

If some of these feasts are the result of the Christianization of earlier pagan holy days (Samon-ios, Beltene, Lugnasade, Ambivolc-os ...), it was especially for Christians to be part of the social rhythm of their time, while giving it a religious sense in harmony with their tradition.

The nature of these Christian holy days of obligation differed greatly from the pagan holy days like Samon; they were only religious; not only public life was suspended, but every game or entertainment which could divert from devotion was forbidden; people went to the church adorned with their finest clothes; It was strictly forbidden to fast except during the Lent, of course.

The laity could omit the feasts of devotion, but the feasts known as holy days of obligation were, on the contrary, equated with Sundays, for the provisions concerning rest and sanctification. These provisions were contravened in three ways:

- 1) By neglecting the works of piety which are ordered on those days.
- 2) By working or practicing a prohibited trade.
- 3) By indulging in forbidden entertainment.

With regard to works of piety, the canons impose on the faithful the obligation to attend mass, on Sundays and on days matching holy days of obligation.

With regard to labor, the regulations differed and differ still, according to the churches, places, and times but the general precept is to abstain from any kind of labor except that which is indispensable to life or which is demanded by a pressing reason of necessity or piety.

As soon as Christianity became a state religion, the secular power did its hardest also in sanctioning by means of coercive measures the ordinances of the Church, relating to Sundays and holy days of obligation. From the time of Childebert, the dictates of Roman emperors were reproduced and developed by numerous ordinances of kings.

Charlemagne's Admonitio Generalis (article 79) forbids, for example, any "servile" work on Sundays (follows a detailed list of agricultural or typically female works) so that everyone can physically go to the church and thank the Lord of his benefits.

With regard to the definition of "servile" works in order to avoid abuse of individual interpretations, the ordinary must be consulted and decide on the cases of exception or dispensation. Remain absolutely condemned, markets, fairs and generally any public trading; as well as games, dances, fights and other shows.

For the Catholic Church Sunday, on which by apostolic tradition the Paschal mystery is celebrated, must be observed in the universal Church as the primordial holy day of obligation. The following days must also be observed: the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Epiphany, the Ascension, the Body and Blood of Christ, Holy Mary the Mother of God, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption, Saint Joseph, Saint Peter and Saint Paul the Apostles, and All Saints.

The pagan origin of the feast, or at least of Christmas Day, being well known (the day chosen by the Christians to celebrate the nativity was that of the winter solstice, the feast of the god Sol Invictus) we will pass directly to the last of the feasts of this list, All Saints Day.

THE FUNERALS.

Every funeral rite is a set of gestures and words, and in certain countries of dances, accompanying the agony then the death of a human being in order to pay tribute to him and, in a way, to accompany him through a ceremony.

The Christian funeral is not a sacrament but a sacramental one. A liturgy some people say. Let's get everybody to agree by saying that it is a liturgy including various sacramentals.

For the record definition of a sacramental.

Sacramentals are sacred signs of very different natures, the use of which is defined: blessing of objects or persons, exorcism, processions, prayer, celebration, etc. They are considered minor in relation to the sacraments and are used to help enjoy their effects.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: "The Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear some resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy."

The Catholic Church distinguishes :

- The major sacramentals that concern persons, such as the blessing of a father abbot, of a priest just ordained ...

- The minor sacramentals, which concern especially objects.

The pious use of sacramentals by non-Catholics is allowed and even encouraged. Like for the blessed objects or the rituals that represent sacred beliefs or persons, disrespect to sacramentals is considered a form of sacrilege.

To return to the Christian funerals properly so-called.

Two major points should be noted.

The belief in the resurrection of bodies at the end of time (hence the reluctance with regard to incineration).

The belief in the communion of saints and in intercession.

This notion of intercession is based on four types of relationship that unite, the living among them; the dead between them; the living to the dead (prayer for the deceased); the dead to the living (cult of saints).

If the prayer specialists remain favored intercessors (monks and nuns, beggars, canonical communities, poor people), conviction imposes itself that every faithful person, whatever his merits, can intercede for the salvation of his brethren: veneration of the tombs of saints and of the collections of relics, distribution of images for the cult of a saint, commemoration of the anniversary, processions, pilgrimages, ex-votos, organized recitation of prayers for the deceased, etc.

Religious practice and sociopolitical practice, therefore, intercession has as its specificity to be a concept common to the two orders of reality that structure the anthropology of Christian societies: the here below and the here-after. It governs the relations between Heaven and Earth as much as it produces social ties within the earthly community. At the basis of this twofold relevance of the intercession, there is the central dogma of the Communion of Saints: the discourse on intercession relies on the image of the Church as the mystical body of Christ, made up of distinct and connected parts between which close ties are forged. Between the triumphant Church in Heaven and the militant Church on earth, to which the suffering Church of Purgatory is joined, the essential lies in the circulation of charity and in the mutual exchange of services and graces. The effectiveness of the works and merits of one part spills over onto the other limbs of the body. The men of the earth are the commembra * of the saints. Better, they are friends and brothers **.

Traditionally and directly after a death, a funerary vigil can be celebrated at the deceased's home. This vigil is made at the initiative of the family or entourage of the deceased person. Nevertheless, this practice is less and less common.

The Catholic religion does not impose any personal care after death. As to how to treat the body after death, the Church nevertheless recommends that the custom of burying the body of the deceased be preserved in remembrance of Jesus who was buried. It is nevertheless permitted to cremate the

corpse, insofar as it is not chosen to deny the faith of the Church in the resurrection of bodies at the end of time.

The ceremony responds to the request, motivated by the faith of the family. The remarried divorced and the persons who have committed suicides therefore can have Christian funerals and there is no difference in the ceremony. Canon 1184 of the new Code of Canon Law of 1983 no longer mentions suicides among manifest sinners to whom church funerals can't be granted.

There can be 3 blessings:

- Before the placing in coffin (by the priest).
- After the entrance of the coffin into the church (by the family).
- During the interment.

Christian funerals include rites that have meaning only in relation to the Christian beliefs; therefore they are not intended for un-baptized.

-After the entrance of the coffin into the church, the rite of light is often performed. It is, for two members of the deceased's family, to light two candles, one on each side of the coffin.

-Rite of the Cross

-Sprinkling of holy water

-Encensement.

-Eucharist or Mass.

* Latin members of the same body.

** The unceasing interaction between the world of the dead and that of the living or vice versa was known by the Irish druids who celebrated during Samon (ios), that is, on November 1st. The intervention of the dead in the field of the living is a universal belief, but the ancient Celts also believed that living beings could intervene in the world of the dead, help somebody, for example, and come back. Whether it is in reality or in a dream.

THE FEAST OF THE DEAD AND ALL SAINTS' DAY.

What is All Saints' Day? As the name suggests, All Saints' Day is the feast of all saints, whether or not they appear in the calendar. It is a Catholic feast, decided by Pope Boniface IV, in 610 but being to be celebrated on May 13th at that time. The Reformists do not celebrate All Saints' Day.

Every 1 November, believers honor the known and unknown martyrs and saints of Christendom. The day after All Saints' Day, November 2, the Catholic Church put all the deceased at the heart of her liturgical prayer. Tradition has appeared in the Benedictine communities, especially at Cluny, shortly before the year 1000.

It is on this occasion that Catholics pay tribute to their missing. It is both a day of commemoration and a day of intercession; they remember the dead and pray for them, in order to secure the salvation of their souls.

Therefore All Saints Day does not originate from the Bible. The day chosen for the celebration seems to be related to the druidic religion, but one should beware of any too hasty conclusion in this field. "In no other faith there was such an intense feeling of the invisible and of the solidarity that links the world of the living to that of the spirits. All those who left the earth were charged with messages intended for the deceased. Diodorus of Sicily has preserved this precious trait: "In funerals they lay down letters written to the dead by their parents so that they can be handed over to them." The adjoining of the two worlds was a common thing. Pomponius Mela, and Valerius Maximus, and all the Latin authors, assert that among the Celts "People lent themselves money to be repaid in the other world." (Quotation from the French Leon Denis, the Celtic genius and the invisible or Celticism and spiritualism). But the best of the definitions is still that given by the great specialist of Vikings Regis Boyer: "There is an unceasing circulation between the two worlds, that of the living and that of the dead. The nuance besides has little meaning in this civilization. At any moment the dead can intervene in the existence of the living (in a dream, for example). Conversely, the living can make the dead appear for purposes he deems useful (Editor's note: see how the Tain Bo Cualnge was found again by Muirgen son of Senchan, in Ireland). A whole series of consequences ensues. Magic is essentially a spontaneous or forced communication with the dead who inform or help. Because they are supposed to be adjoining with the world of God-or-devils, possibly because they are God-or-demons. "

The trinouxton samoni, celebrated throughout the Celtic world as early as -1000, were associated with death. It was the month of Samon (ios), marking the beginning of the dark half of the year. The 1st of November was at the same time the Feast of the Dead and the New Year.

Haut du formulaire

The tribes gathered to honor the dead before the anxieties and harshness of winter, but also to invoke, through rites, the future renewal of nature.

After the change of the pantheon in Rome into a Christian sanctuary, Pope Boniface IV consecrated it to the Mother of God and to all the saint martyrs. A "feast of all martyrs" was then instituted on 13 May. May 13 was a very important day of the Roman calendar since it corresponded to the last three days dedicated to the Feast of Lemures. Lemures were types of ghosts, comparable in some respects to the Breton anaon. To rout them (because their dismissal was not possible), the Romans celebrated the feast called Lemuria, May 9, 11 and 13. Black beans were thrown over the left shoulder of the father in each house. Then, in order to speed their defeat up, they struck large brass vessels all night long.

Celtic monasticism does not seem to have made the first day of November a particular day, but in the eighth century the feast of Samon was apparently still celebrated in England. In 775 an Anglo-Saxon clergyman, Cathwulf, wrote to Charlemagne asking him to establish a feast of all the saints, probably to fight against this feast of the dead; and in 798, a council at Riesbach instituted a new feast, All Saints' Day, which it had placed in the calends of November. The idea came from Alcuin, abbot at Tours, but a native of England. Tours besides will be then, and for a time, the only city in France where All Saints Day was celebrated.

Around 830, the Pope officially transferred the feast of all the martyrs that took place up to that time each 13 May, on November 1st. Dedicated to All Saints, that is, to all persons whom the Church recognizes as worthy of a *dulia* cult because of their exemplary life and of their proximity to the divine; it is not to be confused with the memento of all the deceased, celebrated the day after, which is a

legacy of the monastic readings of the "roll of the dead": the mention of the friars of an abbey or of an order on the anniversary of their death.

It is the foundation of the abbey of Cluny, in 910, which will accelerate the movement. The whole religious policy of Cluny, of which the abbot is a very influential personage, will consist in reviving or creating a liturgical calendar modeled on that of local traditions.

In 998, Odilo decided that the memory of all the departed monks would be celebrated on November 2, the day after All Saints' Day. The order of Cluny was then so powerful (more than 1,000 monasteries) that this memory quickly spread to the whole West. November 2nd becomes therefore the day of the faithful deceased, who are commemorated by a liturgy and special prayers.

It was not until 1580 that Pope Sixtus IV made it one of the great Christian feasts, attributing to it a week of special liturgy. All Saints' Day, November 1st, from now on will be previous to the popular tradition of the Day of the Dead.

Various later explanations will try to "Romanize" the origin of the feast, to make it come from Rome if not from Palestine. But the documents prove that it was the Celtic influences subsisting (through St Colgan and Alcuin) in Great Britain, or on the Continent in the time of Charlemagne, that caused this feast to be adopted by Rome.

But the faithful of the Catholic Church are numerous to remember the dead on November 1st instead of November 2nd; as evidenced by the centuries-old tradition of lighted candles and tapers in the cemeteries * and, since the 19th century, the blooming of graves at All Saints' Day.

* The buildings of dozens of lanterns of the dead (for some real masonry works) in various localities on the continent (mainly in Massif Central and adjacent lands, although there are some lanterns in Brittany and Ireland, the famous round towers, and one in Great Britain at Bisley in Gloucestershire) is seen by some as the survival of a cult of ancestors that goes beyond mere Christian significance.

DOCUMENTS.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE. BOOK V CHAPTER XII.

OF ONE AMONG THE NORTHUMBRIANS [DRYTHELM], WHO ROSE FROM THE DEAD, AND RELATED THE THINGS HE HAD SEEN, SOME EXCITING TERROR, OTHERS DELIGHT.

Editor's note. The narrative was actually composed by an Irish monk of Lindisfarne Abbey, called in Saxon language Haemgils, from a near-death experience. A bit like in the case of St Fursy besides.

"He that led me had a shining countenance and a bright garment, and we went on silently, as I thought, towards the north-east. Walking on, we came to a vale of great breadth and depth, but of infinite length; on the left it appeared full of dreadful flames, the other side was not less horrid for violent hail and cold snow flying in all directions.

Editor's note. This is not without reminding of the icy wind that escapes from the (temporary?) hell where the Hesus / Mars called Cuchulainn was in the Irish legend titled Siabur Charpat Con Culaind.

Both places were full of men's souls, which seemed by turns to be tossed from one side to the other, as it were by a violent storm; for when the wretches could no longer endure the excess of heat, they leaped into the middle of the cutting cold; and finding no rest there, they leaped back again into the middle of the unquenchable flames. Now whereas an innumerable multitude of deformed spirits were thus alternately tormented far and near, as far as could be seen, without any intermission, I began to think that this perhaps might be hell, of whose intolerable flames I had often heard talk. My guide, who went before me, answered my thought, saying, 'Do not believe so, for this is not the hell you imagine'....

In this field were innumerable assemblies of men in white, and many companies seated together rejoicing. As he led me through the midst of those happy inhabitants, I began to think that this might, perhaps, be the kingdom of heaven, of which I had often heard so much. He answered my thought, saying, this is not the kingdom of heaven, as you imagine.'

When we had passed those mansions of blessed souls and gone farther on, I discovered before me a much more beautiful light, and therein heard sweet voices of persons singing, and so wonderful a fragrant proceeded from the place, that the other which I had before thought most delicious, then seemed to me but very indifferent; even as that extraordinary brightness of the flowery field, compared with this, appeared mean and inconsiderable. When I began to hope we should enter that delightful place, my guide on a sudden stood still; and then turning back, led me back by the way we came.

When we returned to those joyful mansions of the souls in white, he said to me, 'Do you know what all these things are which you have seen?'

I answered. I did not.

Editor's note. Here end the recollections of the near-death experience lived by the farmer in Cunningham called Drythelm and shaped by the Celtic monk Haemgils. What comes after this are commentaries.

'That vale you saw so dreadful for consuming flames and cutting cold is the place in which the souls of those are tried and punished, who, delaying confessing and amending their crimes, at length have recourse to repentance at the point of death, and so depart this life; but nevertheless because they, even at their death, confessed and repented, they shall all be received into the kingdom of heaven at the day of judgment; but many are relieved before the day of judgment, by the prayers, alms, and fasting, of the living, and more especially by masses. That fiery and stinking pit, which you saw, is the mouth of hell, into which whosoever falls shall never be delivered to all eternity. This flowery place, in which you see these most beautiful young people, so bright and merry, is that into which the souls of

those are received who depart the body in good works, but who are not so perfect as to deserve to be immediately admitted into the kingdom of heaven.”

Editor's note. A second purgatory, gentler, some limbos?

SUPPLEMENT TO THE SUMMA THEOLOGICA.

The aislingi, or visions like those of St. Adomnan, which are previous, being somewhat muddled, it is the least we can say, let us give the floor to St. Thomas Aquinas in order to work out the kinks, the Holy Spirit having hardly worked on doing this. While knowing that the Catholic Church has largely rejected him today. Let's say as an indication.

QUESTION 69: OF THE PLACE WHERE SOULS ARE AFTER DEATH.

ARTICLE 7 : Whether so many places (5) should be distinguished?

Objection 1: It would seem that we should not distinguish so many abodes. For after death, just as abodes are due to souls on account of sin, so are they due on account of merit. Now there is only one abode due on account of merit, namely paradise. Therefore neither should there be more than one abode due on account of sin, namely hell.

Objection 3: Further, the places of punishment should correspond to the sins. Now there are only three kinds of sin, namely original, venial, and mortal. Therefore there should only be three penal abodes.

1: It would seem nevertheless that there should be many more than those which are assigned to the souls after the death of the body for this darksome air is also the prison house of the demons, and yet it is not reckoned among the five abodes which are mentioned by certain authors. Therefore there are more than five abodes for the souls after the death of the body.

2: Further, the earthly paradise is distinct from the heavenly paradise. Now some were borne away to the earthly paradise after this state of life, as is related of Enoch and Elias. Since then the earthly paradise is not counted among the five abodes of the soul after death, it would seem therefore that there are more than five.

3. Now if we suppose a person to die in original sin who has committed only venial sins, none of the assigned abodes will be befitting to him. For it is clear that he would not be in heaven, since he would be without grace, and for the same reason neither would he be in the limbo of the Fathers; nor again, would he be in the limbo of children, since there is no sensible punishment there, which is due to such a person by reason of venial sin: nor would he be in purgatory, where there is none but temporal punishment, whereas everlasting punishment is due to him: nor would he be in the hell of the damned, since he is not guilty of actual mortal sin. Therefore a sixth abode should be assigned.

4: Further, rewards and punishments vary in quantity according to the differences of sins and merits. Now the degrees of merit and sin are infinite. Therefore we should distinguish an infinite number of abodes.

5: Further, souls are sometimes punished in the places where they sinned, but they sinned in the place which we inhabit. Therefore this place should be reckoned among the abodes, especially since some are punished for their sins in this world.

6. Now to those who die in grace with venial sins an abode is assigned where they are punished ere they receive their reward, which abode is purgatory. Therefore, on the other hand, there should be equally an abode for those who die in mortal sin together with some good works.

7. Further, just as the Fathers were delayed from obtaining full glory of the soul before Christ's coming, so are they now detained from receiving the glory of the body. Therefore as we distinguish an abode of the saints before the coming of Christ from the one where they are received now, so ought we to distinguish the one in which they are received now from the one where they will be received after the resurrection.

Conclusion. I answer that, the abodes of souls are distinguished according to the souls' various states. Now the soul united to a mortal body is in the state of meriting, while the soul separated from the body is in the state of receiving good or evil for its merits; so that after death it is either in the state of receiving its final reward, or in the state of being hindered from receiving it. If it is in the state of receiving its final retribution, this happens in two ways: either in the respect of good, and then it is paradise; or in respect of evil, and thus as regards actual sin it is hell, and as regards original sin it is the limbo of children. On the other hand, if it be in the state where it is hindered from receiving its final reward, this is either on account of a defect of the person, and thus we have purgatory where souls are detained from receiving their reward at once on account of the sins they have committed, or else it is on account of a defect of nature, and thus we have the limbo of the Fathers, where the Fathers were detained from obtaining glory on account of the guilt of human nature which could not yet be expiated.

Reply to Objection 1: Good happens in one way, but evil in many ways, wherefore it is not unfitting if there be one place of blissful reward and several places of punishment.

.....

QUESTION 70: OF THE QUALITY OF THE SOUL AFTER LEAVING THE BODY, AND OF THE PUNISHMENT INFLICTED ON IT BY MATERIAL FIRE.

Three articles. 1. Whether the sensitive powers remain in the separated soul? 2. Whether the acts of the aforesaid powers remain in the soul? 3. Whether the separated soul can suffer from a material fire? etc.

THE "ABODES" OF THE SOUL AFTER THE DEATH OF THE BODY.

After the coming of Christ, the expectation of an earthly Messiah has ceased, so that the horizon of expectation is now oriented only towards Eternity. In the form of hope, men expect Heaven; in the form of fear, Hell. In any case, in spite of the millenarian movements, Christianity situates the believers between an "already," the Incarnation, the coming of the Messiah, and a "not yet," the Judgment of "the end of time." They are "awaiting."

Men, as the "syllogism" says, are mortal. But their souls, no! Death is an occasion for Christians to have a first, individual judgment. It remains to await the universal judgment which will intervene only at the end of time.

We can trace the gradual but non-linear change of this geography of the afterlife during the Middle Ages.

It is necessary to well the heavenly Paradise from the earthly Paradise where only Enoch and Elijah remain until the moment when, after the struggle with the Antichrist, they will rejoin the heavenly Paradise. A first geography had already appeared: the souls of the good individuals, of the just individuals, of the saints, stay in Heaven, the souls of the wicked in Hell. In heavenly Paradise, the happy few chosen by God can enjoy eternal, perfect and infinite happiness in the contemplation of God. And Hell is a subterranean place, the dwelling place of Satan/Lucifer who, with his become demons fallen angels, eternally tortures the damned. Election and salvation: Heaven. Damnation: Hell.

But, even in Paradise and in Hell, men will be awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment, that of the end of time. Thus, for the Christian, fear, for example, has three modes: the fear of death and of individual judgment, the fear of the time that separates this individual judgment from the Last Judgment, the fear of what will be their lot after the Last Judgment, for all eternity. At the beginning of the 12th century, as a result of the increase of individualism, concern was shifted from the Last Judgment to the individual judgment. Because waiting is now essentially focused on this individual judgment is worked out in Ireland under the patronage of St. Patrick the notion of Purgatory (which will become a dogma only with the Council of Trent in the 16th century).

Editor's note. These abodes of souls after death were therefore then imagined as somewhat vague repository in which souls awaited the final resurrection and the reunification with their bodies to undergo their last judgment but in the company of all other men.

FIRST "ABODE" AS FOR THE NUMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN HEREAFTER : HELL.

The definition of hell and its characteristics vary from one religion to another and are sometimes prone to different interpretations within the same religion.

According to Buddhism, for example, hell is above all a state of mind of the individual subjected to desires and passions.

Even more radical, the ancient druids asserted that hell cannot exist. Only the poetic justice existed here below or the reincarnation in bacuceos for some Stalin or Hitler.

Bernese scholia commenting on Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

Hermann Usener. *Scholia in Lucani bellum civile/Commenta Bernensia. Liber I* (1869).

451 "Druids deny that souls can perish

[Driadae negant interire animas]

OR GO TO HELL »

[Aut contagione inferorum adfici] and

454 "They do not say that the Manes exist"

[Manes esse, not dicunt]".

Point 25 of the small list appended to the Council of Leptines in 743, under the Latin title of *indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (of course, it is a matter of condemning or denigrating all this) goes clearly in this direction; it evokes the imagining that every deceased is a saint.

So spoke the hate religion of druids.

And in 851, John Scotus Eriugena also noted in his "On predestination": God foresees neither punishment nor sins: they are fictions. For Eriugena also, therefore, hell does not exist, or then he calls it remorse.

According to the founder of Spiritism the druid Allan Kardec, hell is not a place. Hell designates the state of suffering in which imperfect soul/minds are due to personal defects that they have not yet corrected. This state is not eternal and depends on the will of progress of the soul/minds. Spiritists use the term "lower astral plane" (rather than "hell") to refer to this state of suffering through which the little evolved soul/minds go.

According to other religions, and especially Christianity, hell is a state of extreme suffering of the human soul after its separation from the body, pain endured after death by those who have committed crimes and sins during their earthly lives.

The iconographic representations of Hell are present in the churches (sculpture tympanum representing the Last Judgment, capitals, frescoes ...), manuscripts and paintings. Hell appears as a place of torture, bubbling and hot, where dozens of demons are busy. It was a recurrent theme of the pious iconography of the Middle Ages. We find the most detailed literary representations in the various visions recorded by the Irish tradition (visions of Adomnan, Fursy, Drythelm, Tondale ...).

Hell (or hells) initially designated the abode of the dead, or of part of them

-In Greek mythology, the Hells (plural) are the kingdom of the dead. It is an underground place where the god Hades and his wife Persephone rule.

-Historically speaking, the first traces of hell are Mesopotamian (about 2000 years before our era): the Sumerians and Akkadians believed in hell, as a place where the dead met. Their god of hell was called Nergal and her goddess Ereshkigal.

In the Mesopotamian belief, all the dead met in the Hells, without hope of salvation, and led there in it a dreary and gloomy existence, sentenced to feed on dust and muddy water, unable to provide for themselves without the help of the living.

There does not seem to be any after death judgment – logically useless in the absence of any soteriology - and only deities escape this country of "no return." There is one noticeable exception, Uta-Napishtim, the only human being to get eternal life through the plant of magic rejuvenation.

-The Sheol. In our language there is no exact equivalent of the Hebrew word sheol. This is the Hebrew term of the Old Testament designating the abode of the dead, the hell. It represents a dark and silent place where the dead are asleep, lying in the dust. Even if, during the following centuries, the Greek teaching of the immortality of the human soul has infiltrated Jewish religious thought, the text of the Bible shows that the sheol is the grave common for men, a place where they are unaware.

In the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verses 5-10, it is said: "The living know they will die. But the dead no longer think about such things.....because you are going to the grave. There is no working, no planning, no knowledge and no wisdom there."

The vaticinations of the great prophet of Judaism, Isaiah, concerning the death of the king of Babylon (see higher), and speaking fictitiously to the sovereign in these terms: " You are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit (Isaiah 14:15) will give rise later to the idea that there would be several depths in this Sheol, depending on the degree of reward or punishment earned.

The fact remains that their common point was that sheol appeared as an underground place where the dead led a lethargic life. The existence in the sheol was regarded as a ghostly perpetuation of earthly life, during which the problems of this earthly life ended.

-The New Testament often speaks of Gehenna. A few words about this name.

Comes from Gehinnon, or Hinnom, a valley situated south-west of the Old City of Jerusalem (Joshua 15: 8), a place of sacrifice to the god Moloch (2Chronicles 28: 3; 33: 6; Jeremiah 7: 31-32).

This place was turned into a dump by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10). At the time of Jesus people threw in it their trash, but also the corpses of dead animals, as well as the bodies of the executed criminals. To maintain this fire continually in order to get rid of filth and avoid epidemics, sulfur was regularly poured out, which made this fire perpetual. Gehenna was thus associated with the notion of fire which never ceases. The great Nazarene rabbi Jesus used this place to explain to his contemporaries that Gehenna symbolized the final punishment.

Sheol "and" Hades "represent therefore symbolically the grave common to the dead, and the " Gehenna "symbolizes the eternal suffering and destruction.

Now why so much confusion today about the meaning of the word hell?

Many translators of the Bible have unfortunately transcribed the terms "Sheol," "Hades" and "Gehenna" by the same word "hell." This approach obscured the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek terms. "

The Catholics of Antiquity, like a great majority of the other Christian denominations besides, carefully distinguished "hell" in the singular from "hells" in the plural. "Hell" in the singular is the place of damnation, the eternal place without God. On the contrary, "hells" in the plural are the abode of the dead, also called the Limbo* , where those who died before Christ waited for his coming. The term "hell" is no longer used by contemporary Catholicism in order to avoid confusion, with the exception of the Creed, which has kept the ancient formulation even if by hell we now understand the limbo * of patriarchs. Thus, to say that Christ descended into hell, means simply that he descended to free those who had lived before him in righteousness and who were waiting for him.

Given the division of the world into the chosen people and the gentiles, later taken up by Christians as versus Israel or new chosen people and pagans; reinforced, from Saint Augustine to Jehovah's Witnesses, by the horrible theory of the 144,000 of the Apocalypse and the predestination; the first tendency of Christianity was therefore to think that only a small elite was destined to go to Heaven or Paradise and that the others, that is to say the immense majority of mankind, the massa damnata or

massa perditionis under the pen of Saint Augustine, was destined to go let us say to the contrary of Heaven.

In other words, the first of the destinations of the human soul after death, the most frequented, according to first Christians, was to be Hell, the Sheol for the Judeo-Christians, the Hades for the pagan-Christians. That is why we will start with it.

Matthew 10:28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

God created Hell as the receptacle of the damned souls (Matthew 25:41) and placed the fallen angels there. Hell is therefore the kingdom of the Devil and of his sidekicks (Matthew 13: 42, Revelation 20: 10 and 21: 8). They have authority there and reign supreme, each in his field.

We must not confuse the hell/sheol in Hebrew (Hades in Greek language) and the hell/Gehenna).

The first designates only in a symbolic way the grave common to the dead.

The second is the abode of the damned for all eternity. It is simply the name of a valley south of Jerusalem, the valley of Hinnom. King Solomon built here sanctuaries devoted to gods other than Yahweh. King Josiah profanes the place by sprinkling human bones, after which the valley is used as a dump, with fires burning there.

Gehenna is mentioned a dozen times in the New Testament, and is generally conveyed by the word Hell in the singular although in some occurrences Jesus may refer to the Hinnom Valley itself.

In St. Mark's chapter 9 verses 43-50, for instance, Jesus refers to Gehenna three times:

"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into Gehenna, where the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched."

The mere transcription of these words, by the translators of the revised editions of the Bible, was not sufficient to dispel the confusion and false ideas.

Based on the aforementioned passages of Matthew and Mark, the Catechism of the Catholic Church reaffirmed in 1992 the existence of hell and its eternity (paragraphs 1 033 to 1 037).

Although it seems to be opposed to love, hell would be on the contrary in the very logic of love: since God is love, rejecting him puts in a situation where love does not exist (what the definition of hell is).

According to this Catechism, there is no fatalism: "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this a willful turning away from God is necessary" and only a voluntary, free and fully conscious rejection of God and of the love for neighbor leads to hell just as the choice of God, of love of neighbor leads to Heaven.

To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

The final phrase "this state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell," sums up the notion of hell in Catholicism.

Catholic doctrine therefore presents hell as a state rather than as a place, in which falls automatically the one who has chosen, himself and in full knowledge of the cause, not to be in communion with God and the love for neighbors. He who says he has sought the good but refused to acknowledge that he is only in God, separated himself from him, just as he who sought only evil refused God from the beginning.

There are, however, other reasonings on this subject than this specious alternative.

The Adventist view of hell is often referred to as annihilationism. The Witnesses of Jehovah reject the idea of a hell of fire that would be a place of eternal suffering after death. For them, the Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious and that the human soul is not immortal. They often quote Ecclesiastes 9: 5-10 and Ezekiel 18: 4 in this regard. Thus, in their doctrine, the unjust as well as the good individuals go into sheol. They will be in the sheol until the day of the last judgment (of Jehovah). Moreover, according to them, the existence of a fire hell where human beings would be tortured after their death is incompatible with the dominant quality of God: love (1 John 4: 8).

SECOND "ABODE " AS FOR THE NUMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN HEREAFTER: THE HEAVEN.

We have already said a few words of this first abode of the soul after death in our chapter devoted to the creation of the spiritual world, but from the angelic perspective it is true (caelum empyreum under the pen of Thomas Aquinas) so it is not useless to return to it from the anthropological point of view this time.

The etymology of the word paradise refers to that of the garden (pardes), hence its use in the translations of the Old Testament as the Septuagint or the Vulgate, but the Hebrew text itself uses only the expression Gan Eden (Garden of Eden).

The word paradise-Greek paradeisos- in the meaning of heavenly paradise appears, on the other hand, three times in the New Testament.

First occurrence in the Gospel of Luke 23: 39-43.

"... One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't You the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence. We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you; today you will be with me in paradise....."

From this first text, we can only draw the conclusion that for Jesus, as for his companions executed with him, the heavenly paradise is a place whose existence goes without saying. It is ...

- A place whose access seems to reward a positive attitude during life.
- A place that is perhaps designed as the equivalent of the "Kingdom of God."
- A place accessible immediately after death.

Here we find the traditional image of the heaven as "the reward of the repentant sinner."

Second occurrence in a letter from St. Paul: 2 Corinthians 12: 2-4 (the apostle seems to speak about him in the third person and tells of an ecstatic spiritual experiment he experienced ...)

"...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 God knows— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

According to the ancient representations which distinguished several "stages" in the heavens (3, 7, ... and up to 365 in some Gnostics!), therefore according to these representations of the sky it is in a higher heavenly space that Paul says he heard ineffable words, of which we shall know nothing besides!

In this text, the word paradise seems to designate another spiritual dimension experimented by the apostle. He is well alive and can even relate his experience, but he has the confused impression of having been "out of his body" as transported elsewhere in spirit. More than a particular place, paradise thus seems rather to be a high state of perception.

The last occurrence of the word paradise is found in the book of Revelation (2: 7), at the end of the letter written to the Church in Ephesus.

"... Whoever has ears, let them hear what the spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God..."

Like in the mouth of Jesus according to Luke, heaven is presented here as a reward. The reward promised to the one who holds on in the trials undergone in the name of his faith.

This heaven is explicitly related to the biblical account of the Garden of Eden. Indeed, it is a matter of "eating from the tree of life," and higher in this letter to the Church of Ephesus, it is also a question of her fall. It is as if the promised heaven was a return to the original situation of the Garden of Eden.

From the last book of the Bible, the Revelation, our inquiry is therefore referred to the first, the book of Genesis, of the Old Testament.

Since it is not our practice to pour water on a drowning man (Christianity no longer constitutes a real danger for freedom or human rights in our latitudes), and since Christian intellectuals have insisted on this point since the Middle Ages, we willingly acknowledge that Jesus on his cross, despite the use of Aramaic words rather suitable for a place, meant by paradise a state of being somewhat similar to that evoked by St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians; that is to say, the abode of the souls of the righteous persons after their death, which is not a material place, but a spiritual state, in which the aforementioned righteous people experiment the rest, the eternal, perfect and infinite happiness in the contemplation of God as in the Symbol of the Garden of Eden.

STATUS CONCLUSION ON THESE FIRST TWO “ABODES” OF CHRISTIANITY.

As we have had the opportunity to see the notion of heavenly paradise is little present in ancient Judaism.

Paradise is called Abraham's bosom, which is very vague because it refers to a particular section of the kingdom of the dead awaiting resurrection.

And hell is designated by the name of Sheol, which is also very vague, but is by no means the equivalent of a place of eternal tortures or suffering.

Let us say that this is a long bracketing of the being, everybody waiting for the resurrection of the dead to relive eternally or at least for a thousand years in a Jerusalem and a Palestine glorified by the coming of the Messiah.

So we have with the previous chapters briefly reviewed two of the 5 or 6 “abodes” or hereafter of Christianity.

-To begin heaven (empyrean says St. Thomas Aquinas) , especially created for the angels surrounding God to sing his praises.

- The hell that was created by, or with, the fall of the angels who rebelled against God, and thus became the kingdom granted to the Devil and his demons.

But let us not forget that there are three or four other “abodes” whose appearance it is difficult to date in the time of this creation process.

-The Purgatory of St Patrick.

-The limbo of the patriarchs.*

-The limbo of the children before they were baptized.*

-Not counting the curious land promised to the saints mentioned in the navigation of St. Brendan. This last world besides resembles more a parallel universe we would say today than a beyond the death itself. Some authors bring this idea closer to the notion of millenarianism or of heavenly Jerusalem descended onto earth.

But as we cannot logically speak of purgatory or limbo before there have been human souls to go there, we will come before and meanwhile to the creation of the material world and of the man. Hence the chapters which follow.

* Will be the subject of a separate chapter together with the limb of innocent children who died before being baptized.

OTHER "ABODE" OF SOULS AFTER THE DEATH OF THE BODY: THE PURGATORY.

The idea of purgatory has roots that date back into antiquity. A sort of proto-purgatory called the celestial Hades appears in the writings of Plato and Heraclides Ponticus and in many other pagan writers. This concept is distinguished from the Hades of the underworld described in the works of Homer and Hesiod. In contrast, the celestial Hades was understood as an intermediary place where souls had an undetermined time after death before either moving on to a higher level of existence or being reincarnated back on earth. Its exact location varied from author to author. Heraclides of Pontus thought it was in the Milky Way; the Academicians, the Stoics, Cicero, Virgil, Plutarch, the Hermetic writings situated it between the Moon and the Earth or around the Moon; while Numenius and the Latin Neo-Platonists thought it was located between the sphere of the fixed stars and the Earth.

As for Christianity, the existence of an intermediate state after death is recognized by the very fact of the belief in the efficacy of prayer for the deceased, a constant characteristic of the liturgies in the East and in the West.

Indeed, Orthodoxy distinguishes three states, the heavenly beatitude and two kinds of hell, one from which man can be released thanks to the prayers of the Church by virtue of an inner process of the soul and one from which man cannot be released.

Orthodox teaching is that, while all undergo a particular judgment immediately after death, neither the just nor the wicked attain the final state of bliss or punishment before the last day, with some exceptions for the righteous souls like the Theotokos, the Virgin who was borne by the angels directly to heaven.

The souls of the righteous dead are in light and rest, with a foretaste of eternal happiness; but the souls of the wicked are in a state the reverse of this. Among the latter, such souls as have departed with faith but "without having had time to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance ... may be aided towards the attainment of a blessed resurrection [at the end of time] by prayers offered in their behalf, especially those offered in union with the oblation of the bloodless sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, and by works of mercy done in faith for their memory " (Catechism of St. Philaret of Moscow).

Mark of Ephesus, at the council of Florence, specified: " But if souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying away with themselves certain faults, whether small ones over which they have not repented at all, or great ones for which — even though they have repented over them — they did not undertake to show fruits of repentance: such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sin, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definite punishment in some place (for this, as we have said, has not at all been handed down to us). But some must be cleansed in the very departure from the body, thanks only to fear, as St. Gregory the great literally shows in his Dialogues (book 4) ; while others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, either while remaining in the same earthly place, before they come to worship God and are honored with the lot of the blessed, or — if their sins were more serious and bind them for a longer duration — they are kept in hell, but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard" (First homily on the Catholic purgatory).

With regard to particular judgment, the Orthodox Church, from certain passages of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, describes the lot of the soul after its separation from the body as a path through spiritual spaces, where the demons (Metaphorically called "Customs officers" or "publicans" since Clement and Origen) seek to devour those who are weak spiritually, and who therefore need to be defended by the angels of Heaven and supported by the prayers of the living (cf. Ephraim the Syrian, Macarius the Great , Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria).

Editor's note. In other words, the very traditional battle between the psychopompous deities such as Epona and some others, and the Celtic deities of less sympathetic or even frightening appearance (Nothing new under the sun of men .For more details, refer to our opusculé on the subject) .

The Churches from the Reformation (Lutheran, Calvinist), as well as the Evangelicals, reject the existence of purgatory, since it is not mentioned by name in the Bible. The Reformist and Jewish canon of Scripture considers the books of the Maccabees as apocryphal, whereas the Catholics admit them. If Catholics see in the text of 2 Maccabees 12: 39-45 a justification for the prayers to the dead and the seeds of the doctrine of purgatory, the Reformists on the other hand, sees in it only a deviation in practice of prayer since the rest of the biblical writings never take over this theme.

As for the text of the Apostle Paul on salvation "as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15), the fire represents judgment in the Scriptures, which is single, that is, reserved for every man "once," and at the end of which God accepts him or not in His presence (Hebrews 9: 27).

The preparation for this judgment is made only during life on earth, by the five solae (statements). After death, nothing can be changed any more: "The Lord (....) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." The day of judgment is also called the day of God's wrath, from which we can be spared only by righteousness, which is gotten by the faith in Christ's redeeming work: "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."

The Anglican communion, with the exception of Anglo-Catholics, does not admit the existence of purgatory.

For the Catholic Church purgatory is the place of purification where the souls of the departed dead in a state of grace, and assured of eternal salvation, will expiate the sins of which they have not made a sufficient penance before their death, after a particular judgment.

The compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, first published in 2005, is a summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

" 210. What is purgatory? Purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, with their eternal salvation guaranteed, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven.

211. How can we help the souls being purified in purgatory? Because of the communion of saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice. They also help them by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance."

These two questions and answers summarize well the sections 1020-1032 and 1054 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, which also speaks of purgatory in sections 1472 and 1473.

The idea of purgatory is a truth of faith (= a dogma) for Catholicism, but it is not accepted by the different currents of Protestantism or by the Orthodox Church. Catholics put forth certain verses of the Scriptures to justify their dogma. Although the word "purgatory" is absent from the Bible, some passages in Scripture indeed suggest the existence of a purifying fire occurring after bodily death and the existence of a time of atonement between death and forgiveness of sins.

The Book of the Maccabees, which was not kept by Luther in the biblical canon of 1534, but which was officially incorporated into the Catholic canon at the Council of Trent, speaks of a sacrifice made in favor of the deceased, what suggests the existence of a place of purification distinct from hell and paradise: "And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem in order for a sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection, for if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead, and because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."

In the Gospel according to Matthew 5,25, it is written: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

In Mt 12:31 Jesus teaches that "blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven..... either in this age or in the age to come," which implies that in the other age sins are still forgiven and that between death and this forgiveness - and therefore the access to paradise - there is a time that Catholics equate to purgatory. The soul, once the time of earthly life is finished for it, can do nothing to change its lot, to get new merits; It is then dependent on the charity and merits of human beings still on earth, and who, still enjoying freedom, can act in his name to offer God sacrifices or good works. Principle of the communion of all saints days. Hence the fact that the Catholic Church considers effective prayers for the souls of purgatory ...

Outside the gospels it is Paul of Tarsus who first alludes to a "fire" sometimes interpreted as the purgatory, in the Epistle to the Corinthians.

Many written testimonies show that among the early Christians some would have believed, if not in the existence of a place, at least of a state, where the sinner had to expiate his sins before reaching heaven.

One of the oldest testimonies is the account of the passion of Perpetua and Felicitas: in prison, Perpetua sees in a dream her younger brother Dinocrates, who died before her, going out from a gloomy place. As a result of this dream, she will offer prayers for him, and then another dream will show him happy: "I understood that he was translated from the place of punishment."

If the location of purgatory did not bother the first Christians, nor the fact of not having a name to designate this place, the reality of helping the dead by prayer and asceticism is clearly established in Christian antiquity.

Origen (as soon as the 2nd century), who does not evoke a place but a state, was one of the first to introduce the concept of purgatory by making hell a provisional state: for, according to him, there is no sinner so bad that he is not saved, after a long process of purification, to finally find himself in Heaven. But this opinion of Origen is considered by the Church to be heretical, for, according to her, hell is eternal, in the sense that it will never end, and punishment too.

For Augustine, only certain Christians, already accepted in Heaven, are subjected to purgation as an ordeal of purification, between individual judgment at death and the collective Last Judgment. He underlines that the punishments in it are very painful.

But it is only at the end of the twelfth century that the word purgatory appeared and that it was designed as a third place of the hereafter, between heaven and hell.

The Catholic Church expressed her doctrine concerning the existence of purgatory at the councils of Florence (8th session, 1439) and Trent. (25th Session, Decree of 4 December 1563).

The belief in purgatory grows weaker at the end of the eighteenth century, after the great moments of baroque piety. In the mid-nineteenth century it is spectacularly renewed, in connection with the Marian devotion (Mary was considered the queen of purgatory) and the re-Christianization of the cult of the dead. Between 1850 and 1914, masses for the deceased are multiplied. The Church of the Souls of Purgatory in Naples testifies to this practice.

* This idea is also found in the Irish legends concerning the Hesus / Mars called Cuchulainn and particularly the one entitled in Gaelic language "Siabur-charpat Con Culaind." This beyond the death from which the Hesus / Cuchulainn escapes is in fact characterized by intense cold since an icy wind escapes from it (Elva Johnston: the salvation of the individual and the salvation of the Society). The men of that time had already remarked that cold preserves.

THE LIMBOS.

(From Latin limbus, which means border, edge, fringe, even margin.)

Why limbos? Because of original sin and baptism: it is baptism that washes away original sin. The Gospel according to St. John, in verse 5 of chapter III, affirms the necessity of it: "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit ."

It is therefore necessary to be baptized to enter the Kingdom of God. What could happen then to the Righteous who lived before the coming of Christ and who by definition could not be baptized? What can happen to those who die before they have been baptized?

If Christ has come to save the whole mankind, the question of baptism constitutes a serious obstacle to the salvation of a very large part of this same mankind: the righteous of the Old Testament, the righteous in the nations who have not known the Christ, before or after the Incarnation, the infidels (of which little concern is paid) and ...the children who died without baptism.

During the second half of the 12th century, three "abodes" had been found therefore in the hereafter: Hell, Purgatory, Heaven. In the 13th century, all the great theologians will also use the expression limbus patriarchorum and limbus puerorum: the two limbs, that of the Fathers and that of the children, being two borders of Hell. For the hereafter, scholasticism therefore will develop a system with five "abodes," for the soul after the death of the body: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, the Limbo of the Patriarchs, the Limbo of the Children.

In these five places, we can distinguish three waiting places – the Purgatory and the two limbos - and two places of eternal stay: the Heaven and the Hell. But if two of these places are temporary: the limbo of the Patriarchs and the Purgatory - the other three are eternal: Paradise, Hell, and the limbo of children. We'll see why.

The limb of Patriarchs is henceforth of the past, at least in principle, since Christ has emptied it by descending into it, that it is sealed, and that it will therefore probably disappear on the occasion of the Last Judgment. And as the Purgatory, too, will disappear on the occasion of the Last Judgment, the limbo of children is therefore the only place of an "eternal expectation."

THE LIMBO OF THE FATHERS (LIMBUS PATRUM) OR OF THE PATRIARCHS (PATRIARCHORUM).

The recognition of this other abode of the soul after the death of the body responds to the following moral objection (and besides still relevant in certain cases, since the paragraphs 846 to 848 of the catechism of the Catholic Church deal with it) made against the principle which is thus expressed in Latin "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" in other words: "Baptism is, of course, indispensable to be saved, but can it be decently considered that the great men of the Bible like Abraham or John the Baptist were damned for all Eternity since they were not baptized in the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? "

Again we will note that Christian ideology reasons with respect to the Bible and the Hebrew people, what limits its intelligence, if it is not racism, that!

The case of the righteous of the Old Testament was settled fairly easily by recourse to the last episode of the presence of Christ on earth. Between his death on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus is indeed descended into the Hell. In the first Epistle, which is probably falsely attributed to St. Peter (3:19), it is said indeed that Christ after his Crucifixion went and made a proclamation to the "imprisoned" spirits.

The apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus also called Acts of Pilate (4th century) imagines additional details.

The Hell itself (the Hades) will not let him come in; but the Saints urged him to receive him, David and Isaiah reminding him of their own prophecies. Satan himself, because he knows the power of the Son of God, advises Hades to welcome him. Thus the Lord holds Adam's hand and makes the sign of the

cross on him and on all the saints, makes them go out of hell and go up with Him, then hands them over to the archangel Michael who drives them to Heaven. This apocryphal text was of great importance in medieval Christianity, especially for the iconography of the Passion and of the Descent into hell. This narrative will even be received in the Golden Legend of Jacobus da Varagine in the thirteenth century.

From the 2nd century, therefore, for the apocrypha and the Fathers of the Church, by his Descent into the Underworld (the Sheol of Hebrews), Christ frees the righteous from original sin, thus allowing them access to the Heaven, closed since Adam's Fault. In the 9th century, the phrase "descended into Hell," will be even introduced in the Catholic Creed.

As for its localization, the episode of Lazarus and of the bad rich suggested to the exegetes of the first centuries and of the Early Middle Ages that the bosom of Abraham cannot be situated very far from Hell since, on one hand Lazarus, who rests there, can see the bad rich man who is in Hell; and that, on the other hand, it is very difficult to imagine a place that is not Heaven and is not close to Hell. The place in which Lazarus is therefore takes after the Hell (because of its proximity), after the Heaven (he finds in it refreshment) and after a neutral tranquility place (the bosom of Abraham).

On the other hand, since then no soul is likely to be concerned by this limbo and it is therefore theoretically "closed down," "sealed" in theological language.

The current catechism of the Catholic Church, however, deals with a similar case when he writes (I quote):

"Outside the Church there is no salvation...How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers?"

Baptism is necessary for salvation, but the refusal to be baptized constitutes a mortal sin only if it is made knowingly and deliberately. Those who are not baptized without any fault of their own - whether through not guilty Ignorance, or through inability to be baptized, as in the case of the death of catechumens, etc. - are not damned for something that escapes their control, and these are not new intuitions of Vatican II, because all this can be found already in the early Fathers of the Church.

"Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.

This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church.

Those who, THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will, as they know it, through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.

This " THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN " leaves pensive. To consider that the ignorance of the Gospel may be a fault implies that if we have not committed this fault we deserve to be forgiven. Yet, as forgiveness is in principle a totally gratuitous act in Christianity, the fact that our ignorance of the Gospel is guilty or not should not change something.

It is necessary to be baptized to enter the Kingdom of God. What then can happen to the Righteous who lived before the coming of Christ and who were not even likely to be baptized? In a general way what can happen to those who die before they have been baptized? If Christ has come to save all mankind, the necessity of being baptized constitutes an obstacle to the salvation of a very large part of this same mankind: the righteous of the Old Testament, the righteous of the nations who have not known the Christ, before or after the Incarnation, the unbelievers (to whom little concern is paid) and ... the children who died without baptism. Hence the following limb, the limb of the children.

THE LIMBO OF CHILDREN : A SOFT HELL.

As we have seen above, the theoretical problem of the lot of the righteous dead before the coming of Christ on earth was easily settled by the early thinkers of Christianity who made him descend into hell

to free them from this situation . In the first Epistle, which is probably falsely attributed to St. Peter (3:19), it is said indeed that Christ after his Crucifixion went and made a proclamation to the "imprisoned" spirits.

But much more difficult from the theological point of view, given the principle stated by the Latin expression "extra ecclesiam nulla salus," was the real challenge that was the lot of the children who died before being baptized; and lead to (well comprehensible *) true magical practices in the shrines of the maternal figures or love goddesses from the religions, evoked by Max Dashu in her study of the respite sanctuaries in Burgundy or Savoy. All that under the pretext of prayers to the Virgin Mary, of course. In the present French department of Seine-et-Marne the Black Madonna at Pringy was invoked for this purpose. There was also at Saint-Martin-d'Heuille, in the Nevers area, an oratory (or altar?) devoted to Our Lady of Mercy: on 24 October 1879 a dead child would have been resurrected and could have received baptism. The case of children who died without baptism was indeed often a real moral torture for believing parents. Popular devotion, therefore, considered that in these respite sanctuaries children miraculously came back to live for the time sufficient to receive baptism.

Among the early Christians the baptism of adults, after a long catechumenate, was indeed the rule and only this baptism made possible the access to eternal life, but the theological thought of the lot of the souls of non-baptized children will evolve during the centuries. Indeed what become the souls of children who have died without baptism?

For all human beings - except the Virgin 1) - are marked by original sin and baptism serves to free them from it.

But is a child, who died without being baptized, guilty of something? Does he deserve the flames of the Gehenna ? And if it not the case, should he go to heaven?

This question, which dates back to the earliest days of Christianity, receives a relatively vague answer from the first Fathers of the Church. Gregory of Nyssa (On infant's early deaths) as Gregory of Nazianzus affirms that these souls are not destined to suffer in the hereafter, but without further precision.

Gregory of Nazianzus expounds the problem in these terms: " For not everyone who is not bad enough to be punished is good enough to be honored; just as not everyone who is not good enough to be honored is bad enough to be punished" (Orations XL, 23).

So ? Where to put these children? Everything starts from a search by St. Augustine (354-430) and a theological reflection from him. The truth of faith of his time is: "Every man who dies without grace goes immediately into hell for eternity after his death." But he also knows very well that un-baptized children are not deprived of grace because of a fault committed by them but because their distant ancestors, Adam and Eve, have chosen to disobey God . By reaction to Pelagianism St. Augustine opts nevertheless for Hell, but while specifying that they enjoyed a clearly milder punishment (mitissima) than the other damned.

"And, of course, the mildest punishment of all will fall upon those who have added no actual sin, to the original sin they brought with them; and as for the rest who have added such actual sins, the punishment of each will be the more tolerable in the next world, according as his iniquity has been less in this world" (Enchiridion 93).

Logic with himself St. Augustine nevertheless will make condemned in the Council of Carthage (418) the idea of an intermediate place for children who died without baptism.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) attempts to settle the matter by explaining that there is no other punishment for them than being forever deprived of the vision of God (poena damni) and that they undergo no bodily sufferings (poena sensus) .

Little by little, the idea of an intermediate place, between hell and heaven, yet gains ground. In his Theological Summa, Thomas Aquinas (1228-1274) formalized, so to speak, the concept of "limbo of children" (Latin limbus, "edge," "margin") near the limbo of patriarchs, the place where the Biblical patriarchs waited before the Christian Revelation.

Without ever formally becoming a dogma, as it will be the case for this other interval that is the purgatory, the limbo of children henceforth will be well part of the official teaching of the Church, especially Catholic.

The Calvinists, as for them, stick to the Augustinian solution. More or less confidential debates nevertheless continue. Some theologians, such as Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534), known for his

controversies with Luther, suggest that children who died without baptism could be saved thanks to the faith of their parents. But the Council of Trent disavows them because it is the very importance of baptism that is at stake.

The theologians are not the only ones who are dissatisfied with this solution of limbos: parents, too, are dissatisfied. How can you accept that your child be condemned to remain forever in the darkness, without any chance of escaping? Hence quasi-magical practices, such as that of the "respite," consisting in exhibiting the dead children under a statue of the Virgin or of a saint and waiting for the slightest sign of "life" to proceed to the baptism making it possible to avoid hell.

But what about embryos and fetuses? It is with this problem that dealt a certain Francesco-Emmanuele Cangiamila, whose *Embriologia sagra*, was long an authority. It was necessary to check in what the woman had rejected if there was not an embryo, even tiny, and to baptize it *sub conditione* (because it was not sure that it was alive) by saying: "Si tu vivis..."; when it was not sure that it was a human form it was always specified: «Si tu es homo et vivis ...» or «Si tu es homo et capax ...».

Over the years, however, the belief in limbos has lost ground. Most believers, and the Catholic Church itself, no longer consider the question of the hereafter in the same way as in the sixteenth century.

Modern theological reflection, more willingly putting forward the idea of divine mercy and universal salvation, has continued the evolution towards a possible salvation of infants who died without baptism. The Second General Council of the Vatican thus affirms in the dogmatic constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (§22-5) that "since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal mystery."

Today the Catechism of the Catholic Church no longer uses the term "limbo" when it refers to the fate of children who died without baptism:

"With regard to children who die without having received Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as indeed she does in the funeral rite established for them. The great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus's tenderness towards children which caused him to say: 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them' (Mk 10:14), allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without baptism."

* It is necessary to put oneself in the place of the parents made mad with grief at the thought of the consequences for their child of this "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" in order to understand.

Sixth OF THE ESCHATA IN CHRISTIANITY: THE LAND PROMISED TO SAINTS.

THE VOYAGE OF ST BRENDAN (NAVIGATIO SANCTI BRENDANI).

At this point of our talk about the different eschata of Christianity, some of our readers may exclaim deep down inside them, "all this, like the history of the limbos or of the purgatory, they are bullshit * due to the pen of some visionaries!) Of course! Of course! But the voyage of St. Brendan having played a great part in the Middle Ages in the discovery of America (by the Vikings in Vinland or by Christopher Columbus); as a historian of Christian ideology, in order to be complete on the eschata of Christianity, we shall make it our duty to mention the text below.

St Brendan, son of Finnlug Ua Alta, of the race of Eoghan, was born in the marshy district of Munster. He was famed for his great abstinence and his many virtues, and was the patriarch of nearly three thousand monks.

While he was in his spiritual warfare, at a place called Ardfert - Brendan there came to him one evening, a certain father, named Barinthus, of the race of King Niall, who, when questioned by St Brendan, in frequent converse, could only weep, and cast himself prostrate, and continue the longer in prayer; but Brendan raising him up, embraced him, saying: 'Father, why should we be thus grieved on the occasion of your visit? Have you not come to give us comfort? You ought, indeed, make better cheer for the brethren. In God's name, make known to us the divine secrets, and refresh our souls by recounting to us the various wonders you have seen upon the great ocean.' Then Barinthus, in reply, proceeds to tell of a certain island.

"My dear child, Mernoc, the guardian of the poor of Christ, had fled away from me to become a solitary, and found, nigh unto the Stone Mountain, an island full of delights. After some time I learned that he had many monks there in his charge, and that God had worked through him many marvels. I, therefore, went to visit him, and when I had approached within three days' journey, he, with some of the brethren, came out to meet me, for God had revealed to him my advent. As we sailed unto the island, the brethren came forth from their cells towards us like a swarm of bees, for they dwelt apart from each other, though their intercourse was of one accord, well grounded in faith, hope, and charity; one refectory; one church for all, wherein to discharge the divine offices.

No food was served but fruits and nuts, roots and vegetables of other kinds. The brethren, after compline, spent the night in their respective cells until the cockcrow, or the bell tolled for prayer. When my dear son and I had traversed the island, he led me to the western shore, where there was a small boat, and he then said: 'Father, enter this boat, and' we will sail on to the west, towards the island called the Land of Promise of the Saints, which God will grant to those who succeed us in the latter days.'

When we entered the boat and set sail, clouds overshadowed us on every side, so dense that we could scarcely see the prow or the stern of the boat. After the lapse of an hour or so, a great light shone around us, and land appeared, spacious and grassy, and bearing all manner of fruits. And when the boat touched the shore; we landed, and walked round about the island for fifteen days, yet could not reach the limits thereof.

No plant saw we there without its flower; no tree without its fruit and all the stones thereon were precious gems. But on the fifteenth day we discovered a river flowing from the west towards the east, when, being at a loss what to do, though we wished to cross over the river, we awaited the direction of the Lord. While we thus considered the matter, there appeared suddenly before us a certain man, shining with a great light, who, calling us by our names, addressed us thus: 'Welcome, worthy brothers, for the Lord has revealed to you the land He will grant unto His saints. There is one half of the island up to this river, which you are not permitted to pass over; return, therefore, whence you came'.

When he had ceased to speak, we asked him his name, and whence he had come. But he said: 'Why do you ask these questions? Should you not rather inquire about this island. Such as you see it now, so has it continued from the beginning of the world. Do you now need food or drink? Have you been weighed down by sleep, or shrouded in the darkness of the night? I know then for certain that here it is for ever day, without a shadow of darkness, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the light thereof, and if men had not transgressed the commandment of God, in this land of delights would they have always dwelt.'

Hearing this we were moved to tears, and having rested awhile, we set out on our return journey, the man aforesaid accompanying us to the shore, where our boat was moored. When we had entered the boat, this man was taken from our sight, and we went on into the thick darkness we had passed through before, and thus unto the Island of delights. But when the brethren there saw us, they rejoiced with great joy at our return, as they had long bewailed our absence, and they said: 'Why, O fathers, did you leave us, your little flock, to stray without a shepherd in the wilderness? We knew, indeed, that our abbot frequently departed somewhere from us, and remained away sometimes a month, sometimes a fortnight, or a week more or less. When I heard this I tried to console them, and said: 'Brethren, harbor no thought of evil, for your lives here are certainly passed at the very portals of paradise. Not far away from you lies the island, called the 'Land of Promise of the Saints,' where night never falls nor day closes; thither your abbot, Mernoc, resorts, as the angels of God watch over it. Do you not know, by the fragrance of our garments, that we have been in the paradise of God?'"

* Or near-death experiments.

ESCHATOLOGY.

OR IS IT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT A FUTURE NOT CONTAINED IN ITS CAUSES?

The word eschatology (from the Greek eskhatos "last," logia "study") refers to the doctrine constituted by history or research around the concept of destiny of all things.

It is the doctrine of the last things of the individual or of the world.

Two of the main characteristics of Christian ideology as handed over 2000 years are....

-Cultural racism, which a priori limits its intellectual references, therefore is just the opposite of the open-mindedness suiting to our times.

-The obsession of doing the will of God so to know what he wants.

The result is that if you tell a staunch Christian (I'm not talking about "Christians" who are Christians only because their families were thus) if you tell a staunch Christian that two plus two equals four, he will first check his Bible to see what it says.

The main difference between pagan philosophies and Judeo-Muslim-Christianity in eschatology is that pagan philosophies generally have a cyclical design of history (see apocatastasis) and Judeo-Muslim-Christianity a linear design.

Concretely....

-For the pagan philosophies, after an initial passage from the nothingness to the being, object of many speculations

(it is there generally that is their weak point, for it contradicts the well-known principle thus expressed in Latin "Gigni de Nihilo nihil ") an infinite succession of deaths and rebirths of the Universe.

- For Judeo-Muslim -Christianity, after a creation of the universe, theoretically ex nihilo, in fact, according to the texts the ordering of a pre-existing chaos called Tohu Wa Bohu according to Genesis 1 (first imposture) an absolute end of time but without return to the total nothingness, of the universe created by application of the Latin principle mentioned above "In nihilum nil posse reverti."

Now is it possible to predict an event without this information having a supernatural source or coming from a state of being higher to that of man?

The answer is yes, of course, and that is there the whole challenge of science because the possibilities of mistakes are, of course, innumerable.

"An intelligence which, for a given instant, would know all the forces through which nature is moved would embrace in the same formula the coming movements of the greatest bodies and those of the lightest atom. Nothing will be uncertain for it indeed, and the future as well as the past, would be present in its eyes. "

Nevertheless, man has always thought or imagined that information about the future, and, of course, about that concerning him directly, could be dictated or inspired by sources outside the natural domain in the strict sense of the term.

We will not discuss here whether it is possible to foresee a non-obvious, not contained in its causes, future.

If "the present is big with the future" (Leibnitz) then knowledge of the future is indeed possible because there are fixed natural laws that determine rigorously the future state of a system according to its state in progress (Determinism).

Although some elements are visibly random, assembling them in a series of calculations (based on the theory of chaos) and going back into the past (the known facts) makes it possible to predict these probabilities.

Logically, the highest probability wins.

But the future is not yet predicted. There is always a margin of error due to "unexpected " random phenomena, some things that cannot be foreseen or which have not been taken into account in the calculations.

So, if a group of friends usually go to a specific bar and drink beers, you'll know what they're going to do by crossing them in the street. You can even determine, if you know them a little, what they will talk about ... in what is still the future.

But the unexpected or the unknown can always come into play. Thus, if one of them was ill the night before, the probability that they go to the bar, or that he takes a beer, is limited because of that. In the same way, his state of health will certainly lead to subjects different from those you had envisaged.

Roughly, it is theoretically possible to predict. This requires a thorough knowledge of past elements, redundancies and of anything else that can enter the calculations (including the possible fall of an asteroid). In fact, this is only practically feasible on groups with a high number of individuals (the statistics then become those of the group and not of those of the individuals, what makes the calculation simpler and limits the number of random iterations.

But even so, the patterns obtained are only high probabilities, always subject to unforeseen events. In order to predict correctly and with absolute certainty the future, it would be therefore necessary to have a perfect knowledge of all the past elements and of all the unforeseeable probabilities, what is impossible.

At present, only a few experiments of this type have been carried out in laboratories, with relatively low error rates.

We shall therefore confine ourselves to the observation that one of the constituent ideas of the Jewish people after its return from Babylon and of the New Israel, that is the Christian people, is

-First, that there exists one (and only one) God, creator of this world

-Secondly, that this God communicates with the people he has chosen in various ways, and particularly through the means of certain exceptional individuals.

The emunah - faith - in the fact that God communicated His will to mankind is one of the foundations of Judaism and from there it passed into Christianity.

This conditioned reflex handed down from generation to generation has had as a result that Christians have always been persuaded that these wills of God concerning them had been especially written down in a whole series of books referred to as the Law the prophets or other diverse writings (Tanakh) by Jews, and as Old Testament by the Christians.

In these communications of this God Creator of this world to His people there is therefore information about future events and, of course, of the utmost importance, what is called prophecies.

For those who do not believe in the predictive properties of these poems ascribed to Jewish visionaries of antiquity (WHAT IS OUR CASE), the scenario (of the end of the world and / or of the end of time) that follows , is only a heterogeneous assemblage of poetic visions or of nationalist ideals (not devoid of a certain literary force, it is true). Worthy of appearing in an anthology of the great universal authors to take with oneself into a desert island (as an anthology to be read in order to kill time), but having nothing to do with science philosophy or reason. The drama of Christianity is that it has never been able to detach itself from the Jewish culture or Millenarist expectation of the Messiah to reach the universal one, as Marcion would have liked, for example. On the contrary, it felt that it was more than ever the true Israel, faced with the Goyim (renamed, so to speak, pagans) and kept from it all the conditioned reflexes. Hence an unprecedented intellectual decrease for Mankind. A resignation of intelligence. A crime against the spirit.

Jewish eschatology in the time of Christ can be reduced to two fundamental systems, being distinguishable by the more or less long, eternal or temporary, duration, attributed to the reign of the Messiah.

In the first, the coming of the latter coincides with the end of the world: at his advent the wicked work together against him, he defeats them, the general judgment takes place, the wicked are chastised, the good triumph eternally with the Messiah.

In the second, the reign of the Messiah ends before the end of the world. After having defeated his enemies, he governs for a time the people of the righteous, then the universe is changed, the dead are resurrected and judged, each receives his reward or punishment: eternity begins.

The following points are found in both systems, although in a different order.

- The precursory signs of the catastrophe: upheaval of nature, terrifying phenomena, wars, famines, universal apostasy, etc.
 - The coming of Elijah who must restore everything
 - The coming of the Messiah, preceding, accompanying or following the judgment and the last consumption.
 - The coalition of the ungodly against him under the command of a leader, who is not named, but whom Christians will call Antichrist.
- The defeat and crushing of the coalition, sometimes by God, sometimes and more often by the Messiah.
- The messianic reign with a new Jerusalem purged from the idolaters who defiled it or even descended from heaven with all the Jewish people (even the dead) assembled from its break-up, with God as the supreme ruler and absolute king, with its peace its joys and its perfect happiness.
 - The change of the world through the consumption of what the former had corruptible and mortal.
 - The resurrection of the dead.

All in all a picture, simpler, more simplistic, some will say, than with Christianity, because the Bible seems to speak of two comings onto earth of Christ.

The first is the one in which he was announced, ignored and rejected (John 11:12) crucified, then resurrected according to the many prophecies of the O.T. (Dan 9:26, 1 Cor. 15: 3). This first coming ended in his ascension (Luke 24:51).

- But many times Jesus Christ also announced that he would return. This second coming must also take place in two well-distinct time sequences.
- One for only for the faithful and believers.
- One for the rest of the world.

Let us emphasize that these two sequences are rather entangled in the texts and that their distinction is only an intellectual construction, not to say a construct of the mind.

But we play the game of these staunch Christians and that we reason only starting from the Bible, this is what can be inferred from it (a plan given with reservations: it is well necessary to decide between the contradictions or gaps of our texts and the Holy Spirit is still on strike in this field as usual).

- The return of Christ (parousia).
- The resurrection of the dead (Pharisaic idea) and their judgment.
- The end of time.

The various Christian denominations broadly agree on these three stages but differ about the millennium (the thousand-year reign of Christ and his own on earth) and about the final battle against the antichrist (Armageddon). In any case to be placed before the resurrection of the dead and the end of time.

THE PAROUSIA.

A theological word, coming from the Greek parousia, and by which Christian thought refers to the return of Christ onto the earth, his second and last coming among men. The word parousia, which is commonly translated by advent, is found several times in the NT (its frequent use in contemporary of the NT papyri makes it the technical word for a "visit" of a king or of a great personage, to which the subjects prepare themselves in advance).

The study of the various biblical texts concerning parousia is troubling; on the one hand, there are two tendencies, one which affirms the imminent return of Christ, and the opposite opinion which postpones parousia in an undetermined future; on the other hand, the indisputable fact that the aforementioned parousia (just like the coming of the Messiah for the Jews) has not yet occurred despite the centuries that have elapsed.

From then on, a first question arises for the Christian: why does the NT profess contradictory feelings in this field? And this question naturally changes into this: what was the belief of Christ himself about this? Did he announce to his disciples his imminent return, or did he speak to them of a parousia at the end of time?

This amounts to asking whether Jesus shared all the eschatological ideas of the Jews of his time. This question was answered in three ways.

1 ° some answered yes. Jesus shared all the eschatological ideas of his time, including those concerning the judgment of the world by the Messiah descending from heaven. Considering himself as the Messiah announced by the prophets, Jesus applied to himself this messianic and supernatural intervention after his death.

2. According to others, Jesus did not share any of the eschatological beliefs of Judaism of his time. Consequently, all that the NT says about his return here and the judgment he will preside over is only Jewish inventions from the disciples, both from the evangelists and from the apostle Paul, or from other writers of the NT. Drawn from Judaism and from different mythologies of the time.

3. For others, and their opinion seems the wisest, we have to adopt an intermediate solution.

-On the one hand, it is undeniable that Christ used the language and eschatological ideas of the Judaism of his time; he has used it as a means of making himself understood by his contemporaries, as a framework supporting his thought; he drew from them images of an unrivaled richness and pictures which speak directly to the heart.

-But on the other hand, the disciples have exaggerated the importance of the words and images used; they made them the most important part of the Teacher's lessons. Taking this language literally, they wanted to discover predictions about local and immediate events, instead of clearing the moral or philosophical teaching that could be applied in any country and at any time.

Like the Jews with the coming of the Messiah, some Christians, many at the very beginning, tried to determine the precise date of the parousia based on the book of Daniel or the prophecies of the Revelation. Now, each time, the course of events has proved the fragility of their calculations and the uselessness of this vain curiosity. For the majority of the present Christians, this second coming of Christ is therefore still in the events to be expected, and nothing makes it possible to fix either the epoch or the circumstances.

Editor's note. For the Catholic Church, this second parousia is neither a completely future event nor a completely occurred event. For the Catholics indeed Christ already reigns through the Church.

The second coming of Christ is very frequently and very clearly taught in Scripture. Christ will return personally, in his body of glory (Philippians 3: 20-21, Matthew 24:30, Matthew 25:31), according to his promise (John 14: 2-3). His return therefore constitutes the hope of all believers (Tit 2:13; He 9:28; 2 Ti 4: 8); it is certain even if he seems to be late (2 Pet. 3: 10-10; He 10:37).

All Christian theologians insist on the return of Jesus Christ and the "abduction" of his Church, but differ on the staggering of events in time. The diagram below is that of the pre-millenarianists.

The second coming of Christ is to occur in two phases.

- The believers will be first caught in the air in order to meet Him ((Human beings flying like birds ... that made skeptics like Celsus very much laugh).
Then Christ will return to earth with his own in the sight of all mankind.

a) Rapture of believers.

This event will take place suddenly at a given signal (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Let us stand ready: (Luke 12: 35-40, 1 John 2:28).

The dead in Christ will be resurrected and the believers living on earth will be changed instantly without passing through death; all will take on the glorified body of the resurrection and they will be caught up into heaven where they will meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17, 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52). It will be the fulfillment of a specific promise of Jesus (John 14: 2-3).

b) The court of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb

When believers appear before Christ, the value of their Christian life will be examined and tested (1 Cor. 3: 12-15, 2 Cor. 5:10, Ro 14:10).

c) The last coming of Christ on earth.

After a period of tribulation, Jesus Christ will come back unexpectedly

-On the Mount of Olives (Za 14: 4).

-Bodily (Za 14: 4; Acts 1:11; Is 35: 4).

-Surrounded by glory (Mt 24: 30b, Mt 16:27, 1 Pt 4:13, Is 11:10).

In a way visible for all mankind (1 Th 5: 2-3, Rev 1: 7, Acts 1:11, Mt 24: 27-30, Mt 24: 36-39).

-With authority (Rev 19: 11-16, Ephesians 9: 5-6).

THE MILLENNIUM.

Specialists call Millennialism, or chiliasm, a design that supports the idea of an earthly reign of Christ after or before it has driven out the Antichrist, but in any case previous to the Last Judgment.

John's Revelation 20:1-8 "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.... When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore."

Epistle of Barnabas. Chapter 15: "Give heed, children, what this meant; He ended in six days. He meant this, that in six thousand years the Lord shall bring all things to an end; for the day with Him signified a thousand years; and this He himself bears me witness, saying; Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years. Therefore, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything shall come to an end. And He rested on the seventh day. this He meant; when His Son shall come, and shall abolish the time of the Lawless One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun and the moon and the stars, then shall he truly rest on the seventh day. Yea and, furthermore, He said; You shall hallow it with pure hands and with a pure heart. If therefore a man is able now to hallow the day which God hallowed, though he be pure in heart, we have gone utterly astray. But if after all then and not till then shall we truly rest and

hallow it, when we shall ourselves be able to do so after being justified and receiving the promise, when iniquity is no more and all things have been made new by the Lord, we shall be able to hallow it then, because we ourselves shall have been hallowed first. Finally, He said to them; Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot away with. Ye see what His meaning is ; it is not your present Sabbaths that are acceptable [unto Me], but the Sabbath which I have made, in the which, when I have set all things at rest, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world."

Editor's note. The epistle of Barnabas, not to be confused with the Muslim simplistic and poor fake known as Gospel of Barnabas, was not kept by the official canon of churches but still appeared in the Codex Sinaiticus in the 4th century.

Papias. From the fragments speaking of Papias, we know that he supported the idea of an earthly reign of Christ. Many of these writings speak of what the saints will eat during the millennium.

Irenaeus. Book V of his "Against Heresies" deals with the antichrist or with the reign of Christ and of his elect.

Adv. Hae. V.28: 2:" He [Antichrist] shall give breath to the image, so that the image shall speak and he shall cause those to be slain who will not adore it." He also says: "And he will cause a mark [to be put] in the forehead and in the right hand, that no one may be able to buy or sell, unless he who has the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six," that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units. He gives this as a summing up of the whole of that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.

Adv. Hae. V, 28: 3: For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand years.

Adv. Hae. V, 33:2: 2. And for this reason the Lord declared, "When thou makes a dinner or a supper, do not call thy friends, nor thy neighbors, nor thy kinsfolk, lest they ask thee in return, and so repay thee. But call the lame, the blind, and the poor, and thou shall be blessed, since they cannot recompense thee, but a recompense shall be made you at the resurrection of the just." And again He says, "Whosoever shall have left lands, or houses, or parents, or brethren, or children because of Me, he shall receive in this world an hundredfold, and in that to come he shall inherit eternal life." For what are the hundredfold [rewards] in this world, the entertainments given to the poor, and the suppers for

which a return is made? These are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works that He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation; but shall have a table at hand prepared for them by God, supplying them with all sorts of dishes.

Editor's note. Here we find again the tone of the epistle by Barnabas.

This millenarianism persisted in the Christian Church until Augustine, but the latter fought millenarian belief because he saw in it perspectives of a future that was too carnal or material and not enough spiritual. He therefore proposed a symbolic reading of the Revelation and taught that the birth of Christ began the thousand years of his earthly reign. The official authorities of the Roman Catholic Church endorsed this interpretation, which is therefore, apart from the paradox of the date, still that of the today Catholic Church.

Since St. Augustine decided that a spiritual symbolism is preferable to a literal reading, several conceptions of the millennium have appeared, which can be broadly classified into three categories. Parousia of Christ without millenium, parousia of Christ after millennium, parousia of Christ before millennium.

-Parousia of Christ without millenium. Amillenarists refuse the thought of a reign of Jesus Christ on Earth. They assimilate the millennium with the eternal reign of God at the end of time (chapters 21 and 22 of the Revelation) and apply the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel to the Church (substitution doctrine). It is the thesis of the Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Anglican Church, Reformist Church and Lutheran Church.

-Parousia of Christ after millennium. The postmillenarianists situate the parousia, the return of the Messiah, after the thousand years of reign. This prosperous and blessed period would correspond to a provisional victory of the Church of Christ (cf. Rev. 18:21). In short, a time of Christianity, before an offensive return of the spirit of evil (cf. Rev. 20:7).

- Parousia before the millennium. More closely related to the literal reading, the premillennarianists combine the millennium and the Rapture of the Church according to three major doctrinal currents: pre-tribulationism, mid-tribulationism and post-tribulationism (each dependent on the moment when the Church will be caught up, either before, in the midst or at the end of the tribulations, as described in the Revelation of John.

-According to the most widespread current, pre-tribulationism, in a first time the Church will be caught up (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18) and thus protected from the judgments that will strike the world (Rev. 3:10) for 7 years, and then will be united to the Messiah (Rev. 19: 7-8) before he comes to establish the millennium (Rev. 20: 1-6), that is to say 1,000 years of peace on earth.

-After this will come the Last Judgment (Rev. 20: 11-15), the end of the world and the entrance into a new world (Rev. 21: 1). This is the concept in most evangelical churches: Baptist and Pentecostal Churches, etc.

For the Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), during the Millennium, which will begin at the second coming of the Savior and will be a time of justice and peace on earth, Christ will reign personally on earth and Satan will be bound, so that he will have no more place in the hearts of men. All human beings on earth will be good and righteous, even though many will not have received the fullness of the gospel. Consequently, the missionary work will continue as well as the work of the temple or of the Church. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be unbound for a little while, in order to gather his armies. They will fight the heavenly armies, led by Michel. Satan and his disciples will then be defeated and rejected forever.

Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Below briefly summarized the teaching about the millennium, as understood to date by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, since its beginnings.

The elect are resurrected at the "first resurrection," which takes place during Christ's return to glory, and they go to heaven (with the faithful who are alive on the return of Christ and who will not pass through death). Adventists see evidence of this in the fact that 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 speaks of a rapture "in the clouds" to "meet the Lord in the air" so that the promises of Jesus may be fulfilled, recorded in John 13: 33-37 and John 14: 1-3.

They reign [then] with Christ for a thousand years, judging the world and the fallen angels, that is, determining the punishment to be inflicted upon them at the end of the thousand years. Meanwhile, Satan is chained into the "abyss" (verses 1 and 3), that is to say, on the earth, which by the "judgment" of the "last seven wounds" described in chapter 16 of the Revelation, as well as by means of what will happen during the second coming of Christ (Revelation 19: 11-21), will have been completely purified, and therefore partially reduced to its original state, therefore cleared with unrepentant sinners, who will have all been put to death.

The vision depicts Satan bound for a thousand years by a great chain, thrown and enclosed in the abyss, so that he might no longer seduce [deceive] the non-believers till the thousand years be fulfilled (Revelation 20: 3). Adventists understand therefore that at the end of time Satan will be prevented from leaving Earth, where he will no longer have somebody to seduce, since those who will come to life in order to reign with Christ for a thousand years, will be, as the Seventh-day Adventists believe it, in heaven, and since, wrote John, "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended" (verses 4 and 5).

Unlike much of the Christian world, Adventists believe that this judgment will result in a total destruction not only of Satan and of his fallen angels (the demons), but also of the disbelievers of the human race, the judgment announced by the Bible, being not a punishment consisting of eternal sufferings, which would not be deserved on account of the evil committed in a human life - so brief in comparison with eternity - had been the longest and the most harmful of all.

Each one will be judged according to his works, according to that which was written in the books.

"Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire"

(Revelation 20: 6, 12-15). God seeks at all costs to avoid this unspeakable drama (see 2 Peter 3: 9), but, infinite tragedy, many (Matthew 7:13), by their obstinacy, will constrain him to inflict a just punishment. As Seventh-day Adventists understood death as a state of total non-existence, they believe therefore that these penalties will torment nobody for eternity, but will only reduce sinners to ashes: they will be as if "they had never been" (Obadiah 15: 16).

The Jehovah's Witnesses inherited (and reinterpreted) the conception of Nelson Barbour and Charles Taze Russell regarding the promise of "return" made by Christ. For them, it is not a matter of bodily return, but of the taking charge of the earthly affairs by the Kingdom of God. They justify this position by their translation of the word *parousia*, generally understood as meaning the "return," "coming" or "advent" of Christ, which they convey by "presence" (which may be invisible), a strict meaning they consider matching more exactly the etymology of this word in ancient Greek, to the detriment of other meanings which may be assumed by the word from a "philological" point of view. This long and invisible "presence," during which Christ would remain in heaven, would end with the battle of Har-Magedon, where human being opposed to God would be destroyed, then Christ would reign for a thousand years during which he would bring back paradisiacal conditions on earth and would raise to perfection the survivors and the resurrected who would opt for Jehovah. At the end of this millennium, the Devil will be released to tempt human beings a last time after what all rebels will be eliminated. Those who stay alive will live forever. References: John 5: 28-29; Revelation chapters 20 and 21; Matthew chapters 24 and 25.

THE ANTICHRIST.

Antichrist is a figure common to Christian and Islamic eschatology, but in a different sense. As far as Christianity is concerned, it appears in the epistles of John and in the second epistle to the Thessalonians of St. Paul in various forms but draws its origins from the notion of "anti-messiah" already present in Judaism.

Traditions are numerous on this subject and vary according to confessions and commentators. In Islam, various prophetic traditions (hadith) depict al-Dajjal (the Impostor) - the equivalent of the Antichrist - whose coming is a determining factor in Muslim eschatology. It appears at the end of time and must be eliminated by the prophet Issa (Jesus) on his return. Note that this return is not mentioned in the text and that it goes against the Koran which stipulates that Muhammad is the last (the seal) of the prophets.

The word "antichrist" comes from the ancient Greek antikhristos through medieval Latin antechristus. Despite the change of the prefix anti- (against) into ante- (before) the word antichrist means adversary of Christ and not who comes before.

The term does not appear in the basic Christian texts which form the foundation of the Christian teaching about the end of time: it does not appear in the Revelation of John nor in the Book of Daniel nor in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, nor in the Gospel according to Matthew in Jesus's discussion of the signs of "the end of the world," who besides never uses the word during his ministry. The most influential text concerning the construction of the figure of "antichrist" - the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians does not know him by that name.

The words "antichrist" and "antichrists" appear only five times in the Bible, specifically in two of the three epistles of the Apostle John.

"Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist--denying the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).

"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

"... but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (1 John 4: 3).

Here the word antikhristos seems to designate the Judeo-Christians who somehow keep to themselves by refusing to recognize as the pagan-Christians the full divinity of Christ or his incarnation. The term seems to describe any false doctor, false prophet, or corrupter of the Christian faith, but sometimes seems to indicate a specific person or a mere misleading spirit that causes a false teaching and whose presence is a sign of the end of times. However, in popular understanding, many Christians identify this particular Antichrist with the "man of lawlessness, the son of destruction" mentioned in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (2: 2) and with different figures of the Revelation, including the Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet and the Prostitute of Babylon. The idea that the Antichrist is a person seems to be combined in the first epistle of John with that which makes him a category of persons. John speaks of several Antichrists who embody the "spirit of the Antichrist," who would have lived since the first century ("and who now is already in the world," 4: 3) and would continue to exist until now. As John writes, such an Antichrist (adversary of Christ) is anyone who "does not acknowledge that Jesus is Christ."

Ideas pertaining to him and references appear in many other places in the Bible and various apocryphal texts, so that a more complete biblical portrait of the Antichrist was created, little by little, by Christian theologians and popular religiosity. The Gospel according to Matthew warns against "false Christs" in many places and against the deceivers who would claim to be the returned Christ (Matthew 24: 5, 24)

Antichrist is therefore understood in various ways, either as a group or an organization, or as a fundamentally bad system of government or a false religion; or, more generally, as an individual, as the head of an evil government, a religious leader who replaces the adoration of Christ by false adoration, the incarnation of Satan, a son of Satan, or a human being placed under the dominion of Satan.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON.

Battle in which God will intervene and destroy the armies of the Antichrist, as announced by the biblical prophecies (Revelation 16:16, 20: 1-3, 7-10). A multitude of people will be enlisted in this battle: all who are not true believers will unite their forces to fight Christ.

The word "Armageddon" therefore appears only once in the Bible, in Revelation (or Apocalypse) 16:16. This book of the Bible prophetically announces that to the "place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon," "the kings of the whole world " will be gathered "for the battle of the great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14).

Who is to fight at Armageddon? At the head of a heavenly army, Jesus Christ will fight (the enemies of God). He will lead his army to victory (Revelation 19: 11-16, 19-21). God's enemies will be those who oppose his dominion and treat him without respect (Ezekiel 39: 7).

Will the Battle of Armageddon take place in the Middle East? No, it will not unfold in one place, but on the whole earth (Jeremiah 25: 32-34; Ezekiel 39: 17-20). Armageddon is the symbol of a world situation in which all the unbelievers will meet to oppose one last time the dominion of God.

What will the Battle of Armageddon be like? We do not know how God will use his power, but he will have the same weapons that he used in the past: hail, earthquakes, rainstorms, fire and sulfur, lightning and disease (Job 38:22- 23 Ezekiel 38:19,-22, Habakkuk 3:10- 11, Zechariah 14:12). In this confusion, at least a certain number of the enemies of God will kill each other. But they will eventually realize that it is God who fights against them (Ezekiel 38: 21,-23, Zechariah 14:13).

Will Armageddon be the end of the world? This will not be the end of our planet, for the earth is the eternal abode of man (Psalm 37:29, 96:10, Ecclesiastes 1: 4). Rather than destroy mankind, Armageddon will save it, for a "great multitude" of worshipers of God will survive (Revelation 7: 9-14; Psalm 37:34).

When will Armageddon take place? Speaking of the "great tribulation" which ends in the battle of Armageddon, Jesus said, " "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:21-36).

"Now many people wonder, however, why a God who is the very personification of love would decree the death of a major part of the human beings. Well, imagine a house infested with cockroaches Do not you think that a conscientious proprietor should protect the health and well-being of his family by exterminating the undesirables. It is precisely because Jehovah feels a great affection for human beings that the battle of Armageddon must take place. God intends to make earth a paradise in which the human beings, led to perfection, will experiment peace "and no one will make them afraid" (Micah 4: 3-4; Revelation 21: 4) .Therefore, what should be done with those who threaten the peace and security of their kind? For the sake of the righteous, God has to eliminate the bad guys - the "undesirables" - that nothing will make change."

Christian taqiyya about this reasoning.

"The Jehovah's Witnesses are convinced to perform a work of salvation, why would they pursue their work of evangelization if they believed that there was no hope for others? Jehovah's Witnesses have the certainty that God will extend his mercy "to all people" (1 Timothy 2: 3, 4) The Apostle Paul declares that God will raise up "even the wicked" (Acts 24:15). It is therefore evident that many people who today are not Jehovah's Witnesses will be saved. But about the imminent "great tribulation" and the means to survive, the Bible indicates all the same that those who wish to be protected by God must take a stand for Him.

Counter-lay No. 1.

But when it is written, "God will raise up even the wicked," these are the human beings who will be dead before Har-Maguedon and who will come back to live (provided they have not sinned against the Holy Spirit) but in order to be put to the test or to be destroyed forever if they do not recognize the Kingdom of Jehovah.

Therefore this does not concern the people who are alive at Har-Maguedon, they must absolutely be Jehovah's Witnesses to escape the final solution

Same taqiyya with the phrase "Many people who today are not Jehovah's Witnesses will be saved."

A person who is not Jehovah's Witness today, of course, may become one of them afterward and therefore be saved at Har-Maguedon, but if not, it is the final destruction that awaits him.

Lastly, the phrase "The Bible indicates that those who desire to be protected by God must take a stand for him" is a soft euphemism, since it is not a question here of taking a stand for God, but rather for the organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The writings of Jehovah's Witnesses which describe the war of Har-Maguedon seem nevertheless to evolve in recent years towards a less literal * and therefore less "sectarian" aspect.

In a recent publication that describes still Jehovah's warlike arsenal for this battle: "snow, hail, earthquakes, infectious diseases, flood-like rains, rainfall of fire and sulfur, confusion that leads to murder, lightning, or plague which causes a rotting of the flesh ," it is added in a note: "It should be emphasized that many parts of the Bible are written in symbolic language or" signs. " (Revelation 1: 1). Consequently we cannot therefore know with certainty to what extent the elements mentioned in these prophecies will be used in the literal sense ."

* All in all, it is the same semantic debates as with the Marxist concepts of "class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, disappearance of bourgeoisie."

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD 1).

A fundamental concept of Christianity and Islam, because the sufferings of hell are not to be purely spiritual. On the day of the Last Judgment, the dead will rise again and find a body able of feeling all possible physical pain. According to some Islamologists, the sadism of this idea borrowed from Christianity, of a resurrection of the bodies of the deceased, making possible all possible carnal tortures even long after their death, would have played a major part in the radical rejection of the initial preaching of Muhammad, by his contemporaries in Mecca. As for the bodily rewards of the righteous, if in Islam they seem to be carnal (for men, including alcohol), it is not the same with Christianity, which states clearly that there will be neither husband nor wife in paradise.

Certain currents of thought of Judaism in the time of Jesus believed in the resurrection of the dead but not all. Official Judaism, that of Sadducees, did not believe in it, but Pharisees and Essenes believed in it.

The idea of resurrection is very widespread in the world and comes, of course, from what the life cycle can suggest through the unfolding of the seasons: birth, growth, production, rest, death.

The perception of this cycle dates back to the Paleolithic period. The return of spring after the winter is of it a common allegory.

What has always worried men, of course, is their own resurrection (or not) to them; but it will not be useless to begin with some remarks about the cyclic resurrection (or not) of certain anthropomorphic deities, given what they tell us about this obsession of man since Gilgamesh.

The deicide category indeed may be regarded as a universal fact of religious thought.

The belief in the resurrection of Jesus, died on the cross to redeem the sins of the world, is an essential element of the Christian religion. The history of religions shows that the myths of the gods who die and come back to life are widespread but also assume also very different meanings. Indeed, two different ideas of the gods who die and resurrect are found in the historians of religion and ethnologists.

First of all, those of Frazer. Nobody more him has insisted, in the Golden Bough, on the vegetation deities who die in winter to get back on their feet in spring. Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Demeter, and Persephone, Dionysus, whose death and rebirth become symbols, within the mysteries or initiatory cults, of a doctrine of salvation and immortality. He linked the passion of Christ to the whole of these cults, because the god who dies often can be used as a scapegoat on which the impurities of the community are projected before killing him, what would be the starting point of the idea of the god, who, in dying, takes upon himself the sins of the world.

Other authors, however, point out that the Christian idea of a god who dies on the cross, the execution of thieves and slaves, in the most extreme humiliation, in no case could be accepted by the pagans *, who could not come to consider a god suffering for men, stricken with an infamous torment, just as they could not accept the idea that the death of a righteous could paradoxically wash away the sins of the wrecked. That does not mean that there are no myths of gods murdered throughout the world - but that there is a radical opposition, first between the forms of the assassination of the god and secondly in the theological interpretations the Pagans or Christians will give reciprocally of these suffering and killed deities.

In fact, although Frazer has given African examples of divine kings killed when, in growing older, they lose their mana, his argument is mainly based on the data of a certain cultural area, that of the Mediterranean, while being also based on the European folklore (Carnival death, election of the king and queen of May), and he includes in the same system two different kinds of mythologies: that of the murdered, dismembered, god, like Osiris or Dionysus - that of the descent into hell, like the grain of wheat that is to be put into the ground in order to germinate (Demeter, Persephone). What

constitutes the unity of the system is, in both cases, the image of vegetation (the tree that turns green again, the seed that is buried).

A rapid analysis reveals that the myth of the murdered god extends far beyond the boundaries of the annual cycle of vegetation and that it takes on different meanings according to the peoples.

Frazer noted that the deicide could, in other cultural areas, exist with other meanings than in the area of the eastern Mediterranean. The annual killing of prisoners disguised as gods among the Aztecs was intended not to create scapegoats, but to rejuvenate deities, to renew their mana. And he adds that it is possible that the sacrifice of divine beings performed for the salvation of the cosmos contributed to the idea that the universe was originally created with the body of immolated gods: in Ireland the medicinal plants come from the body of the medicine god Miach sacrificed by his own father Dian Cécht.

Mircea Eliade insisted on this particular type of dying gods, arousing from cadavers some living forms useful to mankind.

To a certain extent, the gods die indeed, like Christ, for mankind, but in the first case it is the material and, in a way, the bodily salvation of man (the farming rising from the deicide), in the second case it is an imaginary salvation (the creation of an illusory world in which the contradictions of society are reabsorbed in the ecstasy that brings the initiate out of this real society, which itself continues to keep its internal contradictions).

But in both cases as in Christianity, the tragic death of a god changes the mode of being of the man; It is "constituent of the human condition," but constituent for a bygone past (passage to agriculture) or for a present that cyclically repeats the past.

The conclusion to which we come is that Christ's death fits well into a universal category of religious thought, of which the divine kings of Frazer are not the prototype, but rather the semi-gods creators, through their violent deaths and the dismembering of their bodies, of a surplus of nature or of a surplus of culture.

BUT LET BE BACK QUICKLY TO THE MOST IMPORTANT: OUR RESURRECTION TO US THE MEN.

BOOK OF THE MACCABEES AND BOOK BY DANIEL.

Second century before our era.

First book of the Maccabees.

Unlike the second Book of the Maccabees, the first does not say a word about a resurrection of the dead; the martyrs of Israel, the Maccabees, reap from their premature death only glory and honor, and they continue to "live" only in the memory of the people. Still in the time of Jesus, a century and a half later, and in the same way, the group of Sadducees who constituted official Judaism refused the idea of resurrection.

Second book of the Maccabees chapter 7.

It is obviously not question in this passage of an "eschatological" resurrection, of an earthly resurrection at the end of time, but - perhaps because the expectation that is expressed in the book of Daniel had not been satisfied by the recent past - of a transcendent resurrection, of a heavenly resurrection before time: we think there of an ascent to heaven after death - a widespread pagan idea (cf. the apotheosis of the Irish hero Cuchulainn in his *siabur charpat*) what, much later, was to be of vital importance in the faith in Jesus Christ and in his resurrection.

The argument for resurrection nevertheless reaches its climax with the two discourses of the mother who is presented more as a philosopher than as a mother. Unlike what happens among Egyptians, where the mummy must remain absolutely intact for the eternal life, bodily mutilation and physical annihilation themselves are not limits for the God of Israel.

In the book of Daniel there is a mention of the individual resurrection, but it is not certain that it is a resurrection for everybody. Given its language, its theology (late angelology) and its composition without unity, this book is by no means the work of a visionary living the Babylonian court of the sixth century, but rather that of a writer of the 2nd century, just during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. As regards the resurrection, there is in the last chapter of this Book (originally of apocalyptic nature) a nationalist passage which was probably influenced by Persian ideas: "At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence."

Who can resurrect, according to this text?

"Your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12: 2-3).

1) The ungodly will remain in the Sheol or Hades, they will not rise again.

2) Apostates and traitors will experience "everlasting contempt": they will be awakened from the dead to suffer endless severe pains in their flesh.

3) The risen righteous and saints will enjoy "everlasting life."

The conclusion drawn by the Christians is therefore the following one. It is of the utmost importance to seize without delay the salvation that Jesus freely offers to all sinners! And for those who are saved, it is another duty: to announce the sinners the good news of salvation through grace. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel," cried the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 9:16). Let us follow his example and remind sinners that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Editor's note. Jews and Reformists, if they do not include the book of the Maccabees in their canon, generally regard these works as reliable historical sources. The Hanukkah Festival commemorating the revolt of the Maccabees is still celebrated by the Jews. It should be remembered, however, that a

non-negligible part of the Jews, faithful to the ancestral law, did not accept then the belief in the resurrection and still does not accept it today.

Moreover the Pharisaic or Christian dogma of the resurrection of the dead should not be confused with a simple bodily resuscitation as in the case of Lazarus or of the daughter of Jairus (2 Mark 7). The resurrections performed directly and personally by Jesus at the time of his incarnation must be understood as an anticipation of the general and glorious resurrection, as apocalyptic literature expects it at the end of history.

* Except for the Irish druids because of their warlike hero the Hesus-Mars called among them Cuchulainn.

1) The purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the resurrection, or not, of the great Nazarene rabbi Jesus, but of the general resurrection of human beings to be judged (at the end of time). Historically speaking, the belief in the resurrection of this man is based only on the testimonies recorded in the four gospels, and on one occasion by the apostle Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15: 3-8). The apostle of the Gentiles Pagans writes to the Christians of the city of Corinth in Greece: " For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter] and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles."

Considering that the date of the writing of the First Epistle (which is the earliest text of the New Testament dealing with the Resurrection) is placed by the specialists between 53 and 57 of our era (i.e., 20 to 25 years after the alleged historical unfolding of the Crucifixion and Resurrection), the interpretation that has always been favored in the churches is that Jesus Christ actually appeared alive on the third day after his death and that several witnesses have seen him and have been in contact with him for a certain time

Rudolf Bultmann puts the episode of the resurrection among the theologoumena, that is some theological affirmations presented in the Biblical narratives as historical facts. Dale Allison finds eight of them.

There are three major doctrinal implications arising from the belief in the generalized rise of the dead, which have major consequences in the Christian faith.

-The possibility of a miraculous return to physical life through the action of God (it is actually a resuscitation of an earthly body rather than a resurrection in the proper sense of the term, cf. the "resurrection" of Lazarus in John 11: 1-44).

-The spiritual state of death of man, stemming from the sin of Adam. With the example of Christ, the Resurrection represents the final victory of Life over Death as a redemptive work done by Jesus for the human race. It also echoes Jesus's declarations according to which he came so that mankind may have "life to the full" (John 10:10).

-The future resurrection, properly speaking, in the last days, of human beings who will be destined either to Salvation or Damnation. According to the millenarians, there will be two resurrections, the first on the return of the Messiah will only concern the righteous, the second will take place for everybody on the Day of Judgment and will thus make it possible to feel in his flesh the joys of heaven or the sadomasochistic appalling tortures of hell. For all eternity.

THE PARADOX OF THE GLORIOUS BODIES.

Science demonstrates the impossibility of the resurrection of the dead in the common sense of the term. If the remains of the human body continued to be homogeneous, even if they were scattered and reduced to dust, their collation would still be imagined at a given time; but things do not happen thus. The body is made up of various elements: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, etc. ; through decomposition, these elements are dispersed, but to serve for the formation of new bodies; so that the same molecule of carbon, for example, will enter the composition of several thousand different bodies (we speak only of human bodies, not counting all those of animals); that this individual possesses, in his body, molecules which have belonged to men of the first ages; that these same organic molecules that we absorb with food may come from the body of another individual we have known (at least perhaps), and so on. The matter being in a definite quantity, and its changes in indefinite quantities, how could each of these bodies be reconstructed with the same elements? There is here a material impossibility.

The resurrection of the flesh can therefore only be admitted as a figure symbolizing the phenomenon known as that of the bodies having taken on *xvarnah* in the Persian world. *bellisama* for women, *bellisamos* for men in ancient Druidic theology, the result of the inner light called in Ireland the light of the hero (*luan laith*) or bird of valor (*en blaith*).

The Persian myths describe very precisely the coming of the Savior (*Saoshyant*) at the end of time, the final struggle where good will overcome evil, as well as the resurrection. This will be the moment when Ormazd sends his son *Saoshyant* to save the world. Ormuz will defeat *Ahriman*. The dead will be resurrected, assuming a body of glory (*xvarnah*). The angels and the archangels will stretch the bridge of judgment (*Chinvat*) through which the righteous will pass.

In his philosophical dictionary Voltaire devotes an ironical article to the Resurrection, in which it is all very well for him to make fun of the learned theologians and of the questions they ask themselves about the resurrection of bodies. Which body will it be? That of the time when we were twenty years old or that of the time when we were eighty years old? How will it be possible to make the body of an unborn child that of an adult? How will revive the bodies eaten by cannibals? With what will be fed and dressed up all these people?

One might wonder whether Voltaire does not lay it on thick a little for his purpose in hand. It must be admitted that he rather subtracts from it.

The theologian who tries to finish the part of the *Summa* that Saint Thomas Aquinas did not have time to write lingers for example on the nails and the hair, which in heaven will have no use, if not that of being ornaments, and will therefore be compatible with the *xvarnah*, whereas conversely, unnecessary secretions (like milk, sperm, in particular) will be supposed to disappear.... but not their organs, of course, become useless (women no longer give birth , newborns are no longer breastfed), but whose glory puts up with exhibiting virtue, as victors exhibiting weapons become useless.

It is clear that we must not lock oneself in these absurd scholastic discussions about the condition of the glorious bodies, and that it is a mistake of principle to ask oneself such questions. In fact, we are constantly turning around this new body, which is to be the same as that of the earthly life, while being different, and of course, in order to complete the body of its indispensable "corollary," to cloth this soul which is not new, but which must await after death to have again "one's" body, a soul that will be the same therefore, though the resurrection is well to change it too, it is supposed!

Basically, all these questions of the how (how will be the glorious body, what will be the life of the glorious body, or in a glorious body?) make the representation of the resurrection depend on a very narrow conception of the link between body and soul (It is only a question of Aristotelian hylomorphism, it is not even sure), and so, they reduce the resurrection to a form of reincarnation or revival.

In truth, the Zoroastrian tradition on the subject is extremely sober, and it is ultimately preferable, compared with the treatises acid thrown by Voltaire. The most sober of all, it is Jesus himself, of whom we could have hoped for a more loquacious teaching ... and less embarrassing apparitions.

His teaching is sober: it holds in the affirmation that there will be a resurrection, and that we must believe it, not for an anthropological reason (the unnatural state of a soul separated from the body), but theological: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt 22:32).

And the only "how" to which Jesus answers is a simple "like," that he must be the only one to understand, in any case not very clarifying for us: "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mt 22:30). And by the way, the angels in heaven, how are they? They take neither wife nor husband! But still? "They see the face of my father" (Mt 18:10). This, let us admit it, gives us little indication of the glorious bodies.

- But Christ himself has well a "glorious" body when he appeared to the disciples?

- It is not so simple ! It is indeed Jesus Himself and alive who appears and is recognized by his disciples, but it is always in a more or less laborious process of recognition, in which Jesus must overcome their doubts and fears (Luke 24:37) or their complete blindness (John 20 :14 ; Luke 24:16). He does it by words (personal speech to Mary Magdalene, rereading of the Scriptures to the disciples of Emmaus) and gestures (notably the breaking of bread). He also shows his wounds, but only twice (John 20: 20-27). Other times, they seem invisible, or they are not noticed!

As for the heavenly glory (xvarnah), there is no such thing in these apparitions where Jesus is not resplendent with light as during his transfiguration (Mark 9: 2-3). An important detail in the eyes of John (and of all posterity): he stood in the midst of them, while all the doors were closed (John 20: 19-26). Without being a person who walks through the walls, Jesus appears with a real and palpable body where he wants to appear. And this is all we can say, without prejudging the glorious body of Christ on the right hand of the Father, that the revelation sees perhaps more brilliantly, but so symbolically (the Lamb slaughtered of Rev 5:12 and Rev 21) that it prevents any realistic representation.

If the glorious body of Christ Himself escapes our inquiry, it may become impossible to think anything of our own resurrection. Paul, who seems to have seen an apparition of the Risen at once more overwhelming and more luminous than the disciples, is well aware of the difficulty of imagining our resurrection and of the despair or radical disbelief which can ensue in his brothers of Corinth. He therefore undertakes to enlighten them (in 1 Cor 15).

The extended metaphor of the grain that Paul uses refers both to a druidic process and an ontological typology of the human being before and after death. A druidic process: how does life come from death? As the plant springs from the grain that has fallen into the ground and that dies there. A typology: born earthly, and psychic body (Gnostic terminology?), Man is "reborn" heavenly, and spiritual body.

If the mechanistic view is left to its field of application, and that an opening is left to other reflections to approach the subject which is man and the question of the spirit, then the typology of Paul is very interesting. He who speaks usually of flesh (sarx) rather than of body (soma) is here engaged in an inculturation attempt of Greek thought, which proves to be profitable, on condition to see well in what he separates from it, and what he opens thus as perspectives.

In examining the distinction between the two kinds of soma, the "psychic" ("earthly" or "natural") soma, and the "spiritual" (pneumatikon) soma, we must question the influences to which Paul was subjected as this discrimination is foreign to the strict Pharisaism in which the Apostle falls. This demanding Pharisaism could not remove the cultural Hellenist who was our author who was raised in the great city of Tarsus, from the dominant intellectual or spiritual currents. Paul lived among the Greek-speaking Gnostics.

From these remarks it can reasonably be said that there is among the Gnostics in Corinth a doctrine of the double soma of which St. Paul is imbued. Perhaps the Apostle takes it over in order to make himself understood, knowing to what extent this doctrine is fashionable in this city? It may be added that in his view to counter the "words taught by human wisdom," that is to say, the discourses of the philosophers (1 Corinthians 2: 13), he thinks it clever to propose an idea of the man where the gnosis is recovered.

At first sight, Paul seems to take over the Greek language of body and soul (*soma et psuche*), which leads some interpreters to consider that the evocation of the spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*) refers to a body "governed by the Holy Spirit." Such an interpretation could make the Holy Spirit the great Soul of all the resurrected bodies. This path, followed by some Arab commentators of Aristotle, does not correspond at all to the Christian faith of the permanence of the personal subject.

If the spirit of which Paul speaks is not the Holy Spirit but the spirit of the person, it could be understood that the person is made up of body, soul and spirit, but can have two ways of "being" according to whether the body is assumed by the soul outside the power of the spirit, in an earthly condition through which the spirit does not "govern" the body (and governs as it can do, the soul), or whether the body is assumed by the spirit, in a heavenly condition through which the spirit "governs" the soul and the body.

Such a representation goes against the individualization of the human person by the body (individuation of form by matter, in hylomorphism). Perhaps we will be then in a world of light, without curse (Rev. 22:3-5), without death or suffering (Rev. 21: 4), and therefore in a new space-time, a consequence of another relationship to God, to oneself and to others, and which cannot be comprehended from the body in its materiality (under penalty of stumbling on the unrepresentable), but from what we know, in the flesh, of the spirit, by establishing another relation to the flesh, and not outside the flesh. So that in the end, the question of our afterlife should not be focused on our bodies: what will become our bodies? How will be our bodies? But on our person: Will our individuality subsist eternally, or will it gradually fade away into the Big Whole?

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUADRATURE OF THE JUDICIUM DUPLEX OR ADVENTUS DUPLEX, OF CHRIST.

The medieval Christian society from the beginning found itself struggling with the tension arising from the simultaneous affirmation of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of bodies at the end of time. It will inevitably result in the prospect of a double judgment: the Last Judgment, announced by Matthew 25 and Revelation 20, and the judgment of souls, which already intervenes at the moment of the death of each one.

In fact, a double duality is here at work: that of the soul and of the body (whose importance in Christian doctrine and society could not be overemphasized) and that of the present and of the future. The duality of the singular and of the collective is often added to it. However, the lot of souls is not, and by far, a strictly individual problem: texts and images readily evoke a collective judgment of souls. Conversely, it is often the case that individualized concerns are projected into the image or imagination of the Last Judgment, by nature collective.

Of course, for every believer, the judgment of the soul falls within the future life that awaits him in the day after death, but from the point of view of the community of the living it can be said that souls are judged in a time which is that of the present destiny of mankind.

As for the Last Judgment, this is a very particular future in that it inaugurates the abolition of temporality and the end of the mutability that characterizes it. It stands on the threshold of eternity.

It connects the time of the creatures and the cosmic eternity that from then on these come to share with the divinity. It is, besides, this highly problematic connection that explains why this inaugural moment of the most absolute eternal order is also in Meta history one of the events most bubbling with movements, gestures and actions having entered a temporality which is then on the verge of being exhausted forever.

Let us also note that if we speak here of the characteristic binarities of medieval representations, they work in reality only in combination with a ternarity (and this less by the effect of a mediation than by reference to an external third party): thus, if the body is perishable and the soul eternal, the latter is nonetheless subject to the *mutatio temporalis*, of which Hugh of St. Victor speaks, so that only God is entirely out of time, both eternal and immutable.

To return to the Last Judgment, it should also be remembered that, in the Middle Ages, it belongs to a future whose handling – in the form of expectation - is particularly delicate, and that the medieval clerics, following Augustine, had to deploy considerable energy to neutralize the millenarian potential. From the point of view of the ecclesial institution, which comes up against many divergent opinions on this point, this future is to be lived as completely close, while falling at the same time within an imminence that is still suspended and kept in vagueness.

Between last judgment and judgment of the soul, it would be wrong to establish a substitution relationship, as historiography has often suggested. There is perhaps a progressive assertion of the judgment of the soul, which is the object of increasingly numerous and worked out stories and figured representations. More significantly, in the circle of the Parisian teachers of the years 1135-1155, we can highlight an unprecedented formalization of the judgment of the soul, which makes an entrance into theological vocabulary, particularly in Abelard and Robert of Melun, with the name of *iudicium*. It is certainly not indifferent to observe that this phenomenon occurs in the context of a general clarification and restructuring of the design of the afterlife, of which the birth of purgatory a few decades later proves to be the most obvious aspect. For all that - and contrary to what our contemporary representations of coherence, and particularly of the coherence of times, would imply spontaneously - this assertion of the judgment of the soul (of a judgment which is already performed at the moment of death) is not made to the detriment of the Last Judgment, of which the moment of most iconographic rise is to be situated in the thirteenth century and in the last phase of the Middle Ages.

We must therefore insist on the coexistence - and even on a simultaneous assertion - of the two judgments. One might even wonder - but it would require a quantitative study we cannot do here - if it

would not be advisable to completely reverse the usual perspective and to recognize that, all in all, in the twelfth century, for example, supposed moment of infancy of the judgment of the soul and of blossoming of the Last Judgment, the images of the first are probably more abundant than those of the second. But beyond the quantitative evolution of the two themes, and once the idea that there would be an incompatibility between them is excluded, the real question is that of the link made between these two judgments. A question that theologians tackle explicitly, showing their concern to connect what they sometimes call a duplex Adventus or duplex Judicium.

We shall try here to analyze how this connection of the two judgments can be thought in images. It is a question of observing different ways of relating two distinct temporalities: the present of the souls (after death) separated from the body and the future of the ultimate judgment concerning all the resurrected (again endowed with a body).

Phew! Congratulations to this great Mexican specialist for having succeeded in expounding with clarity the data of the problem posed by Christianity as regards the lot of souls after the death of the body in the usual sense of the term, that is to say outside this notion of resurrection of the dead, which complicates everything.

THE SECOND AND LAST JUDGMENT OF THE SOULS.

The Last Judgment is a solemn and general judgment that several religions contemplate for the living and the dead, at the end of time. This general judgment may in certain cases be the only one to which the deceased are subjected (Egyptian religion, Judaism, ancient Iranian religions, Druidism * Greek religion, Roman religion, various African religions, etc.) but in other religions, this judgment reproduces the particular judgment to which the soul of each individual is subjected immediately after his death (Christianity, Islam).

Editor's note. The god of Christianity is a god of love but it is a god who judges nevertheless much (at least twice) and Christianity therefore shares with Islam the particularity of accepting the idea of two successive judgments of souls to determine their lot in the hereafter. We will therefore ask our readers to forgive us if at times, in our desperate efforts to try to connect them more logically than the Christian theologians do themselves, we either go astray or contradict each other. Let them then refer in order to know more to the church of their choice WHAT WE ARE IN NO WAY.

A LITTLE BIT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION NOW.

The ancient Persians said that Ormazd, the good principle, after having allowed Ahriman to torment human beings for a certain period of time, would destroy the universe and bring back all human beings to life; That good people should receive the reward of their virtues, the wicked, the punishment of their crimes, and that two angels should be appointed to preside over the punishment of the latter. They thought that after having atoned for their sins during a certain time, the wicked would also be admitted into the company, of the blessed; But that, in order to distinguish them, they would wear a black mark on their forehead, and be at a greater distance from the good principle than the others.

The image of the weighing of souls (or actions) is a very widespread symbol. The best example of this is provided by Egypt. The Egyptians believed in fact that after the earthly death the soul of the dead survived. To deserve this immortal life, it was necessary to pass the ordeal of the judgment of the soul before in the court of Osiris. To convince the judges who were assisting Osiris, the deceased had to prove that he had not committed any evil deeds during his earthly life ...

The dead, in a white robe, is introduced by Anubis into the court presided over by Osiris. His good and evil earthly actions are weighed with a balance: on one of the pans of the scales, the heart of the dead is placed and on the other pan, the feather of Maat, the justice. The god Thot takes note of the result of the weighing. A monster (lion-hippopotamus-jackal-crocodile, animals that the Egyptians feared) devoured the deceased if the result was unfavorable to him. If the result was favorable, the dead man was presented to Osiris, who accepted him in the fields of Aaru (the Egyptian heaven).

Christian mythology being vague or somewhat contradictory on this subject, given its Pharisaic origins, in order to know concretely a little more we will fall back on medieval imagery. And for that we will give the floor to the greatest specialist as far as I know of the subject, the Mexican mediaeval historian Jerome Baschet (Autonomous University of Chiapas).

The oldest representation of the archangel Michael in the western domain (ninth century) is a low-relief carved in the underground sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo, which represents him with a balance weighing the souls.

Another low-relief of about 1140 also represents him weighing the souls on the tympanum of the Last Judgment of the Cathedral Saint-Lazarus in Autun. In the register on the right, we see Michael weighing a soul and a demon tries to tip the beam in his direction but without success.

The Museum of Catalan Art in Lleida also preserves a 14th-century altarpiece where Michael weighs souls, and souls who have not satisfied the weighing are engulfed by the mouth of a devil.

THE LAST JUDGMENT RIGHTLY SPEAKING.

Let us now take on the last phase of the events predicted by the Judeo-Christian prophets. This will begin immediately after the revolt that followed the millennium. Millennium, let us remember it, to which certain Christian denominations, and not the least, give little importance.

The main lines are the following ones. Heaven and earth will be destroyed and Christ will sit on the great white throne to judge the men who died in sin state. They will be resurrected by the power of God, judged according to their works, sentenced and thrown into the lake of fire. Then death will be destroyed in turn.

We read in Revelation 20:11 et seq. : " Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."

What an impressive scene! While the dead in Christ will be resurrected at the coming of the Lord and before the establishment of the millennial reign, those who are not chosen will remain in their graves and will be resurrected only after the millennium to appear before the great white throne. It is time for the score settling ... And on this throne Christ Himself is seating, in order to fulfill the judicial function that the Father has entrusted to him. " Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man" (John 5:22-27). "God will judge people's secrets through Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:16). "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as the judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10: 42). "He has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead "(Acts 17:31). " Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead" (2 Timothy 4: 1)

All will appear before him, the little and the great people in this world, to receive the just punishment that their works will deserve. It will no longer be a question of appearing, as we see in 2 Cor. 5: 10 in the eyes of the redeemed. There it will be necessary for every ungodly to answer for his acts, without being able to count on the grace that he will have been able to refuse during his lifetime.

No redeemed of the Lord will be among these unfortunates. " Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life "(John 5:24). For those who will not have believed in the Lord, there will be no longer any hope, for they will have trampled the Son of God.

Every man will then have to deal with God, either in Christ, or "according to his works." But those who will appear before God, relying only on their own merits, will suffer a certain and just sentence, for their works will never be able to accept divine light. The grace period will be passed and everything will be weighed according to the inflexible demands of the Justice and glory of God.

The dead will be judged, "according to what they had done recorded in the books." This is an image, but so evocative that it was taken over by Islam that states (Sura 17, verses 13-14): "And for every person we have imposed his fate upon his neck, and we will produce for him on the Day of Resurrection a record which he will encounter spread open [It will be said], "Read your record.

Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant." The picture is clear. Nothing will be forgotten, everything will be remembered and this reminder will suffice to convict the dead with their guilt as well as with the correctness of their punishment. Even the secret sins will be judged: "All those who have sinned ... shall be judged ...on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ "

(Romans 2:16). The words also, and not only the acts: "But I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words, you will be.....Condemned "(Matt 12:36). No one will be able to prove one's innocence and all mouths will be closed. It will be "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will repay each person according to what they have done" (Romans 2: 5, 6).

But what will happen to those who have never heard the Gospel?

It is to be remembered that God has always spoken to men through the works of his creation and through the means of consciousness. " The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may

be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (= the creation), so that people are without excuse "(Rom.1: 18-20).

Therefore man can perceive, only through the contemplation of nature, the eternal power of God, and this is enough to make his impiety without excuse. But God has also imprinted in the human conscience the principles of his law, the notion of good and evil that every human being possesses however primitive he is. " Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them "(Romans 2:14-15).

Now all the Gentiles have disobeyed the truth which has been revealed to them by this double channel, and they will be without excuse before God. But this does not mean that all men will be punished to the same extent. Those who have not heard the gospel will not be punished as severely as those who, having more or less heard it, will have refused it.

Jesus Christ himself declares: " The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked "(Luke 12:47- 48).

He affirms, on the other hand, that the generation which, having seen his many miracles and heard his message of grace, rejected him, will be more severely punished on the day of judgment than the sinners of Tyre and Sidon . "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you"(Matt 11:21- 22).

He delivers the same sentence with regard to Capernaum, in relation to the fate of Sodom (v. 23, 24). He tells his disciples, as he sends them to preach in Israel, that the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah will be more bearable on the day of judgment than that of the cities that would refuse to receive them (Matthew 10:14 -15).

These passages show that the Lord will judge with equity and by considering the degree of guilt and responsibility of each sinner.

God has many means and we do not always know. His grace, his love for sinners, and his power to bring them to salvation through faith in Jesus, are infinitely more extensive than we suspect it and none of those who will be sentenced on the day of judgment will be wrongly.

To the souls who fear him God appears on the contrary as a true Savior, as the conversions of Cornelius and of the Ethiopian eunuch testify (Acts 10: 19-20, 8: 26-29). "Even in darkness light dawns for the upright " (Psalm 112: 4).

The repentant sinners of the Old Covenant could even be ensured of the forgiveness of their sins thanks to the atoning work of Christ, from which they benefited by anticipation (see the example of David, adulterous and criminal, expressing in Psalm 32 his certainty of being forgiven). God indeed uses patience, " not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3: 9). Another book will be opened: the book of life. It will not be to inscribe the name of anyone, but to remind the sinners that they too could have been inscribed there and thus escaped hell if they had not despised the grace of God. Nor is it a question of verifying whether the name of some damned could, contrarily to all expectations, be found in the book of life! No ! None of those whose name God has written in this book will appear before the great white throne. Having believed in Jesus, they will not go to trial (John 5:24). "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus " (Rom 8: 1).

Many other passages speak of the book of life, "Be delighted because your names are written in heaven." Otherwise, do not wait, regularize your situation without delay with God, for the Word is formal: "Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

The refusal of divine grace indeed greatly aggravates the sentence of sinners. "Whoever believes in him (the son of God) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already " (John 3:18).And for those who will appear before the great white throne, there will be an inexorable and definitive condemnation : they will be "thrown into the lake of fire." The chapter 21, v. 8 specifies the counts of the indictment that will bring them this punishment: " But the cowardly (that is, those who

will never have chosen the camp of Christ frankly) , the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death ."

Such is the righteous judgment of the Lord against all these guilty.

Warning to readers. Not suitable for those of a sensitive disposition!

The sadomasochist horror movie that will follow is an 18 rated film. It is not our fault if some Jehovah's Witnesses share the same idea of hell as staunch Muslims (I am not talking about Muslims who like Sufis think that Allah is only love calm and delight) !

What is meant by "lake of fire"? It is the place commonly called "hell."

The Word of God contains several passages describing the nameless horror of this place and the torments of the unfortunate who are confined there. It appears in Isaiah 30:33, in the image of a burning stake fired by the breath of the Lord, like a torrent of sulfur. In Luke 16: 24, the rich calls for help in the bottom of Hades, saying that he is "in agony in this fire," and yet he is not yet in the lake of fire. The Lord expresses the torments of those who are thrown into the fire Gehenna, declaring that their worm does not die and that the fire is not extinguished (Mark 9:48, see also Matthew 25:41 and Heb. 10:27).

Daniel also announces the Last Judgment and describes us the terrible condition of the damned:

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (12: 2).

This place is also that of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 13:42 and 50, 22: 13), the place of the "outer darkness" (Matt 8:12, 22:13). This word "outer" expresses the total and definitive distance from the presence and from the light of God. Being outside, behind a door closed forever, this is what awaits the unbelievers. "Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where do you come from.' And he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Away from me, all you evildoers!" (Luke 13, 25-27. Read also Rev.2:15).

It is a "place of torment" (Rev. 14:11, 20:10), which will consist of "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1: 9, 2 Peter 2: 1), of the curse of God (Matthew 25:41). This appalling state is called "the second death" (Rev. 20:14, 21: 8). While the first death has deprived these cursed from earthly life, the second death will throw them into the lake of fire where they will be tormented day and night, for centuries and centuries.

What a terrible condition! The images that the Word uses to describe it (everlasting fire, rodent worms, everlasting contempt, weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, everlasting destruction, and so on) express the inexpressible suffering, the remorse, the anguish, that will embrace the damned that they will be forever separated from God.

To these moral sufferings will evidently be added bodily sufferings, since the ungodly will be resurrected before appearing before in front of the great white throne. They will therefore receive a body with which they will go into the lake of fire.

While the redeemed is all clothed in a glorious body, like the Lord, and will enjoy the presence of God during eternity in the heavenly light, felicity and glory; the ungodly themselves will undergo unspeakable suffering in a conscious and definitive separation from God. That is what the second death will be.

What will aggravate the torments of these dead is that they will keep their awareness and their memory. Like the rich man of Luke 16, they will know that there is a place of bliss whose access will be forbidden them by an impassable abyss.

A terrible feeling of abandonment, the conviction of being under a well-deserved judgment, the bitterness and remorse caused by the certainty that it would have been possible to escape punishment only by believing in the Lord * the anguish of an ordeal that will never end, the eternal distance from the presence of God, who will have done everything, given everything, to save sinners, but who will have withdrawn from those who will have despised his salvation by abandoning them to themselves forever, in the outer darkness... Day and night, for centuries and centuries, they will be tormented. That's what Hell is! What a dreadful lot!

Editor's note. Let us point out that the hatred religion, of Druidism, itself has opted for the non-existence of hell.

-In druidic mythology hell does not exist. Bernese scholia commenting on Lucan's Pharsalia.

Hermann Usener. Scholia in Lucani bellum civile/Commenta Bernensia. Liber I (1869).

451 "Druids deny that souls can perish

[Driadae negant interire animas]

OR GO TO HELL »

[Aut contagione inferorum adfici] and
454 "They do not say that the Manes exist"
[Manes esse, not dicunt].

For thus spoke the hatred religion, of druids, formerly.

Point 25 of the small list appended to the Council of Leptines in 743, under the Latin title of *indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (of course, it is a matter of condemning or denigrating all this) goes clearly in this direction; it evokes the imagining that every deceased is a saint.
And in 851, John Scotus Eriugena also noted in his "On predestination": God foresees neither punishment nor sins: they are fictions. For Eriugena also, therefore, hell does not exist, or then he calls it remorse.

* And in the Buddhism of the land revised and edited by the great Japanese sage Honen, it is enough, just before dying, to think of the Buddha Amitabha to be saved (*nembutsu*). His disciple Shinran beside added that in his opinion it was not even necessary.

THE END OF THE WORLD ?

As the Lord will take his place on the great white throne to judge the dead, the earth and the heaven will flee from his presence (Rev. 20:11). The apostle Peter gives precise information about the destruction of the earth and the astronomical sky. " But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat"(2 Peter 3:10 et seq.).

So then, when the world of old was destroyed by the flood, the present world will be destroyed by fire. But it will be then a total and final annihilation, which will also affect the astronomical sky. Other passages of Scripture confirm this solemn truth. "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish.....they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them" (Ps 102:26- 27, Heb 1:10-12). "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matt 24:35).

Editor's note.

The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, from heaven tremble stars.

The raging reek with age to linger plays load heat with heaven itself.

She sees arise a second time earth from ocean, beauteously green;

Waterfalls descending, eagle flying over, she from mountains captures fish.

(Prophecy of the Volva, Poetic Edda.)

What will happen to the saints of the millennium during this cataclysm? No passage gives us information on this point, but we can admit that they will be transmuted and preserved. Flesh and blood, we know, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Therefore, we may be sure that the saints, preserved from this universal dissolution of the astronomical sky and earth, will be transported under the new heavens and on the new earth, and that in a new condition, appropriate to the eternal state in which they will be introduced.

The word of God does not depict in detail what this new heaven and new earth will be, perhaps because our present human condition would not make us able to grasp the wonders that will be thus revealed to us. The apostle Paul, caught up to the third heaven (that is, the abode of God), declares that there he has heard ineffable words that man is not allowed to express (2 Cor 12: 4). That is to say, we can never have a complete idea of the bliss that reigns in this blessed place, any more than of the glory that will be the share of the redeemed for eternity.

Editorial Note. From the point of view of imagery, this end of a cycle, seen as an end of time by the Jewish Islamic Christians, therefore resembles many scenes being in the Scandinavian Ragnarok or on some Celtic coins (a gigantic wolf devouring the moon and stars and give them of changed ...) evidently more spectacular than the druidic reflections on the question. THE CONCEPT OF JUDGMENT OF SOULS. But according to the druids this end of the world will not be one in reality because their constituent elements able to be again combined will remain. What brings us straightly to the notion of apocatastasis as Origen has rightly seen.

" Not only the high-knowers but others as well say that men's souls, and also the universe, are indestructible, although both fire and water will at some time or other prevail over them" (Strabo, Geography, 4, 4).

EDITOR'S NOTE.

The word apocatastasis appears only once in the Bible in Acts 3:1. Peter heals a disabled beggar and then speaks to the astonished witnesses. His speech presents Jesus in the Jewish context, that is to say, as the one who accomplishes the Abrahamic Covenant, "Heaven must receive him [Jesus] until the time comes for God to restore everything (apokatastasis panton), as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

The idea of apocatastasis is variously contemplated in apocalyptic, Platonic or Stoic writings in antiquity, is best known for its developments in Christian theology where the term refers primarily to

positions on the final restoration of all things in God developed from the Origen Treatise On first Principles.

Ten propositions resulting from this tract were condemned in 542 by the emperor Justinian, condemnation validated by Menas, the bishop of Constantinople and taken over by the second council of Constantinople in 553 .

The "Origenian apocatastasis" was blamed for nullifying the freedom and responsibility of creatures, for according to this position the restoration into God of all that He created in its state of original goodness, a state previous to all sin and to all evil, is done independently of the dispositions and acts of each one.

This council contrasts singularly with the previous four. Indeed, the four councils of Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon, are rightly regarded as the founding councils of the Church in terms of doctrine. On the other hand, the Council of Constantinople II appears, in comparison, very poor, poor in the first place because of the 'poverty' of the taken decisions, especially at theological level. Moreover, the very reason for the convocation of the Council is revealing, since it is justified by no new element. This council was in fact convened only in relation to theological debates which had already been dealt with by the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

In the final analysis, this council marks a new era in theology in the Church: the debates or decisions taken will henceforth have only a more or less relative importance, inasmuch as the councils will no longer deal with fundamental points such as the Trinity and the nature of God, the Holy Spirit, or the divine and human nature of Christ. We may besides question the scope of the decisions of this council. Justinian considered Pope Vigilius as deposed from 26 May 553. Moreover, the council did not give the results expected by Justinian. A simple look at this council is sufficient to grasp the extent of the damage that political interference can cause in the religious field.

* In druidic philosophy this moment of history was called erdathe according to the life of St. Patrick by Tirechan.

CONCLUSION.

The real problem of today's mankind is still, beyond the difficulties peculiar to each individual, the religious question. The real challenge that our mankind must still and more than ever face is that of monolatrous religious thought is that, handed over from generation to generation, of the monolatrous religious conditioning, which is anything (an infantilizing, totalitarian ideology, capable of justifying all holy wars, etc.) but a philosophy and which is not even a without God spirituality like Buddhism. Let us specify here that we are not talking about Sufi or Mu'tazilite Islam and that, as for Christianity, the question that arises is "why do billions of women, men, and children, meet periodically in special houses to listen to the story of very ancient tortures practiced on a hypothetical Jewish agitator, and pretend to eat of his flesh "?

The tragedy of Christianity is that its mitochondrial DNA is its Jewish origin (spiritually Semitic, Pope Pius XI said.) The first big spiritual disaster for mankind, given the extent this superstition took with Christianity, was indeed to believe

- a) That the future may be predicted outside any rational mode of forecasting, for example, by revelations;
- b) that an extraordinary man or even a god (a messiah) must come to wrest from his difficult coexistence with other nations the people chosen by the only true god existing in the world;
- c) that the coming of this Messiah has been announced with precision in certain writings (in this case the Jewish Bible).

As a result, unlike Buddhism or Greek philosophy, what was important was not to convince one's interlocutors by exchanging rational arguments, or even to behave in a way that was already morally irreproachable, or almost, but to re-cognize the Messiah in the man in question, and not to oppose his action or even to support it.

The other true spiritual disaster for Mankind was therefore that, unlike the Greek philosophers or Buddhism, for example, Christianity started from a milieu (the Jewish people or its sympathizers the God-fearers) that an undeniable feeling of national superiority put on the face of things in a state of latent conflict with the other populations (the goyim or pagan non-Jews) to which it quickly spoke. Hence the racist hatred of early Christians for religious freedom of, for temples and statues outside the scope of their belief or of their mythology. Disaster worsened by the impossibility of any rational dialogue since the only thing that mattered was to recognize in this man the messiah announced by the Jewish writings: in other words the faith.

It is enough to turn a few seconds towards the god of the philosophers or Buddhism to realize the gap that separates them from Christianity.

The Greek philosophers tried to convince their interlocutors by demonstrations, Buddha too. But as for Christianity, faith being necessary for salvation, orthodoxy is therefore essential and heterodoxy or heresy brings the risk of everlasting damnation.

The Old and the New Testament teach us the truths necessary for our salvation, repeat the Christians since the elimination of the Marcionite tendency. We wonder why. Because the Jewish Bible has never distinguished the body from the soul or from the mind?

As Henry Lizeray saw it very well, this compassion religion besides was not a novelty in the religious landscape of the time. "The cults of Attis, Adonis, Hyas, among so many others, also taught to pity the lot of the in the great national festival of the Eleusinian mysteries, the Athenian women wept together on the misfortunes of Iacchus, " like Christians lament, at the same time of the year, on the execution of Christ followed by his resurrection, that is to say, the end and renewal of the sun cycle.

Moreover it is not because a society calls itself a Christian that it necessarily respects the values it says draw from love. Christianity has no practical morality which, not likely of a double interpretation (love /justice), is usable and healthy, hence the multiple parts the hero of his historical novel. It has happened more than once to Christians to overvalue certain values to the detriment of others (for instance obedience). A socialist with the theology of liberation, a lover for St. Teresa, an assistant

tormentor in the house of Torquemada, a victim among the Reformists, rich with the rich for St. Augustine, poor with the poor, lord of war and lord of peace; Jesus can serve the most diverse uses. Even more troubling is the unfortunate tendency that Christians have always had to choose the object of their criticism (selective indignation).

Some criticize the crisis of family, pornography, sex, materialist hedonism without soul, but become much more discreet when it comes to socio-ethnic injustices or infringes of environment. Others deplore the dictatorship of the money powers, the damage of the progress and the other human alienations but remain speechless about the programmed disappearance of certain peoples (the winter of demography) on racism in reverse, communist or leftist dictatorship ... Let us repeat it, Judeo-Islamic-Christianity does not have the monopoly of ethical values and sometimes, like freedom, they have even had to be reaffirmed.....AGAINST THE SYNAGOGUES, AGAINST THE CHURCHES, AGAINST THE MOSQUES

Conversions by force, wars of religion, killing of heretics, are not pagan inventions. And besides, the often advocated "values" do not always come out of the Bible. They are the result of an incessant dialectic between the ethical reflection that preceded the first apostles and even quite simply Moses (Greek philosophy in the East, Druidism in the West, etc.) and the limits of the Gospel message. The good news initially is simply this: "Got it, the messiah has arrived, he performs miracles, God is with him, he has been seen in Jerusalem, the people follow him en masse" etc.

"To this typically Jewish composition at once terrifying and sentimental, the Greeks added their two cents. The latter professing ... made the new religion a fable dangerous for Reason. They completed their fault by personifying numerical abstractions after the prohibition of Druidism by the Romans, Europe received the imported religion as it was Another perturbing element, a consequence of Roman Catholicism, was the establishment of Latin.... The thought of Charlemagne was overstepped. But in our country the people has never spoken the Latin reserved for churches and faculties."

Notice by Peter DeLaCrau: Let us remark that in what follows under his pen there is perhaps a beginning of contradiction in the thought of Henry Lizeray who gives too much credit to the myth or to the received idea of the forty words of Celtic origin only (in our language). Custard tart of all the ignoramuses who want to be peremptory in the field of the philosophy of History. Despite this opinion expressed in his time by Henry Lizeray, our current dictionary of the language spoken by Boudicca or even by Calgacus amounts to much more 40 words (800 entries in that of Xavier Delamarre).

Nailed to the cross Jesus continues to lead to bodily or intellectual death those who persist in honoring him for 2000 years. The peoples will not have finished with him until they have expelled from their minds this second aspect of Judaism; and it is by protesting against Jesus and his hubris, and by ceasing to worship the cross that we will be able to make mankind evolve; because the salvation of mankind passes through the cultivation of its reason. In other words, Faith but also Reason. Humanity being both History and Reason, the progress of liberties depends on the progress of knowledge and the thoughtful assimilation of the past. If man doesn't learn to believe, man must always learn to think. After having been part of the scramble for the spoils, during the trial against the French writer Michel Houellebecq, for the offense of blasphemy, is not the French League of Human Rights taking the wrong road by participating now in the development of communitarianism? ?

We can only warn against the current drift of the French League for Human Rights, which is coming, in the name of human rights; to gut for example the neutrality of the state in religious matters (not to recognize or subsidize any particular religion).

Let you allow us to come to this point of our talk, to paraphrase somewhat the immense thinker that was Robert G. Ingersoll said (About the Holy Bible).

For thousands of years men have been writing the real Bible, and it is being written from day to day, and it will never be finished while man has life. All the facts that we know, all the truly recorded events, all the discoveries and inventions, all the wonderful machines whose wheels and levers seem to think, all the poems, crystals from, the brain, flowers from the heart, all the songs of love and joy, of smiles

and tears, the great dramas of Imagination's world, the wondrous paintings, miracles of form and color, of light and shade, the marvelous marbles that seem to live and breathe, the secrets told by rock and star, by dust and flower, by rain and snow.

All the wisdom that lengthens and ennobles life (Merlin) — all that avoids or cures disease, or conquers pain — all just and perfect laws and rules that guide and shape our lives (Arthur) , all thoughts that feed the flames of love, the music that transfigures, enraptures and enthralls, the victories of heart and brain, the miracles that hands have worked, the deft and cunning hands of those who worked for their wife and their child, the histories of noble deeds, of brave and useful men, of faithful loving wives (Chiomara) , of stronger than death mother love (Eponina), of conflicts for the right, of sufferings for the truth, of all the best that all the men and women of the world have said, and thought and done through all the years. These treasures of the heart and brain — these are the Sacred Scriptures of the human race.

Long live secularism, agnosticism, atheism, or religions without gods like Yahweh Allah or Jehovah, which are especially philosophies and philanthropies or some humanism!

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 strewing 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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8. From Fenians to Culdees or "The Great Science which enlightens" volume 1.
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12. The hundred paths of paganism. Science and philosophy volume 1 (druidic mythology).
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15. The Greater Camminus: elements of druidic theology: volume 1.
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19. Mystagogy or sacred theater of ancients Celts.
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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.
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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.
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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.