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PLATO, PHILO, AND PAUL;

OR,

THE PAGAN CONCEPTION OF A "DIVINE LOGOS" SHEWN
TO HAVE BEEN THE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN
DOGMA OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST.

BY

REV. J. W. LAKE.

"Christianity conquered Paganism, but Paganism infected Christianity. The rites of the Pantheon passed into her worship, and the subtleties of the Academy into her creed."—*Macaulay.*

"Godly men are called God-like, for God lives, forms, ordains and works in them all His works; and doth, so to speak, use Himself in them."—*Tauler.*



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“To shew you openly my opinion, I say, that it is not absolutely necessary for salvation to know Christ after the flesh ; but it is altogether otherwise if we speak of the ‘Son of God,’ that is, of the ‘Eternal Wisdom of God,’ which is manifested in all things, and chiefly in the human soul, and most of all in Jesus Christ. Without this wisdom, no one can come to the state of happiness, for it is this alone which teaches what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. As to what certain churches add, that God took human nature, I expressly declare that I do not know what they say, and to speak frankly, I confess that they seem to me to speak a language as absurd as if one were to say that a circle had taken the nature of a triangle.”—*Spinoza, Letter to a Friend.*

“ Behold ! behold the God whom every spirit adores,
Whom Abraham served, of whom Pythagoras dreamed,
Whom Socrates announced, with whom Plato conversed,
That God whom the universe reveals to reason,
Whom justice waits for, whom the unfortunate hopes for,
And whom at length Christ came to shew to the world ;
This is not that Deity fabricated by man,
That God ill explained by imposture,
That God disfigured by the hands of false priests,
Whom our credulous ancestors trembling worshipped,
He alone is, He is One, He is just, He is good,
The earth sees His work, and the heaven knows His name.”

[From a French poem addressed by Lamartine to the Abbe
De Le Mennais, quoted in Hunt's Essay on Pantheism.]

DEDICATION.

To the Bishops and Clergy of the Church of England, to those Dissenting Ministers who hold and teach the so-called orthodox faith, but especially to the intelligent and thoughtful among the English Laity, this pamphlet is dedicated.

It is a condensed, comprehensive, and connected survey of religious history, and in discerning the simple facts which that history records, it sees and shows that the present fundamental dogmas of the national religion, viz., the "Deity of Jesus" and the "Atonement for Sin, said to be effected through the merits of his death," are plain and palpable delusions.

History must itself be rewritten, and all its prominent facts reversed, ere this position can be refuted. The overwhelming and conclusive evidence on which it rests, is now brought, for the first time, in simple, clear, and connected form, before the masses of the English people, and possibly the facts adduced, will be new to many of the clergy also.

Refutation is fearlessly challenged, for we have but given a mere outline of the evidence we possess, and could easily supply volume after volume of added proofs.

This pamphlet will be widely circulated, and the people possessed of the knowledge it imparts, will

increasingly come to despise and contemn, as ignorant or untruthful men, a clergy who, in the face of the information which is here given, shall continue to propagate known and proven fallacies as the eternal Truths of God.

The hour for a new Religious Reformation has struck, and it rests with the clergy of the National Church to determine whether they will rank among its honoured leaders, or be swept away as an effete priesthood by its waves.

PLATO, PHILO, AND PAUL.

THE belief that Christ was God, may be said to be the foundation doctrine of the Christian Church. Christianity, both sacerdotal and evangelical,—both Romish and Calvinistic, makes this belief to be a fundamental doctrine. There are few Christians, however, who would not feel it something akin to gross irreverence, were they asked to express this belief in other language, and to assert that Jesus of Nazareth, the peasant teacher of Judea, whom the Jewish priests accused of blasphemy, and got crucified by the Romans for sedition, was the Almighty maker and framer of the myriads of worlds that stud the vast infinity of space!! To express the doctrine in this form, is instinctively felt to be akin to ridicule, and we are immediately told that we do wrong thus to confuse the two natures of Jesus, who was both God and Man,—who, in the former capacity, was the creator of the world, but who, as man, was like other men, subservient to the laws of nature, and subject to the adverse fortunes and ordinary discipline of human life.

Again, the Church of England defines God as being “a Spirit,” and consequently, destitute of “body, parts, and passions;” how then, we ask, can Jesus, who was a man like ourselves, and who had “body, parts, and passions,” be God? The question is unanswerable, in any way consistent with an intelligent belief in the dogma of the Godhead of Christ; and this dogma, as held and taught by the churches of Christendom, is a

gross and idolatrous superstition. Jesus was man, and only man, was doubtless a good, earnest, devout, and pure-minded man, was possibly pre-eminent, in an intense degree, in all the virtues and excellences that ennoble our humanity ; but still he was only man. We know but little of his actual life, many years of which are veiled in an impenetrable darkness, which no light of history illumines, and the account we have of the (two or three) brief years of his public ministry, is so loosely and dubiously recorded, that we have no means of estimating his true and actual character ; all we really know concerning him is, that he was a philanthropist and religious reformer, and that living in an age, the thought-currents of which were busy in lifting religion from a sensual to a spiritual character, Jesus endorsed the highest, and purest, and noblest thought of the time, and wove it into a new religion, which constituted the gospel he proclaimed.

The true duty of men with regard to him, is to profit by his teachings, and to catch the pure and earnest spirit of his life, not to believe in any special dogmas as to the office he held, or the mystical nature he bore.

This dogma of the Deity of Christ has been the main instrument in corrupting and debasing Christianity. For Christianity, through the corruptions that have distorted it, has been often more of a curse than a blessing to the world. It has caused rivers of blood to flow, has again and again crushed liberty under its foot, and, for centuries together, has kept Europe in the mists and darkness of ignorance. To-day, those countries are lowest in the scale of European civilisation, where a Christian priesthood rule in greatest power. Even in our own so-called free and enlightened country, the Christian Church has been the stumbling-block in the way of a true and sound national education. We regard this dogma, then, of the "Deity of Christ," as a pernicious and debasing idolatry, and we proceed to lay bare its origin and

history, to show it as being the corruption and travesty of one of the grandest and noblest ideas that have lit and elevated the human mind,—and so to make it absolutely impossible for men of honest and intelligent mind to cherish this idea in its corrupt and idolatrous form.

In the early portions of the Bible, God is often spoken of as having the form and passions of a man. In Christ's day, the more thoughtful and intelligent minds had outgrown this gross and crude idea, and Christ taught that God was a Spirit, and that he was to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." Christians, however, have reproduced the gross ideas of an early and ignorant age, by worshipping the teacher as God, and by inventing a series of mystical dogmas through which they have identified him with the Great Creator of the universe.

Now, it is evident that the first lesson in religion should be that which gives us a correct and worthy, if not a complete and full conception of God. As Minucius Felix told a heathen of his day, so we also "should know our Gods before we worshipped them." For on this knowledge and assurance the stability of our religion depends. Unfortunately, the Bible gives us but little help here. It asserts, but it does not explain, much less reveal, the existence and nature of God.

Its assumed earliest words, "In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth," imply that the idea of God is familiar to the reader's mind. The early chapters of the Book of Genesis belong, however, to the later rather than to the earlier era of Jewish history, are an adaptation of Chaldean legends, knowledge of which was gained by the Jews, during their captivity in Babylon, one thousand years after the death of Moses. Almost down to the era of the captivity, the Jews were idolaters, worshipped God under the similitude of graven images, and practised many of the rites of the Pagan peoples around them. As this

assertion, however, runs so counter to the current religious teaching, it is perhaps desirable to fortify it by the following testimony of some of the most learned biblical scholars of our age:—

“For a long time after the building of Solomon’s Temple (which event was itself five hundred years after the time of Moses), sacrifices were offered on high places as well as at the temple, and even by kings who were noted for their piety and adherence to Jehovah’s laws, and for being desirous, with all zeal, to promote the worship of Jehovah, as *Asa* (1 Kings xv. 14), *Jehosaphat* (xxii. 44), *Joash*, the pupil of the priests (2 Kings xii. 4), *Amaziah* (chap. xiv. 4), *Uzziah* (chap. xv. 4), and *Jotham* (chap. xv. 35.) In the Books of Kings and Chronicles, it is always pointed out as *blameable*, that even these pious kings should have allowed the worship in the high places to remain. But this is merely the verdict of the author of these books which, in no case, could have been composed before the Babylonian exile. As the kings above named are depicted in everything else as such zealous servants of Jehovah, we can scarcely think that they would not have aimed at putting a stop to the worship at high places, where sacrifices were offered to Jehovah (? to Baal) at other altars besides that in the Temple, if the Deuteronomic law, so expressly showing the service to be contrary to the will of Jehovah, had been acknowledged by them as Mosaic.”—*Bleek’s Introduction to the Old Testament*, Vol. I., p. 328.

Dr Samuel Davidson, the most eminent of English biblical scholars, speaks with even greater plainness on this matter, and shows clearly the crude ideas which the Jews entertained concerning God, even down to the period of the Babylonish captivity, one thousand years after the time of Moses, from whom it is manifest they could not have received the laws and teaching, which the Pentateuch declares him to have given with the authority of a special and supernatural revelation. Dr Davidson says—

“It is remarkable that the fundamental doctrine of Mosaism, viz., that there is but one God—the creator and preserver of all, invisible, eternal, omnipotent, holy, and

just,—was all along inadequately apprehended till the captivity. A few choice spirits grasped it with sufficient distinctness, and adhered to it, while to the mass of the people, Jehovah was no more than a superior God beside other deities. Polytheism had deeply penetrated the vulgar mind, and though the nation frequently sought Jehovah with convictions of sin and repentance, such conversions, called forth by external circumstances, were transient in their effects. A manifold idolatry, partly of Zabian and partly of Egyptian origin, had its altars in all the cities of the land, in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the very Temple of Jehovah, immediately before the exile, as we learn from Jeremiah (chaps. vii., xlv.). There is no evidence to show that the ceremonial law was observed by the Jews with anything like regularity or strictness. The great feasts themselves, such as the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, &c., were allowed to fall into desuetude, as the historical books attest. If the externals of religion were negligently attended to, religion itself must have been sickly.”—*Introduction to the Old Testament*, Vol. I, p. 340.

Dr Kalisch, in his learned commentary on Leviticus, shows, very convincingly, the late date of this book as a whole.

“It contains,” he says, “ordinances respecting several institutions, the existence or full development of which cannot be proved until long after the captivity—such as the Sin-offerings and the High priesthood, the Day of Atonement, and the Year of Jubilee. Now, it has been shown that the Day of Atonement was unknown in the time of Nehemiah, and as the Year of Jubilee was associated with the Day of Atonement, the compilation of the Book of Leviticus must fall later than that date, and we shall probably be near the truth if we place the final revision of Leviticus and the Pentateuch at about B.C. 400.” (That is 1100 years after the time of Moses, its reputed author!)

Again, Dr Kalisch states that

“The notion of a holy God, governing a holy people, in a holy land, was the *latest* product of religious thought, that it pre-supposes an age very far in advance of that in which the people danced round the golden image of the calf Apis, exclaiming, ‘These are thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt,’ or of that in which

Jephthah believed that he was presenting an acceptable offering to God, by slaughtering his daughter as a holocaust."—*Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leviticus. Part II., pp. 637, 639.*

These views, which are the established results of all free and learned inquiry into the Hebrew scriptures, revolutionize the popular conception with regard to them, and show us very clearly that the grander, though still imperfect conceptions of God, which these scriptures contain, were only held during the later period of Jewish history, the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era. They prove that the idea of God was not a matter of divine revelation, specially given through Moses, but was a much later development of Jewish thought, and they leave it an open question as to whether it was not an importation from other and even higher faiths. We shall see that while the people, whom we are mistakenly taught to regard as being specially chosen and called of God, were falling continually into the practice of the Syrian idolatries, and were even participating in the gross rites of Baal and Astarte, there were countries where a far purer and truer worship prevailed, and there were, in heathen lands, systems of philosophy extant, in which infinitely higher and more worthy ideas of God were held.

Five hundred years before Christ, the Jews were mixing idolatrous rites with the worship of Jehovah, were conceiving of Jehovah as a local god, superior in power and majesty to the gods surrounding nations worshipped. He was, to their thought, not a pervading spirit, but a localised person,—a magnified man, dwelling just above the clouds, ruling as a king, and watching over the fortunes of the Jewish nation, giving them the victory over their enemies. After the captivity in Babylon, into which the Jews went as a nation of idolaters, but from which they emerged as a band of puritans, their thought of God took a much higher

tone, and from this time, a system of Jewish philosophy took its rise. Of this philosophy, few traces are discernible, till within a century or two of the Christian era.

During this captivity they came in contact first with the Chaldean religion, and subsequently with the purer doctrines of the Persian faith. In the former, they would have seen a gross idolatry from which they probably shrank, but they would have also been familiarised with a higher form of speculative thought than they themselves had hitherto known. From the Persian conquerors, however, they would have learned a much higher faith, and have found a religion strikingly like the best aspects of their own worship, but with a speculative philosophy from which they had much to learn. We find them consequently speaking of the Persian monarch, Cyrus, as the anointed servant of Jehovah; and there is but little doubt that his leniency to the Jews, in remitting their captivity, was due largely to the similarity of their religion to his own, to his respect for the monotheistic idea that marked it.

From the Babylonians the Jews learned the stories, or myths, of the creation of the world, the fall of man and the flood. The recent finding among the ruins of Babylon, by Mr Smith of the British Museum, of the tablets on which the latter legend was recorded, ranks as one of the great biblical discoveries of our day, and shews us the source whence those legends were derived, which Englishmen are still taught to regard as being special revelations from God! From the Persians, whose religion was that taught by Zoroaster, the Jews learned to hold far more sublime conceptions of God than any they had hitherto known. Eusebius, quoting in the fourth century from an old Persian record, gives the following as the teaching of Zoroaster concerning God:—

“God is the first Being, incorruptible and eternal, un-

made and indivisible, altogether unlike to all his works, the principle and author of all good, gifts cannot move him; He is the best of the good, and the wisest of the wise. From Him proceed law and justice."

This, however, was the philosophic idea of God, an idea in close alliance, if not identical, with the Pantheism of the Hindoos, which makes God to be the pervading force of nature. It is obvious that such a God could not be worshipped by the Jews as a magnified man,—could not be an object of popular worship at all,—could not be grasped by the popular mind. His name was "Zeruane Akerne," signifying "time without bounds," or "beginningless time," or "the Eternal." But the Persians themselves could not worship such an abstract being, so for practical purposes they had a second and personal God, *Ormuzd*, God of light and goodness, who has a powerful enemy, *Ahriman*, the lord of evil and darkness; betwixt these there is continual strife, in which the latter, like the Christian "devil," of which he is the prototype, is destined to be eventually overcome. Then there is the *mediating* and *reconciling* God *Mithras*, who is sometimes worshipped as the creating God also,—a being who is sometimes distinct from, and sometimes identified with, *Ormuzd*, who is worshipped as the reconciler between light and darkness, and beyond *Mithras*, there is *Honover*, the "Word" or *Him* who is eternal wisdom, and whose speech is an eternal creation. "Ormuzd is the creation of the impersonal God, the living personal deity, the first begotten of all things, the resplendent image of infinitude, the being in whose existence is imaged the fulness of eternal time and infinite space. The sun is His symbol, yet the sun is but a spark of the unspeakable splendour in which he dwells. Whatever the original One is, that is *Ormuzd*,—infinite in light, in purity, in wisdom. But, as the first begotten of the Eternal, his duration is limited to 12,000 years; as a personal deity He is finite; He is a king, and

has a kingdom which is not universal, for it is opposed by the kingdom of Ahriman." *

In the common thought the Persian religion, while nominally monotheistic, seemed practically to recognise the existence of *two* gods, a good god and an evil god; a god who ruled the light, and a god who ruled the darkness;—a beneficent god who sent prosperity, and a malignant god who strove to fill the world with adversity. Such views would be likely to have special attraction for the Jewish captives, as they would solve for them the perplexing problem of their own present adversity. The God on whom they had relied for the permanence of their national prosperity, had allowed his and their enemies to triumph, to destroy his sacred temple, to profane the holy vessels, and to make his chosen people captive. This theology, therefore, which taught that there was a bad and evil God, who sometimes foiled the plans and marred the purposes of the good God, offered a fair explanation of their difficulty. We find accordingly that the belief in a dual god, or rather in two opposing and distinct gods, won considerable acceptance with them, and threatened to undermine the monotheism that to the higher minds of the Jewish people marked the national faith. This is evident from the 45th chapter of Isaiah, which seems to have been expressly written to combat this perversion of their faith, and which, from the mention it makes of Cyrus the Persian King, was evidently written at the period of the return, by his permission and direction, of a portion of the Jews from Babylon. "*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me. I form the light, I create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.*"—Isaiah xlv. 5-7. This dualism, however, was never wholly eradicated, and from this date the idea of an evil god entered the current of Jewish

* From an Essay on Pantheism, by Rev. J. Hunt.

thought, and the Persian Ahriman in due time developed into the Devil of Christian theology.

But the higher aspects also of the religious thought of the followers of Zoroaster, the great Persian lawgiver or prophet, tinged from this time the subsequent thought of Judaism.

It is singular that the Bible, as Protestants use it, furnishes no record of the Jewish people during the best and brightest portion of their religious history, viz., the four or five centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, and constituting the period of their national life, that intervened between their return from captivity and the ministry of Jesus. The apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus—the Wisdom of Solomon—the books of Esdras and of Maccabees, together with the book of Enoch, not only supply the history of the Jewish people during this period, but, what is of far greater importance to our present enquiry, they show us the progress and development of their religious thought. This progress was largely due to the admixture of the higher and more recondite ideas concerning deity, which marked the Persian theology, with the cruder views of their own faith. Here they first learned that God was not a magnified man, but a pure and pervading spirit,—and as a step towards His better apprehension, they imbibed the idea that the creative and upholding providence of the world were emanations from His essence, personifications, as it were, of His power and wisdom. The pure, passionless spirit could not, it was thought, come into contact with a gross material world which was inherently depraved and vicious, so the actual God that formed and ruled the world, by whom men were upheld, and whom they were bound to worship, was regarded as a Divine *personage*, who acted as God's vicegerent;—his wisdom, his angel, or messenger, or word (*Memra*). The Jews, however, learned also a more practical lesson, they learned the ultimate triumph of righteousness as the

purposed discipline of God, and they gathered from the functions of the mediating God, Mithras, the ideas which fashioned the expectation of their own Messiah. Good and evil blended promiscuously in the world, so the Persians held, because Ormuzd and Ahriman, the good and evil Gods, were in perpetual strife, and sometimes the good, and at other times the evil God was in the ascendancy. A period, however, was looked for at which Ahriman and his followers were to be finally exterminated (the devil and his angels will be cast into the bottomless pit as the Book of Revelation reproduces the thought), when the earth, divested of all the mountains that roughen its surface, would become the habitation of happy men, the members of one great community, speaking the same language, and animated by the same vital and universal principle. Between those powers who are perpetually at variance, Zoroaster placed a *mediatory* being, Mithras, whose business it was to overcome the powers of darkness, and to bring all things under the control of Ormuzd, the beneficent deity. Mithras had his symbol in the sun, which luminary was to the Persians the symbol of the good and beneficent God. So Mithras is spiritual light contending with spiritual darkness, and through his labours the kingdom of darkness shall be lit with heaven's own light,—the Eternal will receive all things back into his favour, the world will be redeemed to God. The impure are to be purified and the evil made good, through the mediation of Mithras, the reconciler of Ormuzd and Ahriman. Mithras is the Good, his name is Love. In relation to the Eternal he is the source of grace, in relation to man he is the life-giver and mediator. He brings the "Word," as Brahma brings the Vedas, from the mouth of the Eternal. (See *Plutarch "De Isid et Osirid,"* also Dr Hyde's "*De Religione Vet. Pers.*," ch. 22, see also "*Essay on Pantheism,*" by Rev. J. Hunt). It was just prior to the return of the Jews from living among the people

who were dominated by these ideas, that the splendid chapter of Isaiah (xl.), or indeed the series of chapters which form the closing portion of the book, were written, "*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.*" And then follows a magnificent description of the greatness and supremacy of God, and this is followed by chapters which tell of a Messiah, or conquering prince, who will redeem the nation from its enemies, and restore them to the light of the divine favour, and which predict a millennium, a golden age of purified and glorified humanity. It is thus manifest that the inspiration of these writings came to the Jewish people from their contact with the religious thought of the Persians, and not from any supernatural source. From this time the Jews began to hold worthier ideas concerning God, and to cherish expectations of a golden age, a kingdom of heaven, which the Messiah, who was to be the sent messenger of God, should inaugurate. And this kingdom was to be a kingdom of righteousness,—a day of marvellous light, a rule under which all evil and darkness were to perish.

We trace the influence of these thoughts on the Jewish literature of that day, and those portions of the Old Testament which are classed as Messianic prophecies, were doubtless written under its inspiration. While, however, the Jews were captive in Babylon,—living in an exile into which they went, a nation of turbulent and lawless idolaters, Pythagoras was teaching in Greece a philosophy based on the indivisible unity of God, whom he named, or rather spoke of as, "The One." On this conception he based a society, which was the prototype of the subsequent schools of Grecian philosophy. One deity he taught was the soul of all, whence the spirits of men issued; hence he framed his theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls, in

order to provide a discipline by which souls, contaminated by their contact with the evil and impure bodies of men, might receive a purification fitting them to return eventually to the pure source from whence they sprung. Before him Thales and Anaximander had lived, and while the Jews were offering idolatrous worship within the Temple at Jerusalem, these men were seeking, by the aid of deep and earnest speculative thought, to find some worthy and fitting conception of the only true God. And at the time when the Jews, liberated from captivity, were about settling down once more in their Fatherland, Socrates and Plato were teaching not only moral, but religious philosophy, to their countrymen at Athens. They were discussing such questions as the origin of the world, the immortality of the soul, the nature and existence of God, the discipline of human life, the character of virtue and the rewards that should attach to it, as well as the penalties that the wicked would incur.

Plato, B.C. 400, was familiar with the Pantheistic philosophy, as well as with the polytheistic worship of India, Egypt, and his own country, Greece. His mind, however, shared in the general revolt which all thoughtful minds feel, alike from the vagueness of the former as from the superstition of the latter.

"It is difficult," says this philosopher, "to find out God, and when we have found him, it is impossible to make him to be comprehended by the multitude." * Plato discerned that there was one supreme God, eternal, immaterial, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, the first and the last, the beginning, middle, and end of all things. But with this admission of *The One*, TO EN, Plato conjoined many subordinate natures and intelligencies, *καί τα Πολλα*. In the supreme mind, *Θεος, Νους* or *Πατηρ*, Plato discerned the Thinker; in the manifold he discerned His thoughts. The universe was thus the expression of the thought or idea of God,

* *Timæus*.

was fashioned NOT by the supreme and impassible thinker, but by his ΛΟΓΟΣ (*Logos*),* or active thought.

"All objects of sense have relation to the ideal as well as to the material world. Thus a house or machine, or table, &c., are but the material expressions of ideas that existed in the mind of those who fashioned them. The manifold (material nature), has thus a double existence, one in its *ideals*, the other in its *phenomena*. The latter is the world of sense, what men call the material, and what the vulgar suppose to be reality. But its existence is only borrowed. It is a shadow,—a copy, of that which is real, the realities are the ideas,—the architypes."—" *Essay on Pantheism*," by Rev. J. Hunt.

With Plato, however, *ideas* are sometimes identical with God, the ΤΟ ΕΝ, the one self-existent Being, and at other times he speaks as though they were distinct from God. Thus in his system, God, the designer, is the supreme mind, and God the Creator, Δημιουργος, is spoken of as a secondary or inferior being,—a confusion of thought that prevails also in the Christian systems of to-day, which in fact have been largely based on the Platonic thought, and in which Jesus is sometimes spoken of as the "Son of God," "the maker of the worlds," "begotten" of the Father, but subordinate to the Father," and sometimes is revered and worshipped as being the actual and supreme God.

Plato spoke of the *active* mind or operating thought of God, the eternal and supreme one, under the title of the Demiurge (creator), or Logos (the word). "This Logos," he says, "divine above all other beings, fashioned the heavenly bodies. This Being a happy man will principally reverence, while he may be stimulated by the desire of learning whatever is within the compass of human understanding, being convinced that he will

* The Logos, which here implies the mind of God (divine inspiration), was personified as a distinct being by the later schools of the Platonic philosophy.

thus enjoy the greatest felicity in this life ; and that after death he will be translated into regions that are congenial to virtue." (*Plat. Epinomis*). Another of Plato's divinities of second or inferior rank is the *Ψυχη του Κοσμου*, or "soul of the world," a personification of the living forces of nature, a conception akin to the pervading spirit of God—the *Holy Ghost* of modern creeds. The Gospel of John commences with a plain and palpable reproduction of the Platonic thought.

"In the beginning was the Logos or Word, and the Logos or Word was with God, and the Logos or Word was (*a*) God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light or guidance of men."

The speculative thought, and the religious teaching of Plato, are diffused throughout his voluminous writings, but the following is a popular summary of them, by Madame Dacier, contained in her introduction to what have been classed as the "Divine Dialogues."

"That there is but one God,* and that we ought to love and serve Him, and to endeavour to resemble Him in holiness and righteousness; that this God rewards humility and punishes pride.

"That the true happiness of man consists in being united to God, and his only misery in being separated from him.

"That the soul is mere darkness, unless it be illuminated by God: that men are incapable even of praying well, unless God teaches them that prayer which alone can be useful to them.

"That there is nothing solid and substantial but piety; that this is the source of all virtues, and that it is the gift of God.

"That it is better to die than to sin.

"That it is better to suffer wrong than to do it.

"That the 'Word' (*Λόγος*) formed the world, and rendered it visible; that the knowledge of the Word makes

* Plato, while acknowledging one supreme divinity, often accommodates his language to the prevailing polytheistic thought. In a letter to Dionysius of Syracuse, he says, that in his serious moods he uses the term *ΘΕΟΣ* (God), and in his lighter moods he uses the phrase *ΘΕΟΙ* (Gods).

us live very happily here below, and that thereby we obtain felicity after death.

“That the soul is immortal, that the dead shall rise again, that there shall be a final judgment—both of the righteous and of the wicked, when men shall appear only with their virtues or vices, which shall be the occasion of their eternal happiness or misery.”

Such were the ideas of God and of religion, that were held and taught by Plato in Greece, about the time that the Jews were returning from captivity, bringing with them ideas of God and of religion, higher than any they had before known. These they had gathered through contact with the followers of the Zoroastrian faith. But clearer and truer conceptions of God and of duty were already dawning on the Grecian mind, and these were destined eventually to mingle with Hebrew thought, and to fashion the central dogma of the Christian faith, the Deity or Godhead of Jesus.

The Jews were, from this time, an enterprising people, and colonies of their countrymen established themselves in the leading cities of neighbouring nations. About three centuries B.C., a large and important colony resided in Alexandria, the chief city of Egypt, during the rule of the Ptolemies, and the metropolitan city of the western world. Here Grecian learning established its chosen seat, and here the various schools of philosophy were represented. Here, too, was a splendid library, the virtual commencement of that grand collection which became the finest library of the ancient world, and whose reputed destruction in the seventh century, by order of the Caliph Omar, was an irreparable loss to all subsequent time.*

* The fact of this destruction was regarded by Gibbon with some doubt. Alexandria had several public libraries. The first great library was founded by the Ptolemies, and placed in the museum; this library was burned by the soldiers of Julius Cæsar. The second was formed around the library from Pergamus, presented to Cleopatra by Mark Anthony, and was placed in the Temple of Serapis (the Serapeum). In the reign of Julian, this

The following succinct account of Israel in Alexandria, is given in the valuable pamphlet, "Our First Century," published in Mr Scott's Series.

"So far back, in the history of the Jews, as B.C. 588, they had formed a settlement in Egypt. This we know from Jeremiah (xliii. 7), who was hostile to its formation. The impossibility of these Jews having access to the temple at Jerusalem, and owing to its destruction, their losing the benefit of the daily sacrifice which used to be offered there, were facts through which the literal observance of the Mosaic ritual came to a violent end. The Jews in Egypt, therefore, were compelled either to relinquish the Mosaic law altogether, or to understand it in a new sense. They adopted the latter course. But that law had not any second meaning. So when a second meaning was sought for, it could not be found. In the meantime, these Jews, at a later period, learned the Greek language, read the books of the Grecian philosophers, entertained certain Grecian ideas, and so became Hellenists.

"This Hellenising tendency found its most active development at Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, B.C. 332. When Ptolemy, son of Lagus, captured Jerusalem, B.C. 320, he carried away a large number of Jewish and Samaritan captives to Alexandria, where he gave them the full privileges of citizenship. Many others migrated thither of their own accord. According to Josephus, Alexander himself assigned to the Jews a place in his new city. But, be that as it may, it is certain that, at an extremely early period in the history of Alexandria, the Jews became so numerous in that city, that the north-east angle was known as 'the Jews' quarter.' The religion and philosophy in that city produced an effect upon the Jews there, more

library amounted to seven hundred thousand volumes. This library was dispersed or destroyed when the Pagan worship was put down by Theodosius the First, and the Temple of Serapis was sacked by the Christians. Orosius, who visited Egypt in the reign of Theodosius Second, saw the empty book shelves. (*Sharpe's History of Egypt.*) The museum, however, was rebuilt, and with the restoration of the city, there would, doubtless, have been a restoration of the public library. The author of "Time and Faith" supposes that when the Saracens conquered the City, A.D. 642, the public library, composed in large part of the remnants of the earlier libraries, had become, for the most part, so decayed and worm-eaten, that Omar caused them to be destroyed as worthless rubbish.

powerful than the influence of politics or commerce. Alexander had founded a Temple of Isis side by side with a temple of the Grecian gods. Creeds from the east and from the west, co-existed there; and in aftertimes, the mixed worship of Serapis was characteristic of the Greek kingdom in Egypt. For that god, originally a native of Pontus, and adored by the inhabitants of Sinope, was introduced into Egypt by the first Ptolemy. At first, the priests opposed the introduction of Serapis. But the liberality of the Ptolemies overcame the resistance of the priests; they submitted to worship Serapis, to whom they gave the throne and the wife of Osiris. This catholicity of worship was further combined with the spread of learning. The same monarch who favoured the worship of Serapis, founded and embellished the museum and the library; and part of the library was deposited in the Serapeum. The new faith and the new literature led to a coalition of opinions; and the Egyptian Jews imbibed a portion of the spirit that prevailed around them. Its first development appeared in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. The day on which the Greek text of the law was introduced into the synagogue at Alexandria, was thus marked in the Palestine calendar: 'The law in Greek! Darkness! Three days' fast!' So different already had the Alexandrine Jews become from the Jews in Palestine."

This Alexandrian colony of Jews soon became, by their close contact with Grecian philosophy, to a large extent, Hellenised. By degrees, they lost the memory of their national language, and much of their reverence for their national faith. Their distance from Jerusalem prevented even their attendance at the annual festivals, and lessened their interest in, as well as their knowledge of, their *own religion*.

At length, they lost the power of reading their own Scriptures. The generations who were born and bred among a Greek-speaking people, would naturally cease to have any large or general acquaintance with what would have virtually become a foreign language. Thus, under the rule of Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 260, and some say, by his direction, the Hebrew scriptures were translated into the Greek tongue, and were read for the

future in this language only, by the Alexandrian Jews. Moreover, the greater part of the subsequent writings of the Jews, those written after the closing of the Hebrew or Old Testament canon, were written in the Greek tongue, and emanated from the Alexandrian Jews, and of those which had a Hebrew original, only Greek translations now remain; showing the supremacy which this language attained in connection with the later Jewish literature, and showing also the Hellenised character of the literature itself. In the Book of Proverbs, compiled by the Hebrew-speaking Jews of Palestine, at a period subsequent to the captivity, and portions of which were, in all probability, written at a much later date, we have the wisdom of God personified, and represented as a being distinct from the Eternal. Especially is this seen in the following passages from the 8th chapter.

“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

“Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom. I am understanding, I have strength.

“By me, kings reign and princes decree justice.

“I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.

“Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

“When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depths, there was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

“Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of Jehovah.”

Of the actual writer of these words we have no knowledge at all, neither do we know at what period they were written. The presumption is that they are among the latest additions to the Book of Proverbs, and that they were penned, at a time when the Hebrew

thought was tinged with the Alexandrian theosophy, by a Palestinian Jew familiar with the subtleties of Grecian philosophic thought, and desirous of harmonising it with Hebrew ideas.

The ideas of the divine unity expressed in the Book of Deuteronomy, though doubtless not written till the time of King Josiah, B.C. 632, "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one God," betray a tone of thought wholly at variance with the personification of divine wisdom as a separate divine personage.* This conception of the divine unity, however, was felt, in the presence of the speculative thought with which the Jews of Alexandria were in such close contact, to be confessedly imperfect. God was made by it to be simply a magnified man, and this view in the growing enlightenment of the world was felt to be no longer tenable. The Eternal could not come into material relation with his creatures, as the early Jewish scriptures had narrated. It was a conception too gross to entertain, to think of the Creator as wearing a human form, while to imagine him as a spirit or pervading power, was to lose him altogether as a God. So the Jews, to accommodate their views to the growing thought of a more enlightened age, began to personify his attributes; spoke of the divine wisdom as a personage, as a divinely commissioned being, as the power by which the world was created, and mankind were purified and made godlike. This was a marked departure from the monotheism of an earlier day, but it was also a way of escape from the anthropomorphism in which this had resulted.

The Jewish mind had now taken a large step towards the recognition of a second and inferior god, and this

* It is scarcely probable that the Jewish people could have been familiar with the declaration of the divine unity which the book of Deuteronomy contains, or with the prohibition of idolatry and of the worship of images found in the book of Exodus, during the reigns of the kings when they were continually falling back into idolatrous worship.

thought was largely helped by the current expectation of a divinely commissioned Messiah—a Son of man, who should make his advent in the clouds of heaven attended by legions of angels,—who should be God himself coming to judge the nations.

God communed, the Jews held, with man by his “Memra” or “Word,” by his angel or messenger, by his Sophia, or wisdom. By wisdom he made the worlds. By wisdom he calls to men.

The Alexandrian Jews, however, carried their views still nearer to the form of the Platonic thought. Living in close contact with the Stoic philosophers, who were the later representatives of the Platonic school, the writings of the Alexandrian Jews of a period dating about two centuries before Christ show unmistakably the influence of Grecian forms of thought. We have two remarkable books emanating from Hebrew writers somewhere about this date—viz., the book of “Wisdom,” written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew, and embodying the Neo-Platonic thought, and the book of “Ecclesiasticus,” written in Hebrew by a Palestinian Jew who was intimately acquainted with the Alexandrian literature.

In this latter book we have wisdom set forth as an inseparable attribute of God, identified so closely with God as to preserve intact the Hebrew conception of the divine unity, and to controvert the Neo-Platonic conception which made the divine wisdom or word to be a distinct divinity. It commences, “All wisdom cometh from the Lord, and is with Him for ever. . . . The word of God most high is the fountain of wisdom, and her ways are everlasting commandments.” And then the writer asks, “To whom hath the root of wisdom been revealed? or who hath understood her wise counsels? There is one wise and greatly to be feared, the Lord sitting upon his throne. He created her, and saw her, and numbered her, and poured her out upon all his works. She is with all flesh according to his gift, and

he hath given her to them that love him. To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."—Ecclesiasticus, chap. i.

Here is at once a recognition and a repudiation of the Platonic idea of a secondary god, or rather we may speak of it as an adaptation by which it is made to harmonise with the stern monotheism of Hebrew thought. Wisdom is declared to be a power of God, but not a personality distinct from God.

Very different is the tone of the Alexandrian writer of the book of Wisdom. He was a Hellenised Jew, one who mingled Grecian speculation with Hebrew traditions, and thought as much of the one as of the other. Here is his description of wisdom.

"For wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me ; for in her is an understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtile, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt.

"Loving the thing which is good, quick.

"Kind to man, stedfast, sure, free from care, having all power, overseeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure and most subtile spirit.

"For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty.

"She is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.

"And being but one, she can do all things ; and remaining in herself she maketh all things new ; and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets, for God loveth none but him that dwelleth in wisdom."—ch. vii., v. 22 to 28.

Here we have a definition of wisdom as a divine power or personage, closely allied to God, yet capable of being conceived of as distinct from God, much as we find Christians of our own day believing God the Holy Ghost to be a distinct deity from God the Father, yet in some mystical sense to be one and the same with

him. The writer continues his praise of wisdom, and asks—

“If riches be a possession to be desired in this life, what is richer than wisdom that worketh all things? And if prudence work, who of all that are, is a more cunning workman than she? And if a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues: for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude; which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life. . . .

“Moreover, by the means of her I shall obtain immortality, and leave behind me an everlasting memorial to them that come after me.”

Of the Platonic character and origin of these thoughts we shall find abundant evidence by comparing them with some extracts from Plato's writings. Take the following passage from the *Phædon* :

“Wisdom is the only true and unalloyed coin, for which all others must be given in exchange. With that piece of money we purchase fortitude, temperance, justice. In a word, that virtue is always true that accompanies wisdom, whereas all other virtues, stripped of wisdom, are only shadows of virtue. Temperance, justice, fortitude, and prudence, or wisdom itself, are not exchanged for passions, but cleanse us of them. And it is pretty evident that those who instituted the purifications, called by us *Teletes*, *i.e.*, perfect expiations, meant by such riddles (rites) to give us to know, that whoever enters the other world without being initiated and purified shall be hurl'd headlong into the vast abyss; and that whoever arrives there after due purgation and expiation, shall be lodged in the apartment of the gods. For as the dispensers of those expiations say, ‘There are many who bear the *Thyrsus*,* but few that are possessed by the spirit of the God.’ Now, those who are thus possessed, as I take it, are the true philosophers.” . . .

“Those who have distinguished themselves by a holy life,

* The *Thyrsus* was a spear wrapped in vines or ivy, carried by the worshippers of Bacchus on their initiation into the mysteries. Of these, Socrates here virtually says that “many are called but few are chosen.”

and those who are sufficiently purged by philosophy, are received after death into admirable and delicious mansions. Therefore we should labour all our lives to acquire virtue and wisdom, since we have so great a reward proposed to us, and so bright a prospect before us."

The writer of the Book of Wisdom distinctly personifies divine wisdom. This is what Plato does not do. Plato speaks of wisdom as an attribute common to God and man. It is the *Logos* or word that he speaks of as a secondary or inferior deity, as a divine personage, able to be conceived of as separate from God though still in mystical union with him. It is in the interest of Hebrew tradition that the writer of this book personifies wisdom as opposed to Plato's *Logos* or world-making God, yet in close imitation of Plato's idea, escaping only the heresy of imagining a second God—of making the Godhead composite, he says :

"And wisdom was with thee ; which knoweth thy works, and was present when thou madest the world, and knew what was acceptable in thy sight, and right in thy commandments. O send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labour with me that I may know what is pleasing to thee. For she knoweth and understandeth all things."—Wisdom, ch. ix. 9-11.

So it was that the leaders of Jewish thought sought to reconcile their conceptions of God with the views of the prevailing Gentile philosophy. The Jews were as a nation destitute of philosophy, but were pre-eminently devout. All the laws of nature, and all the actions of men were, as they thought, under the immediate direction of God. "The eyes of the Lord," they said, "were in every place beholding the evil and the good." God was seated on a throne in heaven, king of kings and lord of lords. This was the faith of an ignorant people who possessed healthy religious instincts. It would not, however, bear the questionings

of an enlightened intellect. God was, in this view, only a great king, a magnified man.

After the residence of the Jews in Babylon and their contact with the Persian faith, a monotheistic religion like their own—a religion in which God was conceived of as a pure spirit, and in which the fancies of a speculative theology, by setting up inferior intelligences, brought the power and wisdom of this pure spirit into close contact with the human and material world, we find a marked change and elevation of the Jewish thought. Thus one of the Psalmists asks : —“ Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? ” and pours out a grand hymn expressive of the omnipresence of the Deity. There was, however, danger here. Truth itself was too dazzling, and God was all but lost in the glory that surrounded the conceptions which the minds of men were framing of his being. The nearer men ascended towards the truth that God was a pervading power, the more they found themselves nearing the boundaries of a cold and desolate Pantheism ; and a God who was thus universal, ceased to be the god of the individual, ceased to be a national god, ceased to be a being whom they could regard as the upholding providence of their lives, and of whom they could say in the words of one of their favourite and familiar hymns, that “ God, even our own God, shall bless us. ”

The speculative philosophy by which the surrounding nations of Persia, Egypt, and Greece, escaped alike the vagueness of a Pantheism in which God was virtually lost, and the anthropomorphism which made him but a huge man, became in course of time a matter of absolute necessity for the Jews to adopt. So we find that they exalted this attribute of wisdom as being, not a distinct personage, but as being a manifested power, by which the thought of man could enter into communion and harmony with the divine mind, and so the Eternal could sustain a real and palpable relation to

his creatures. The problem that needed solution was to tone down the exalted conception of God which an enlightened intellect prompted, so as to bring him within the reach of the pious and prayerful thought, and this without degrading or falsifying a true and proper estimation of himself.

In our common thought to-day we regard nature as an intermediate link between man and God. Man lives in immediate contact with nature, and we say that through nature he can rise to nature's God.

Again, the laws of nature we discern as operative powers that came from God, but that are now the *intermediate* rather than the immediate agents of his will. Thus we regard the laws of nature as being in one sense separate and distinct from the divine mind, acting, as it were, independently of it, through powers that were originally derived from it, and in another sense we regard them as being one and the same with it. So in a spiritual sense we say that God is Light, Love, Truth, Goodness, &c., and yet we can conceive of these things as being separate and distinct from God, as virtues adorning a human soul. Thus we say that these are agencies that draw men close to God, and that make them even to be one with God.

The popular idea of Christ is that *he* was the expression of the divine mind, the teacher of divine wisdom ; that through this spirit of divine wisdom, which in the current belief rested upon him without measure, he was one with God, and by his relation to humanity he conferred the same privilege upon it. And a natural consequence of this belief upon the vulgar mind and common thought has been to suggest the idea that Christ was God incarnate—the Almighty in human form.

The late learned Dean Milman, in his *History of Christianity* has very ably summarised this development of ancient speculative thought ; he says—

“Even the notion of the one Supreme Deity had undergone some modification consonant to certain prevailing opinions

of the time (Christian era.) Wherever any approximation had been made to the sublime truth of the one great First Cause, either awful religious reverence or philosophic abstraction had removed the primal Deity entirely beyond the sphere of human sense, and supposed that the intercourse of the Divinity with man, the moral government, and even the original creation had been carried on by the intermediate agency, either in Oriental language of an Emanation, or in Platonic of the wisdom, reason, or intelligence of the one Supreme. This Being was more or less distinctly impersonated, according to the more popular or more philosophic, the more material or the more abstract notions of the age or people.* This was the doctrine from the Ganges, or even the shores of the Yellow Sea to the Ilissus; it was the fundamental principle of the Indian religion and the Indian philosophy; it was the basis of Zoroastrianism; it was pure Platonism; it was the Platonic Judaism of the Alexandrian school. Many fine passages might be quoted from Philo, on the impossibility that the first self-existing Being should become cognisable to the sense of man; and even in Palestine, no doubt, John the Baptist and our Lord himself, spoke no new doctrine, but rather the common sentiment of the more enlightened, when they declared that 'no man had seen God at any time.' In conformity with this principle, the Jews, in the interpretation of the older scriptures, instead of direct and sensible communication from the one great Deity, had interposed either one or more intermediate beings as the channels of communication. According to one accredited tradition alluded to by St Stephen, the law was delivered by the 'disposition of angels;' according to another, this office was delegated to a single angel, sometimes called the angel of the Law (see Gal. iii. 19); at others, the Metatron. But the more ordinary representative, as it were, of God, to the sense and mind of man, was the Memra, or the Divine Word; and it is remarkable that the same appellation is found in the Indian, the

* It is curious to trace the development of this idea in the older and in the apocryphal books of the Old Testament. In the Book of Proverbs, the wisdom is little more than the great attribute of the deity; in Ecclesiasticus, it is a separate being, and "stands up beautiful" before the throne of God. (xxv. 1.)

[The learned Dean is in error here. "Wisdom" is still an attribute of God, a quality of character, as a perusal of the entire verse will shew. It is the Book of Wisdom that makes it a *distinct* personage.—*Author's Note.*]

Persian, the Platonic, and the Alexandrian systems. By the Targumists, the earliest Jewish commentators on the scriptures, this term had been already applied to the Messiah; nor is it necessary to observe the manner in which it has been sanctified by its introduction into the Christian scheme. This uniformity of conception and coincidence of language, indicates the general acquiescence of the human mind in the necessity of some mediation between the pure spiritual nature of the deity, and the moral and intellectual nature of man, *of which the sublimest and the simplest was the revelation of God in Christ.*"

In this last assertion, however, Dean Milman ceases to be the learned and accomplished historian, and becomes a special pleader for the dogmas of the popular religion. The admissions of the former portion of this passage, establish, beyond the possibility of reasonable cavil, the fact that the idea of God in Christ,—God as personified in Jesus, is but a version of a speculative belief held in all the great religious systems that were anterior to the Christian era, and is not a *divine revelation* that was then, for the first time, specially and supernaturally given. The asserted deity of Jesus is, indeed, a corruption, and perversion, and degradation of a conception that, as held in these ancient faiths, was but the feeble expression of a sublime truth. In the modern dogma, however, the sublimity is lost, and a crude superstition takes its place.

The Jews, however, as a nation, were not greatly given to philosophic speculation, and it was not till the year B.C. 160, that we have any indications of its appearance in the Alexandrian colony. About this time, Aristobulus, a philosophic Jew, endeavoured to harmonise Jewish with Grecian literature. He wrote an allegorical exposition of the Pentateuch, in which he endeavoured to show that it was the source of the Aristotelian philosophy. He did this by allegorising its matter of fact narratives, and putting a secondary meaning into them; only fragments of this work, preserved by Eusebius, now remain. The great master,

however, of this art of allegorising the Old Testament, was Philo, the contemporary, though, at the same time, the senior of Jesus.

Philo, commonly known as Philo Judæus, was an eminent, and learned, and distinguished Alexandrian Jew, while, at the same time, he was a devoted student and follower of the Neo-Platonic philosophy. He was brother to Alexander the Alabarch, or president, of the Jewish colony. He was also, through his brother, an intimate acquaintance of King Agrippa, who then ruled in Judea, and notwithstanding that a temple had been erected in Alexandria, the gold and silver plating of nine of the doors of the temple at Jerusalem, were due to the munificence of Philo's brother. Besides being a man of high learning and cultured thought, Philo bore a stainless reputation, and stood so high in the esteem of his fellow religionists, that he was chosen, with two others, in the year A.D. 40, seven years after the crucifixion of Christ, to go on an embassy to the Emperor Caligula at Rome, to counteract the calumnies of Apion against the Jews, and to complain to Caligula of a persecution that had been incited against them by Flaccus, the Roman President, on account of their refusing to burn incense before the statues of the emperor, to admit them into their temples, or to worship them as the representative of a God. In the voluminous works which remain to us from Philo's pen, we have a lengthened account of this embassy, and of the rude and contemptuous treatment it received from Caligula, whose extraordinary conduct, running through the various rooms of his palace, giving directions to his workmen, and expecting the embassy to follow him as best they could, clearly betokened his incipient or perhaps developed insanity.

Of the date of Philo's birth, we have no record ; he, however, describes himself as being "a grey-headed old man" at the time of this embassy, A.D. 40. This would make him to be sixty-five or seventy years of age at

that period, and consequently would place his birth twenty-five or thirty years before the birth of Jesus. Philo would consequently have been forty-five or fifty years old when Jesus commenced his ministry. This is an important consideration, because in Philo's writings, we have an anticipation, not only of the larger part of the moral and religious teaching of Jesus, but of those forms of speculative thought which mark the Fourth Gospel, the Epistles of Paul, and that to the Hebrews. So striking is the resemblance between Philo's writings and the writings of the New Testament, that efforts have not been wanting to claim Philo as a disciple of Jesus, and as an apologist of Christianity. The learned Jacob Bryant wrote a treatise in which, by collating passages concerning "the Logos," from Philo's writings, with passages of the New Testament concerning the nature and offices of Christ, he thought to establish the fact that Philo must have been a Christian; and in the early part of the present century, a volume was published under the title of "Ecclesiastical Researches," by Dr J. Jones, the object of which was to prove that both Philo and Josephus were Christians.

Philo, the translation of whose literary remains fill four volumes of Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library, never makes the smallest allusion to Jesus, but writes as though he were in perfect ignorance as to his existence.

The great bulk of his writings are rambling and allegorical commentaries on the laws of Moses, and on the Hebrew scriptures. These he interprets in the light of the Platonic philosophy. The intense reverence which Philo displays in these writings for the lightest word of Moses, and for the priesthood, and laws, and ritual that had his sanction, is a convincing proof that he had never heard or heeded the reformed Judaism which Jesus taught, much less the Christian repudiation of the Mosaic faith which marks the Epistles of Paul, the earliest of which was, in all pro-

bability, not penned till years after Philo's death. One of Philo's treatises is a life of Moses, whom he regards as "king, lawgiver, high priest, and prophet."

"The Theology of Philo is in great measure founded on his peculiar combination of the Jewish, the Platonic, and the Neo-Platonic conception of God. The God of the Old Testament, the exalted God, as he is called by the modern Hegelian philosophy, stood in close relations to the Greek Philosophers' conception of God, which believed that the Supreme Being could be accurately defined by the negative of all that was finite. In accordance with this, Philo also described God as the simple Entity; he disclaimed for Him every name, every quality, even that of the Good, the Beautiful, the Blessed, the One. Since He is still better than the good, higher than the Unity, He can never be known *as*, but only *that* He is: his perfect name is only the four mysterious letters (Jhvh), that is, pure Being."

"By such means, indeed, neither a fuller theology, nor God's influence on the world was to be obtained. And yet it was the problem of philosophy, as well as of religion, to shed the light of God upon the world, and to lead it again to God. But how could this Being which was veiled from the world be brought to bear upon it? By Philo, as well as by all the philosophy of the time, the problem could only be solved illogically. Yet, by modifying His exalted nature it might be done. If not by His being yet by His work, He influences the world. His powers, his angels, all in it that is best and mightiest, the instrument, the interpreter, the mediator and messenger of God. His pattern and His first-born, the Son of God, the Second God, even himself God, the divine Word or Logos communicate with the world."—*Keim's "Jesus of Nazara," Introduction, article Philo.*

This modification of the conception of deity was the keynote of Philo's copious commentaries. By so doing he toned down the exalted conception of God, which the Gentile philosophies taught, and explained away the crude narratives of his own country's scriptures, in which the idea of God was degraded by representing him in form, and thought, and action, as a man. In the Platonic Logos Philo found the mediator between God and man, which enabled him to reconcile the

Jewish Scriptures with the teachings of the Gentile Philosophy.

Allegory, however, is not science, and the scientific or speculative views of Philo form no separate and condensed treatise, but are disseminated throughout his voluminous writings. Subjoined are two passages from his treatise, "De Confusione Linguarum," an exposition or commentary on the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel.

"The statement," he says, "The Lord went down to see that city and that tower,' must be listened to altogether as if spoken in a figurative sense, for to think that the divinity can go towards, or go from, or go down, or go to meet, is an impiety. . . . Since who is there who does not know that it is indispensable for a person who goes down, to leave one place and to occupy another. But all places are filled at once by God, to whom alone it is possible to be every where and also nowhere. Nowhere, because he himself created place and space. . . . The divine being, both invisible and incomprehensible, is indeed everywhere, but still, in truth, he is nowhere visible or comprehensible."—(*Bohn's Edition, Vol. 2, p. 29*).

In reference to the phrase, "sons of men" who are described as having built cities, Philo says, that they who have real knowledge of God, are properly called "sons of God," and that elsewhere (*Deut. xiv. 1*), Moses so entitles them, and then adds:—

"Accordingly it is natural for those who have this disposition of soul to look upon nothing as beautiful, except what is good. . . . And even if there be not as yet any one who is worthy to be called a son of God, nevertheless let him labour earnestly to be adorned according to his first-born Word (*Logos*), the eldest of his angels, as the great archangel of many names; for he is called 'the authority' and 'the name' of God, and the Word (*Logos*) and 'man according to God's image,' and 'He who sees Israel.' For even if we are not yet suitable to be called the Sons of God, still we may deserve to be called the children of his eternal image, of his most sacred Word (*Logos*); for the image of God is his most sacred Word."—(*Philo "De Confusione." Bohn's Edition, Vol. 2, p. 31*).

It would be easy, did space permit, to multiply such extracts as these to a very large extent, and so to shew that before Jesus commenced his ministry, possibly even before Jesus was born, Philo was familiarising the minds of his countrymen with ideas concerning "a second or delegated God," "the first-born son of the Eternal Father," "the express image of his person," "the word of God by whom the world was made," &c. We have this thought largely reproduced in the Fourth Gospel, that ascribed to John, though not written till the early part or middle of the second century, nearly one hundred years later than the writings of Philo. There is, however, an important difference between the conception of the "Word," or Logos, as Philo held it, and as the unknown writer of the Fourth Gospel regarded it. Philo held the Logos or Word to be a *celestial* being, "an angel or messenger of the Supreme God, to be even as God, but never to be *man*." He regarded it, however, as having sometimes the likeness of man, and as being one with the Jewish High Priest, as consecrating his office, when on the day of atonement he entered into the Holy of Holies. But Philo, while he regarded the Logos as the perfect or ideal man, never identifies this Logos with any particular man. The writer of the Fourth Gospel does, however, do this, he identifies the Divine word with Jesus of Nazareth, says that in him "the word was made flesh" (*καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο*, became flesh), and dwelt among us? This denotes a considerably later stage or development of the Logos doctrine. A change due in great measure to the florid language which Paul applies to Jesus, and which is word for word, the same with that which Philo had previously used with regard to the Logos. Paul, we must bear in mind, had never seen Jesus, knew him at best by the results of his teaching. He learned nothing from Jesus directly, and distinctly asserts that his followers, the apostles, were unable to give him any instruction.

So Paul's estimate of Jesus was largely ideal, was drawn in great part from the thought currents of Jewish and Gentile philosophy, and without doubt in no small degree from the writings of Philo.

It will be worth while before shewing the similarity, or rather the identity, of speculative thought which existed between the writings of Philo and the Epistles of Paul, to trace the connecting lines which mark the channel through which the ideas passed from one to the other.

When Philo was writing, the elder Hillel,* one of the most celebrated of the Jewish Rabbis, whom Renan declares to have been the virtual teacher of Jesus, and who certainly, as a religious reformer, anticipated no small portion of Christian teaching, was chief of the Jerusalem school, and must have become immediately conversant with the writings of his eminent countryman, the Alexandrian Philo. Hillel was celebrated as the successor of Ezra, who brought the law anew out of Babylon. His wisdom was esteemed manifold as Solomon's, while his piety and gentleness became proverbial. He founded what may be called a Broad Church School of Judaism, and put a permanent impress upon Jewish thought. He put moral duty far before ceremonial piety, and taught as the very kernel of the law "The duty we owe to our neighbour."

Such a wise and large-hearted teacher must have given a warm welcome to the writings of so able and distinguished a man as Philo. And it is fair to infer that these became, to a large extent, the authorised and familiar text-book of the Jerusalem School.

* Hillel was originally a day labourer, and he devoted one-half of the small pittance that he earned to the support of his family, and with the other he paid his fees to study the law, under the celebrated teacher Schemajah. Once, on the eve of the Sabbath, when for want of work he was unable to pay the school fee, he climbed to the window of the house on a dark winter's evening in order to be able to see and hear, and in the morning he was found by the teacher stiffened with cold and snow, who in releasing him said, "It is truly worth while to break the Sabbath on his account."

When St Paul was, as a young man, studying at Jerusalem, the post of chief teacher, which had been filled so ably by Hillel, was now held by his equally celebrated grandson, Gamaliel, "the glory of the law," of whom it is recorded that out of his thousand disciples he instructed five hundred in the Jewish law, and five hundred in the wisdom of the Greeks; and Paul himself tells us that it was at the feet of this Gamaliel he sat to receive his education. Here, then, he would have made acquaintance with the Philonic literature. For these writings moulded the whole future of Jewish thought; and Dr Keim, in his "Jesus of Nazara," tells us

"that the teachings of both Hillel and Gamaliel were tinged with Philonism; and that, from this time forward, every material image of God in the Old Testament—such as the mention of His countenance, His mouth, His eye, His hand, &c.—were carefully converted into conceptions of the divine glory, of the indwelling presence of the Logos or Word of God."

And, he adds,

"The Apostle Paul, a disciple of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, was essentially imbued with Alexandrine ideas, which he has evidently transferred to the heart of Christianity in his teaching concerning Christ." (Vol. I. pp. 292, 293, English translation.)

While, however, Philo and the Alexandrian school were incorporating the Grecian conception of "the Logos," or Divine Word, with the Hebrew thought, the Hebrew teaching proper contented itself with a personification of Divine Wisdom. There was, however, another current of thought, viz., the expectation of a Messiah. This was held in various forms. At first it simply expressed the national hope of restored fortunes through the conquering arm of some great leader, destined by God to restore the throne and the supremacy of the Davidic era. This was still the popular expectation in the time of Jesus. But the

more spiritually minded Jews, the Essenes and other devout communities, had hopes, not of a restoration of David's throne, but of the time spoken of by Malachi when "the Lord himself should come to declare judgment, to inhabit his temple, to establish his covenant and his kingdom;" while the scholastic and speculative thought of the Philonic school identified the Messianic expectation with the Logos idea. The two former conceptions mark the three earlier Gospels; the latter conception finds plain and emphatic expression in the introduction to the fourth Gospel, and is the pervading idea throughout.

The fourth Gospel and the Epistles of Paul represent the speculative thought of their age; and the following quotations will show how closely they at the same time reproduce the Philonic thought. The passages here selected from Philo's writings are taken from the treatise by Jacob Bryant before alluded to, the Greek original being omitted, and simply the English translation given.

Identity of the Christ of the New Testament with the Logos of Philo.

Philo, describing the Logos, says:—	The New Testament, speaking of Jesus, says:—
"The Logos is the Son of God the Father."—De Profugis.	"This is the Son of God."—John i. 34.
"The first begotten of God."—De Somniis.	"And when he again bringeth his first-born into the world."—Heb. i. 6.
"And the most ancient of all beings."—De Conf. Ling.	"That he is the first-born of every creature."—Col. i. 15.
"The Logos is the image and likeness of God."—De Monarch.	"Christ, the image of the invisible God."—Col. i. 15.

"The Logos is superior to the angels."—De Profugis.

"The Logos is superior to all beings in the world."—De Leg. Allegor.

"The Logos is the instrument by whom the world was made."—De Leg. Allegor.

"The divine word by whom all things were ordered and disposed."—De Mundi Opificio.

"The Logos is the light of the world, and the intellectual sun."—De Somniis.

"The Logos only can see God."—De Confus. Ling.

"He is the most ancient

"The brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his person."—Heb. i. 3.

"Being made so much better than the angels. Let all the angels of God worship him."—Heb. i. 4, 6.

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."—Heb. ii. 8.

"All things were made by him (the Word or Logos), and without him was not anything made that was made."—John i. 3.

"Jesus Christ, by whom are all things."—1 Cor. viii. 6.

"By whom also he made the worlds."—Heb. i. 2.

"The Word (Logos) was the true light."—John i. 9.

"The life and the light of men."—John i. 4.

"I am the light of the world."—John viii. 12.

"He that is of God, he hath seen the Father."—John vi. 46.

"No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."—John i. 18.

"Now, O Father, glorify

of God's works."—De Confus. Ling.

"And was before all things."—De Leg. Allegor.

"The Logos is esteemed the same as God."—De Somniis.

"The Logos was eternal."—De Plant Noë.

"The Logos supports the world, is the connecting power by which all things are united."—De Profugis.

"The Logos is nearest to God, without any separation; being, as it were, fixed upon the only true existing Deity, nothing coming between to disturb that unity."—De Profugis.

"The Logos is free from all taint of sin, either voluntary or involuntary."—De Profugis.

thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—John xvii. 5.

"He was in the beginning with God."—John i. 2.

"Before all worlds."—2 Tim. i. 9.

"Christ, who is over all, God blessed for evermore."—Rom. ix. 5.

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God."—Phil. ii. 6.

"Christ abideth forever."—John xii. 34.

"But to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."—Heb. i. 8.

"Upholding all things by the word of his power."—Heb. i. 3.

"By him all things consist."—Col. i. 17.

"I and my Father are one."—John x. 30.

"That they may be one as we are."—John xvii. 11.

"The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father."—John i. 18.

"The blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God."—Heb. ix. 14.

"The Logos the fountain of life.

"It is of the greatest consequence to every person to strive without remission to approach to the divine Logos, the Word of God above, who is the fountain of all wisdom; that by drinking largely of that sacred spring, instead of death, he may be rewarded with everlasting life."—*De Profugis*.

"The Logos is the shepherd of God's flock.

"The Deity, like a shepherd, and at the same time like a monarch, acts with the most consummate order and rectitude, and has appointed his First-born, the upright Logos, like the substitute of a mighty prince, to take care of his sacred flock."—*De Agricult.*

The Logos, Philo says, is "The great governor of the world; he is the creative and princely power, and through these the heavens and the whole world were produced."—*De Profugis*.

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."—1 Pet. ii. 22.

"Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—John iv. 14.

"The great shepherd of the flock . . . our Lord Jesus."—Heb. xiii. 20.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—John x. 14.

"Christ . . . the shepherd and guardian of your souls."—1 Pet. ii. 25.

"For Christ must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet."—1 Cor. xv. 25.

"Christ, above all principality and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in

“The Logos is the physician that heals all evil.”—*De Leg. Allegor.*

The Logos the Seal of God.

“The Logos, by whom the world was framed, is the seal, after the impression of which everything is made, and is rendered the similitude and image of the perfect Word of God.”—*De Profugis.*

“The soul of man is an impression of a seal, of which the prototype and original characteristic is the everlasting Logos.”—*De Plantatione Noë.*

The Logos the source of immortal life.

Philo says, “that when the soul strives after its best and noblest life, then the Logos frees it from all corruption, and confers upon it the gift of immortality.”—*De C. Q. Erud. Gratiâ.*

this world, but in the world to come . . . and God hath put all things under his feet.”—*Eph. i. 21, 22.*

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to heal the broken-hearted.”—*Luke iv. 18.*

Christ the Seal of God.

“In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy seal of promise.”—*Eph. i. 13.*

“Jesus, the son of man . . . him hath God the Father sealed.”—*John vi. 27.*

“Christ, the brightness of his (God’s) glory, and the express image of his person.”—*Heb. i. 3.*

Christ the source of eternal life.

“The dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible.”—*1 Cor. xv. 52.*

“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”—*Rom. viii. 21.*

Philo speaks of the Logos, not only as the Son of God and his first begotten, but also styles him "his beloved Son."—*De Leg. Allegor.*

Philo says "that good men are admitted to the assembly of the saints above."

"Those who relinquish human doctrines, and become the well-disposed disciples of God, will be one day translated to an incorruptible and perfect order of beings."—*De Sacrificiis.*

Philo says "that the just man, when he dies, is translated to another state by the Logos, by whom the world was created. For God by his said Word (Logos), by which he made all things, will raise the perfect man from the dregs of this world, and exalt him near himself. He will place him near his own person."—*De Sacrificiis.*

Philo says that the Logos

The New Testament calls Christ the Beloved Son:—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—*Matt. iii. 17; Luke ix. 35; 2 Pet. i. 17.*

"The Son of his love."—*Col. i. 13.*

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."—*Heb. xii. 22, 23.*

"Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be the partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—*Col. i. 12.*

The New Testament makes Jesus to say—

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."—*John vi. 44.*

"No man cometh to the Father but by me."—*John xiv. 6.*

"Where I am, there also shall my servant be . . . him will my Father honour."—*John xii. 26.*

The New Testament

is the true High Priest, who is without sin and anointed by God—

“It is the world, in which the Logos, God’s First-born, that great High Priest, resides. And I assert that this High Priest is no man, but the Holy Word of God; who is not capable of either voluntary or involuntary sin, and hence his head is anointed with oil.”—*De Profugis*.

Philo mentions the Logos as the great High Priest and Mediator for the sins of the world. Speaking of the rebellion of Korah, he introduces the Logos as saying—

“It was I who stood in the middle between the Lord and you.”

“The sacred Logos pressed with zeal and without remission that he might stand between the dead and the living.”—*Quis Rerum Div Hæres*.

The Logos, the Saviour God, who brings salvation as the reward of repentance and righteousness—

“If then men have from their very souls a just contrition, and are changed, and have humbled them-

speaks of Jesus as the High Priest—

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”—*Heb. iv. 14*.

“For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”—*Heb. vii. 26*.

The New Testament says of Christ—

“We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a mediator of a better covenant.”—*Heb. viii. 1-6*.

“But Christ being come an High Priest . . . entered at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”—*Heb. ix. 11, 12*.

The New Testament says of John, the forerunner of Jesus, that he preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”—*Mark i. 4*.

Jesus says—

“Ye will not come to

selves for their past errors, acknowledging and confessing their sins, such persons shall find pardon from the Saviour and merciful God, and receive a most choice and great advantage of being made like the Logos of God, who was originally the great archetype after which the soul of man was formed."—*De Execrationibus.*

me, that ye might have life."—John v. 40.

"Beloved, we be now the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he doth appear we shall be like him."—1 John iii. 2.

"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—1 Cor. xv. 49.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. vi. 5.

These extracts, which might be very largely multiplied, show how much of the estimate and office of Jesus as "the Christ," which the New Testament contains, does but reproduce the thought and teaching of Philo with regard to the "Logos." This "Logos" Philo brings into very close association with the Jewish High Priest. As a good man may be said to be filled with the Spirit of God—as our clergy profess to have the Holy Ghost imparted to them at their ordination—so this Logos, or Word of God, Philo says, is associated with the high priest while he is performing his official duties.

In his treatise "On Monarchy," speaking of the law which requires that the priest's body should be without blemish, he says,—

"For if it was necessary to examine the mortal body of the priest, that it might not be imperfect through any misfortune, much more was it necessary to look into his immor-

tal soul, which they say is fashioned in the form of the living God. Now the form or image of God is 'the Word' (Logos), by which all the world was made."

Again, in another part of the same treatise, speaking of the Levitical law which *forbids* the High Priest either to rend his clothes, or take from his head the ensign of the priesthood, or to show any sign of mourning, even on the death of his very nearest relation, Philo says,—

"The law designs that he should be the partaker of a nature *superior to that of man*; inasmuch as he approaches more nearly to that of the deity; being, if one must say the plain truth, *on the borders between the two*, in order that men may propitiate God by some mediator, and that God may have some subordinate by whom he may offer and give his mercies and kindnesses to man."

It has been a common argument with the Christian clergy, that at the period of the Christian era the world was sunk in the thick darkness of spiritual ignorance. Adam's sin had, they say, so alienated the human race from God, that a great gulf of separation intervened between God and man, and no possible way of approach was open whereby sinful man might reach the throne of offended justice to plead for mercy and forgiveness; that then God conceived a way of escape, which human thought could never have devised. He became incarnate, laid by His proper glory, and clothed Himself with a human form; consented to be born as a man—was thus a God-man; a being for the time inferior to deity, yet far superior to humanity. In a word, just such a being as Philo above describes, as being on the borders between the two natures. Yet Philo wrote long before Christ commenced his ministry, and not the slightest evidence exists to warrant the supposition that Philo ever knew of the existence of Jesus. Moreover, Philo only reproduces the thought that Grecian philosophy had known and cherished for centuries! In addition to this, we have the most positive and con-

vincing evidence that, for at least two centuries before the birth of Jesus, the world in general, and the Jewish nation in particular, had possessed the essentials of a high spiritual faith. It is difficult now to show that Christianity contains either a moral or spiritual teaching that may not be found in the Dialogues of Plato, or in the Apocryphal scriptures of the Jews. There had been a bright blaze of spiritual light glowing in the world for centuries before Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Philo, writing in all probability about the time that Jesus was a youth, describes the existence of religious communities, who were living a monastic or secluded life in Egypt, under the name of "Therapeutæ," or healers, and in Palestine under the title of Essenes, or holy ones; a society probably allied to the society of Assideans, mentioned in the 1st book of Maccabees ii. 42, or those who had voluntarily devoted themselves to the study and observance of the law. The Essenes, who in Palestine numbered above 4000, are thus described by Philo:—

"Their name 'Essene,' corresponds to the Greek (ἁγιοί), 'righteous, pious.' For they have attained the highest righteousness in the worship of God, and that not by sacrificing animals, but by cultivating purity of heart. They live principally in villages, and avoid the towns. Some cultivate the ground, and others pursue the arts of peace, and such employments as are beneficial to themselves without injury to their neighbours. They seek neither to hoard silver or gold, nor to inherit ample estates, in order to gratify prodigality and avarice, but are content with the mere necessities of life. . . . They deem riches to consist not in amplitude of possessions, but in frugality and contentment. Among them can be found no one who manufactures any weapon of war, nor even such instruments as are easily perverted to evil purposes in times of peace; they decline trade, have no slaves, but all in turn minister to others. They discard all learning, save that which relates to the existence of God and the creation of the universe, but they devoutly study the moral law. In their public

assemblies on the Sabbath they interpret the Scriptures, and mutually instruct each other in piety, holiness, righteousness, domestic and political economy, the knowledge of things good, bad, and indifferent, and what objects should be pursued and what avoided. . . . Of their love to God they give innumerable proofs, by leading a life of continued purity, unstained by oaths and falsehoods; by regarding Him as the author of every good and as the cause of no evil. Their love to man is evinced by their benignity, their equity, and their liberality, of which I proceed to give a short account, *though no language can adequately describe it.*

“In the first place, there exists among them no house, however private, which is not open to the reception of all the rest, and not only the members of the same society assemble under the same domestic roof, but even strangers of the same persuasion have free permission to join them. There is but one treasure, whence all derive substance. . . . The daily labourer keeps not for his own use the produce of his toil, but imparts it to the common stock, and thus furnishes each member with a right to use for himself the profits earned by others. The sick are not despised or neglected because they are no longer capable of useful labour, but they live in ease and affluence, receiving from the treasury whatever their disorder or their exigencies require. The aged, too, among them are loved, revered, and attended as parents by affectionate children, and a thousand hands and hearts prop their tottering years with comforts of every kind.”—(*From the Treatise showing that the Virtuous are also Free.*) See Bohn’s translation of Philo, vol. iii. p. 525.

Josephus gives a very similar account of this community, and among other things he says,—

“The Essenes refer all things to God; they teach the immortality of the soul, and hold forth the reward of virtue to be most glorious. They send gifts to the temple, but they differ from the other Jews in their ideas of purification. From this reason they are excluded from the holy place, and do not offer sacrifice; *themselves* being the only acceptable sacrifice which they offer to God.”—*Antiquities*, xviii. 1, 5.

We have here distinct evidence of the gradual *spiri-*

tual growth of the Jewish people ; of the development of a devotional piety, and of a practical conception of religious duty.

After reading Philo's account of the Essenes, the conviction flashes upon us that John the Baptist must have belonged to one of these communities, and that Jesus himself must have been largely imbued with their spirit. The Sermon on the Mount is, in fact, a simple reiteration of their teaching. There is, however, one distinctive difference, the Essenes separated themselves from the world, and maintained a degree of secrecy with regard to their views, admitting members only after a lengthened probation. Jesus endorsing nearly all their specific teaching, preached it as "the kingdom of God" to the mixed multitude of the people, disclaimed all seclusion and secrecy with regard to it, and made membership open to all who were disposed to enter. But for this *public* ministry Jesus would have been simply one of the Jewish Essenes, *i.e.*, a spiritually minded religious recluse ; living in association with a sort of monastic fraternity. His desire, however, to outstep the limitations of this society, and to make the fraternity one of world-wide comprehensiveness, to establish, as it were, a system of universal brotherhood, gave to his life the special character that marked it, and enabled him to put an impress on all succeeding time.

It is time now for us to review the religious thought currents that were flowing through the Jewish mind at the time when Jesus was preaching through the towns and villages of Judea.

First, There was the Mosaic law with its ordinances and ritual, forming the traditional substratum of the national religion. This was also the established or orthodox worship.

Secondly, There was the Messianic expectation assuming two very diverse forms. In the one which prevailed among the multitude the expectation was

that a mighty man, a great conqueror, should be raised up from their midst, who, coming of the lineage of David, should restore the brilliancy and prosperity of David's reign ; should overthrow the Roman rule, and make Judea chief among the nations. In the other, Messiah was looked for not as a great warrior who should lead the people through revolt to victory and freedom and supremacy, but as a great prophet who should lead the people through righteousness back to the loving favour of God ; God, it was thought, would then descend in person upon the earth, and call the nations to judgment. Those who held this latter view cultivated personal piety, and, regarding religion as a spiritual influence, outgrew their reverence for the ceremonial law and the Temple service. The Essenes were among those who held this spiritual estimate of religion, and they looked for the coming of a new age, a millenium—a kingdom of God on earth—and in harmony with this expectation they so lived as to be in readiness to enter when this kingdom should appear.

Thirdly, There were the lines of speculative thought which the more educated and cultured of the Jews had imbibed from the religious systems and philosophies of the Gentile world. Every class of the Jewish people was outgrowing its adhesion to the crude letter of the law, and to the literal interpretation of the scripture. To adapt these scriptures to the advancing thought of the age, it became necessary to make them speak in harmony with the philosophic systems that were dominating the world at large. This was accomplished by commentaries which declared the cruder narratives of Scripture to be allegories typical of higher truths. Philo was the great master of this art, and the copious commentaries and philosophical essays which he wrote must have revolutionised the Jewish thought of his age. Philo was born about the year B.C. 25, he must therefore have been above fifty when Jesus commenced his ministry. The speculative thought of Philo, how-

ever, does not seem to have reached or influenced the mind of Jesus. It makes its first appearance in the New Testament in the epistles of Paul. Paul had learned in the Jewish schools the subtleties of the Philonic thought ; how by the Logos, or divine wisdom, or Spirit, or Word, God came near to the world of man ; how this divine Logos rested upon the High Priest and made him to be more than human, to be a divine being while he was engaged in performing the sacred rites of his office. Paul, however, was born at Tarsus, a city of Asia Minor, the rival of Athens as a seat of Grecian philosophy and learning. In early life Paul must have therefore been largely influenced by the forms of Gentile thought which were prevalent in his native city, and till his residence in Jerusalem for instruction in the Jewish law, was doubtless a very indifferent Jew. Here, while studying at the feet of the learned and liberal chief Rabbi Gamaliel, he would have made a close and intimate acquaintance with the theories and commentaries of Philo, who sought to reconcile Judaism with the philosophy of the Grecian schools, and to assert for it the place of honour as being the primal light. Plato was thus represented as a plagiarist of Moses. This Jewish education seems to have suddenly fired the youthful zeal of Paul, or Saul, as he was then named, and to have made him a Jewish zealot. But this was only the effervescence of a fiery and impulsive nature, and Paul soon outgrew his sudden attachment to the Jewish law and became a convert to the Christian reform.*

Paul did not, however, part with his philosophy on his conversion, and that system of an intermediate divinity, which was common now to the Grecian and

* This reform as a Christian movement was then in its infancy. It was, however, in large harmony with the teachings of the Essenian communities, and these were well established as Jewish sects, as a sort of Jewish Puritanism. The Essenian communities in all probability merged into the early Christian church.

the Jewish thought, Paul applied to his new faith, the great founder and teacher of which he never knew or saw in the flesh.

Jesus was, consequently an *ideal* conception to the mind of Paul. Paul knew him simply as the teacher of a sublime spiritual faith, as one who had taken up a prophet's work in a prophet's spirit, who had done works of wonder, and who had perished by a martyr's death. Nay, more, the general rumour amongst his followers was, that God had raised him from the dead, and that he had been seen ascending into heaven.*

This was enough for Paul. Not the Jewish High Priest, as Philo had taught, who was after all but a very ordinary man, but this great and pure-minded and high-souled prophet was in his estimation the true Logos, the accredited messenger of God, was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person."

Paul never saw Jesus, and never learned his doctrine, either from his disciples or his apostles; these, he says, could teach him nothing that he did not beforehand know.† The great principles of spiritual religion he felt as inspirations of his own quickened heart, but he recognised Jesus as the great prophet who had spoken these with a prophet's power, who had given his life as their witness, and who had suffered a martyr's death in their behalf. So he preached Christ; for he recognised Jesus as the Messiah, not in the popular but in the spiritual sense, *i.e.*, as the power and the wisdom of God. But the power and the wisdom of God were the attributes of the Gentile Logos; the "Divine Word," by whom the worlds were made, the second God, the mediator between God and man. So Jesus, considered as the Christ, Paul felt must be each and all of these, and thus in his epistle to the Colossians, Paul calls upon them to thank God,

* For the value of the Gospel testimony to this event, see "English Life of Jesus," by Thomas Scott.

† Gal. ch. i. 2.

“Who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love . . . who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”*—*Col. i. 13-17.*

This is but a specimen of the numerous passages to be found in the writings of Paul, exalting the nature of Jesus, and attributing to him those attributes of divinity which Philo had attempted to affix to the Jewish High Priest, and which both Philo and Plato had ascribed to the Logos or Divine Word, which, in short, had for centuries been the basis of the philosophic thought of the then known world.

The unknown writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writing from a Jewish stand-point, claims, in like

* It has lately been a question in dispute among biblical scholars, as to whether Paul really wrote this Epistle to the Colossians, and some others, which bear his name. The only epistles of which his authorship is undisputed, being those to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians. Certainly, in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, Paul, if he wrote them, speaks of Jesus in far more exalted terms than those he uses in the above-named letters. This, however, may be due to the fact that both at Ephesus and Colosse, Gnosticism was the prevalent philosophy. This seems to have been a mixture of Grecian philosophy and Oriental ideas. According to this system, the Pleroma, or fulness of the Godhead, was made up of the Divine Essence, and an endless series of “Æons” which emanated from it. Some of these were very nearly allied to the Supreme, and others were removed by generations or descent from him, till at last they became bad or evil influences,—the enemies of the good God. By these Æons, the Supreme was thought to have made the world, and to rule mankind. This Gnosticism tainted Judaism, and early in the second century, it largely corrupted Christianity. Simon Magus claimed to be one of these Æons—“gave himself out to be some great one to whom the people all gave heed, saying, this man is the great Power of God.”—Acts viii. 10. Paul, addressing a people, imbued with these ideas, claims, for Jesus, that he was first and chief of these Æons, or emanations or powers of God,—the Son or Æon of his love, who made the world, and rules over all things.

manner, that Jesus was the Logos in his character of High Priest, and in this sense, invests him with a divine nature.* But to both Paul and this writer, the Logos is a spiritual being, and the human Jesus is, to a large extent, lost sight of by them; their Christ is largely ideal, and of Jesus, they have but the vague knowledge of general repute. Paul distinctly refused to know Jesus after the flesh. It marked, therefore, a further stage of development when early in, or possibly towards the middle of, the second century, the Fourth Gospel, that attributed to the Apostle John, appeared. This Gospel was written with an express purpose, that of proving that Jesus was the Christ or Logos. The people among whom Paul chiefly laboured, accepted his teaching that Christ was the wisdom and the power of God, the best beloved of the Æons or emanations from the divine essence; but many of those versed in the current philosophy, denied that Christ or the Logos

* Ernest De Bunsen, in his interesting work, "The Hidden Wisdom of Christ," ascribes the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews to Apollos, the companion of Paul, and says "that Apollos has here applied to Christ the pre-Christian Alexandrian doctrine about the first-born Wisdom, Spirit, or Word of God is evident. For, as we have pointed out, in the book of Wisdom, the same is called 'the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness.' Now we have seen that in the Apocrypha, God is not revealed as a person, but merely as a spirit or glory. . . . But Apollos conceived, and with him, as we may assume, all those who believed in Christ, that since the mark of humanity's high-calling had been reached by and in Jesus,—since the perfect incarnation of God's holy spirit had been accomplished, the real pattern of mankind has ceased to be a divine idea, has been manifested in the flesh, *has become a person.*" . . .

"It is possible that by thus connecting an historical individual with a pre-historical idea, Apollos did either consciously or unconsciously lay the foundation to that 'doctetism' which denied the humanity of Christ." . . .

"The Divine Spirit or Word thus personified, has taken the place by the throne of God, which was, up to this time of reformation, occupied by a merely *ideal* image of humanity's high-calling. Divine Wisdom, which, from the beginning, is by the throne of God, henceforth is represented by the first-born of deified humanity. The spiritual messiah has become personal."—Vol. I., p. 311, 323.

was a man. Jesus, they said, was simply a human being on whom this Logos descended, with whom Jesus as the Christ was mystically united, as a soul is united with a body. The Fourth Gospel is written to refute this teaching, and to assert that Jesus was himself the Logos—Christ, “that the Word or Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, so that men beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father.” (John i. 14.) Throughout this gospel, Jesus is spoken of as a superhuman being, as wearing the human form, but claiming a mysterious and intimate relationship with God, as asserting, for himself, an equality with God, and as claiming to have existed before the world was made. This gospel, however, records but the fanciful, though deep and philosophical, speculations of a devout and spiritually-minded Christian, who lived quite one hundred years after the crucifixion of Jesus. It is an endeavour to identify the Platonic Logos with the personality of Jesus, whom his Jewish followers had accepted as a spiritual Messiah or Christ, and whom his Gentile followers were anxious to exalt, by asserting his identity with the “Logos” or Divine Word.

The three earlier Gospels contain the real history of Jesus, or rather, they record the traditions that were current among his followers concerning him, some thirty years after his death. These followers were, for the most part, Jews, some of whom had been his actual companions. They are a mixture of history and legend,—nevertheless, all our knowledge of the actual Jesus must be gathered from these sources. The so-called Gospel of John is the record of the speculative fancy of some Gentile Christian, who never had seen either Jesus or his disciples, or conversed even with those of the second generation from these; who, moreover, knew but little either of Judea or the Jewish religion; who, however, is thoroughly conversant with the Logos as a personified power of God, and who is desirous of identifying Jesus with this being.

In the three earlier Gospels, Jesus never claims to be the Christ whom the Jews were expecting, till just at the close of his ministry, when he bids his disciples to keep his assumption of the office a profound secret till after his resurrection. (Mark ix. 9.) In the fourth Gospel, however, Jesus is represented as openly claiming this title from the very commencement of his ministry, and as continually upbraiding the Jews for refusing to recognise it. In this Gospel, it is the sum and substance of his teaching. The same writer who wrote the Gospel ascribed to John, is generally believed to have written also the Epistles which claim the same authorship. In these, we very clearly discern the speculative controversy that occasioned their appearance, viz., the denial on the part of many Asiatic Christians that the Logos, whom they now called Christ, had ever possessed a personal and material existence, had ever "come in the flesh." So this epistle commences—

"That which was from the beginning (the pre-existent Logos or Christ), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word (Logos) of Life.*

"(For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us);

"That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Again the writer says—

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits

* The period of the appearance of the Gnostic heresy renders it possible for those who took part in the controversies it occasioned to have seen the living Jesus; the writer of this epistle, however, to add weight and authority to his arguments, writes in the name of an apostle, who was the companion of Jesus, and thus antedates his work by upwards of half a century. Dr Davidson places the epistle before the gospel, and dates the former about A.D. 130.

whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now, already is it in the world.”

During the larger portion of the second century, the representatives of Hebrew Christianity, *i.e.*, of the first church of the apostles, which had its centre at Jerusalem, were almost wholly extinct, and Christianity was altogether in the hands of its Gentile converts. Its severance from Judaism was complete, and the churches that now existed, took their tone very largely from the teachings of Paul.

The chief and almost the only Christian literature of the second century, consists in the copious Apologies made to the Roman Emperors on behalf of Christianity, viz., that made by Justin Martyr to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 160, and that made by Tertullian about A.D. 200,—and in the celebrated dialogue or controversy of the former, with the Jew Trypho. Justin was a native of Palestine, but a Grecian by birth and education, a student and teacher of the Gentile philosophies. Plato was his great master till his conversion to Christianity. After this event, however, he still continued to wear the philosopher's mantle, and endeavoured to reconcile much that he had learned from Plato's writings with the spirit he had imbibed from his new faith. His conception of Jesus was necessarily largely ideal, and Justin claimed, on his behalf, that he was the pre-existing Logos of whom Plato had taught. Commenting in his “Apology” on the passage from Matthew's gospel, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” Justin says—

“The Jews therefore for maintaining that it was the Father of the Universe who had the conference with Moses, when it was the very Son of God who had it, and who is styled both Angel and Apostle, are justly accused by the prophetic spirit, and Christ himself, for knowing neither the Father nor the Son. For they who assert the Son to be the Father, are guilty of not knowing the Father, and likewise of being ignorant that the Father of the Universe has a Son, who being the Logos, and first-begotten of God, is God. And he it is who heretofore appeared to Moses and the rest of the Prophets, sometimes in fire, and sometimes in the form of angels. But now, under your empire, as I mentioned, was born of a virgin, according to the will of his Father, to save such as should believe in him, and was content to be made of no reputation, and to suffer, that by his death and resurrection, he might conquer death.”

Justin here asserts Jesus to be God, but God in such a subordinate sense as not to interfere with the unity and supremacy of the Father. A confused thought that literally implies the recognition of two deities. In the old philosophy, the Logos was the spirit, or active power, or wisdom of God. But this idea, when identified with Jesus, suggests two distinct persons in the Godhead, and takes a large step towards the Trinitarian dogma. In his “Dialogue with Trypho,” Justin speaks yet more clearly—

“I will produce another proof* from the scriptures to show that God did, before all creation, beget of Himself a beginning, a certain rational power, which, by the Holy Ghost, is called also the glory of the Lord, and sometimes the Son, sometimes wisdom, sometimes an angel, sometimes the Lord, and the Logos or Word. Just like what we see done in ourselves, for when we speak any word, we beget that word: but not by separating it from us, so as to diminish the word that is in us by our speaking it. Just as we see, also, that one fire is lighted from another, without diminishing that from which it is lighted from, that still continuing to be the same.”

* The proof consists in quotations from the Book of Proverbs, describing the personification of wisdom.

Here, again, we have, in this attempted definition of the Logos, a confusion of thought, seeing that it may imply a soul lit by the spirit of God, as well as a separate and subordinate divinity. This confusion of ideas and perplexity of thought is well seen in the following passage from the "Apology" of Tertullian, who was born at Carthage, of heathen parents, about the year 160, who as a youth, was instructed in the whole round of philosophic study ; but becoming a convert to Christianity, wrote, about the year 200, a powerful Apology, for the purpose of showing its superiority to the heathen religions, yet who eventually lapsed into the Montanist heresy, which looked for another Christ or Paraclete yet to come. In the chapter concerning the God of the Christians, Tertullian says—

"The God we worship is one God, that Almighty Being who fetched this whole mass of matter, with all the elements, bodies, and spirits which compose the universe, purely out of nothing by the word of his power, which spoke them into being, and by that wisdom which ranged them into this admirable order for a becoming image and glorious expression of his Divine Majesty, which world the Greeks call by a word implying beauty (*κοσμος*). This same God is invisible, though we discern his infinite majesty in all his works, and whom we cannot touch though represented to us by divine revelation, and united to us by his spirit ; and incomprehensible, though we come to some imperfect ideas of him by the help of our senses."

Later on, in a chapter concerning the birth and crucifixion of Christ, who, he says, was born of a pure virgin, he adds :—

"I have already said, that God reared this fabric of the world out of nothing, by his word, wisdom, or power ; and it is evident that your sages of old were of the same opinion, that the "Logos," that is, the word or the wisdom, was the maker of the universe, for Zeno determines the Logos to be the creator and adjuster of every thing in nature. The same Logos he affirms to be called by the name of Fate, God, mind of Jove, and necessity of all

things. Cleanthes will have the author of the world to be a spirit that pervades every part of it. And we Christians also do affirm a spirit to be the proper substance of the "Logos," by whom all things were made, in which he subsisted before he was spoken out, and was the wisdom that assisted at the creation, and the power that presided over the whole work. The Logos or Word issuing forth from that spiritual substance at the creation of the world, and generated by that issuing or progression, is for this reason called the Son of God, and *the* God, from his unity of substance with God the father, for God is a Spirit. An imperfect image of this you have in the derivation of a ray from the body of the sun; for his ray is a part without any diminution of the whole, but the sun is always in the ray, because the ray is always from the sun; nor is the substance separated, but only extended.

"Thus is it in some measure in the eternal generation of 'The Logos,' he is a spirit of a spirit, a God of God, as one light is generated by another, the original parent light remaining entire and undiminished, notwithstanding the communication of itself to many other lights. Thus it is that the Logos which came forth from God, is both God and the Son of God, and those two are one. Hence it is that a spirit of a spirit, or a God of God, makes another in mode of subsistence, but not in number; in order of nature, but not in numericalness or identity of essence; and so the Son is subordinate to the Father as he comes from him as the principle, but is never separated."—(*Tertullian's Apology—Reeves' Translation*).

Such were the confused ideas as to the nature and person of Jesus considered as the Christ, that prevailed at the close of the second century. We have got, it will be seen, half way towards a Trinity. We have a Father who is God, and a Son who is of the same substance with him, being begotten by him, who is, however, at this era, not the equal, but the subordinate, of the Father. We are, it is evident, approaching the era of the Nicene creed, are already far in advance of the Apostle's symbol, but are yet some centuries removed from the Athanasian dogma.

From this date to the early part of the third century, fierce controversies raged in the Christian church, as to the proper relation which the Son bore to the Father. Moreover, another personage was introduced serving to increase the perplexity, viz., the Holy Spirit or Ghost.

Early in the third century Noëtus, a native of Smyrna, maintained

“ that God himself, whom he denominated the Father, and held to be absolutely one and indivisible, united himself with the man Christ, whom he called the Son, and in him was born and suffered. From this dogma of Noëtus his adherents were called Patripassians, *i.e.*, persons who held that the great parent of the universe himself, and not merely some one person of the Godhead, had made expiation for the sins of men.”—*Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.*

Later on in this century lived Sabellius, an African Presbyter or Bishop. He was the founder of the famous Sabellian heresy, which asserted in opposition to the followers of Noëtus, that only a power from God, and not the Father himself, was united with the Son, or the man Christ; the Holy Spirit he considered as another power or portion of the Eternal Father. The controversies that prevailed about this period, as to the true nature of Christ and his relation to the Supreme God, were innumerable. The religion of Jesus as a moral force was consequently all but lost sight of in the clouds of metaphysical subtleties that veiled the pure, bright light of God. These speculative fancies were cobwebs spun by the heated imaginations of fierce and fiery disputants, and had no foundation whatever on the rock of Eternal truth. Yet these grotesque and fantastic speculations were laying the foundation of the creeds and dogmas that were to dominate the Christian church for succeeding centuries; that were to fill it with bitter strifes, to fetter its freedom, and effectually to stop its growth.

By the close of the third century, it came to be

generally recognised that the Godhead was to be conceived of in three aspects, or understood as comprising three persons. The former was a heretic opinion, the latter the orthodox faith. But this orthodox faith was by no means clearly defined, and endless disputes prevailed as to the relation which the persons of the Trinity bore to each other. Early in the fourth century, Alexander, who was bishop of Alexandria in Egypt, the metropolitan city alike of philosophy and religion, and now the chief seat of Christianity, the workshop where its chief doctrines were moulded, maintained, among other things, that the Son possesses not only the same dignity, but the same *essence* as the Father. Arius, one of the presbyters, and who was ultimately the great opponent of Athanasius, the successor of Alexander in the Alexandrian Bishopric, condemned these views as allied to Sabellianism, and maintained

“that the Son is totally and essentially distinct from the Father; that he was only the first and noblest of those created beings whom God the Father formed out of nothing, and the instrument which the father used in creating this material universe, and therefore that he was inferior to the father both in nature and dignity. He defended his heresy by showing that if the Father begat a Son, he who was begotten had a beginning of existence, and therefore once had no existence.”

Alexander accused Arius of blasphemy, and excommunicated him. But Arius had numerous followers; and the church at large was rent by a wide-spread schism on this account. The Emperor Constantine, who had recently been converted to Christianity, and who had little taste for this theological hair-splitting, deeming it remote from the true use of religion, tried in vain to quiet the controversy, and at last as a means of effectually settling it, and putting an end to the disgraceful strifes that were raging with regard to it, he summoned, in the year A.D. 325, the famous council

of the entire church, which met at Nice in Bythinia, at which three hundred and eighteen bishops assembled to decide the question as to whether the Son was of the same essence with the Father, or a distinct being from him, and an inferior being to him.

The good Bishops, who sat in great state with the Emperor as their president, had a somewhat warm discussion, during which blows as well as words were interchanged. The council lasted for two months, and the result was, that a majority declared that "Christ was of the same essence as the Father." Arius, who had asserted the contrary, was sent into exile in Illyricum, and his followers were compelled to subscribe their belief in the following confession of faith, composed by the council. The reader will detect in the strange theological jargon which it contains, the natural sequence of the forms of thought we have been considering.

"We believe in one God the Father Almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, of the substance of the Father. God of ($\epsilon\kappa$, from or out of) God, light of light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things are made that are in heaven and that are in earth; who for us men and for our salvation descended and was incarnate, and became man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit. But those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that he was not before he was begotten, or affirm that he is of any other substance or essence, or that the Son of God is created and mutable or changeable, the Catholic Church doth pronounce accursed."

The Nicene creed, as it appears in the Church of England prayer-book, and as it has been generally used by the Christian Church, is a modification of the above, which was made by the council of Constantinople in the year 381. Its chief difference consists in

the removal of the appended excommunication, and in the addition of the following clauses in reference to the Holy Ghost.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeded from the Father (*and the Son*),* who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets.”

The Eastern Church severed itself from the Western Church on the clause which makes the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Son in conjunction with the Father, instead of (as it held) from the Father alone. In this later creed we have a near approach to the Triune Godhead, which forms the fundamental dogma of modern Christianity; and from this time—the latter half of the fourth century—speculations about the Christian Trinity were more thought of than considerations concerning Christian duty, while a correct belief in this matter was regarded by many of the clergy as being of infinitely higher importance than a virtuous life. Historians of this date inform us that while the morals of the people were degenerating, so that a great preacher (Gregory Nazianzen) described the people as being composed of “the bad who wore a mask, and the bad who appeared without one;” yet the interest even of the poorer classes of the people in the theological speculations of the period was as intense as that shown in the present day by the English public in the result of some popular horse or boat race. At Constantinople, which was now the capital city of the empire, it is recorded that

“knots of people stood at the street corners, discussing incomprehensibilities; in the markets, clothes-sellers, money changers, provision dealers, were similarly employed. When a man was asked, How many oboli a thing cost? he started a discussion upon generated and ungenerated existence.

* The word “Filioque” was appended by the Latin Church early in the fifth century.

Inquiries as to the price of bread were answered by the assertion that the Father is greater than the Son. When one wanted a bath, the reply was that the Son of God was created from nothing."

Such is the picture of the condition of the public mind as drawn by Gregory of Nyssa, a preacher of this period. This deep popular interest, which existed towards the close of the fourth century, concerning the subordination of the Son to the Father, and the *status* of the different personages of the Godhead, affords convincing evidence that the Council of Nicæa had by no means furnished a satisfactory settlement of the question, and that a fierce and virulent controversy was raging with regard to it. This was conducted with arguments of a very questionable nature. Athanasius, who was then Archdeacon of Alexandria, as secretary of the Nicæan Council, drew up the formularies of the Nicene creed, which is much more truly his creed than the one which has been made to bear his name, and which was not in existence till centuries after his death. This creed was opposed at first by seventeen bishops; these, however, were ultimately reduced to two, who, with Arius, were sent into exile as soon as the decision was made. Considering the penalties that were consequent on voting in the minority, it is surprising that even two were found prepared to suffer banishment and loss of high office on account of the faith they held. On the death of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius was promoted to the office, and Athanasian dogma ruled in the ascendant, yet not without considerable opposition; and Athanasius had to use very rough and violent measures to silence this. History tells, possibly with some exaggerations, for the charges are brought by his opponents, of his flogging several bishops, interrupting divine service, burning the sacred books, breaking the chalices, overthrowing the communion table, and causing the building to be razed to the ground. Still the views of Arius progressed in

spite of this high-handed persecution ; they even infected the court, and the emperor's sister espoused them. Possibly through her influence, Arius is recalled, and the bishops who were exiled with him, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nice, are restored to their sees. Athanasius, however, is now Bishop of Alexandria, and Arius, on his return, is neither allowed to teach, nor to be received into communion in any of the churches. The Church, as represented by Athanasius, sets the State, as represented by the emperor, at defiance ; yet a synod of the clergy assembled at Jerusalem recognised the *status* of Arius in the Church. The tide, however, is about to turn. Complaints against the overbearing tyranny of Athanasius are heard on every side, and he is summoned to answer them before a council of bishops at Cæsarea ; but he declines to appear, and, as a consequence, is eventually deposed and exiled. Arius now drew up a Confession of Faith, without the controversial points relating to the *consubstantiality* of the Father and Son, and presented it to Constantine, with a memorial praying that this confession might be deemed a sufficient test of Catholic orthodoxy. To this Constantine assented, and was so well satisfied with the faith of Arius, that he sent for Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople, and enjoined him to admit Arius to communion on the following Sunday. The terrified bishop, over-awed by the authority of the emperor, retired to the church of Irene, and there prayed "that God would call himself from the world, or let that Arius die." On the following Sunday, as Arius, accompanied by Eusebius of Nicomedia and others of his adherents, was proceeding to make a sort of triumphal entry into the church of Constantinople, he was seized with a sudden colic, and expired in dreadful torments. Thus the bishop's prayer was answered, but suspicion was rife that poison had lent a helping-hand towards the accomplishment of its uncharitable request.

During the remainder of the reign of Constantine, and till the death of his son and successor, Constantius,—that is, for about forty years—Arian views were in the ascendant; and a compromise was effected between these views and the Nicene dogma, which declared the Son to be of the *same* substance with the Father, by substituting the word *ὁμοιουσιος* (*like essence*) for *ὁμοουσιος* (*the same essence*). Under Julian and Theodosius, however, the tide again turned, the latter emperor, towards the close of the century, depriving the Arians of all their churches, and enacting severe laws against them, persecuted Arianism to its virtual extinction; and the doctrine of the complete Godhead of Christ was henceforth the ruling dogma of Christendom.

This result was largely helped by the powerful advocacy of the great preacher of this period, Gregory Nazianzen, whose public discourses were chiefly directed to prove the existence in one Godhead of three self-depending hypostases or persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—each of whom was distinguished by peculiar qualities or attributes. During this period a fierce and protracted theological strife prevailed throughout the empire, and discussions concerning the Trinity engrossed the public thought. Eventually the Nicene dogma of a Godhead composed of three equal and distinct persons, of which Athanasius had been the distinguished advocate, became the settled faith of Christendom. It was doubtless to make assurance doubly sure, and to prevent all further controversy on the matter, that the Athanasian creed was in course of time constructed, or was for this purpose accepted, if, as rumour states, it owed its origin to the polished satire of an opponent of the dogma it professes to uphold. This creed, which was wholly unknown till at least two centuries after the death of its professed author, Athanasius, sets forth the Catholic faith on this knotty question; and, after making the subject, by way of

explanation, infinitely more dark and perplexing and contradictory than it was before, it declares that "except every one do keep this faith whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly!" Shall be consigned by a merciful Father and a loving God to the eternal torments of a cruel and pitiless Hell!

Apart from the frightful blasphemy of such a declaration, this creed is a mass of absurdity and nonsense.* It reminds us of theological speculation gone mad. It professes to reason concerning subjects far beyond the grasp of the highest and largest thought. It declares "the Father to be God, the Son to be God, and the Holy Ghost to be God;" asserts that each of these Gods has a separate and distinct personality; that each is uncreated, incomprehensible, eternal, and almighty, and yet while compelling us by the "Christian verity," to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, it forbids us by the Catholic religion to say "there be three Gods or three Lords!" and it declares that if we "confound the persons or divide the substance," the flames of an eternal hell will be our portion! This theological monstrosity, which some assert was penned in satire by a drunken monk

* Yet last year densely crowded meetings, composed largely of the higher church clergy, and the nobility, and influential laity, were held in St James and Exeter Halls, for the purpose of maintaining this creed as the foundation dogma of the national religion. If we are asked to account for such a sad spectacle, we say the following facts explain it. It is the party cry rather than the real belief of the church and people. "The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," the high honours of society, and the wealth and prestige of the National Church, are to be had by professing a belief here, or rather this profession is one of the essential conditions to their possession, while till a century or two ago, it was death to openly express a disbelief in the Athanasian dogmas, and till the early part of the present century it involved outlawry. Even now penury and neglect, and the starving inquisition of modern times, wait to punish by various forms of social persecution, those who are earnest enough to think for themselves, and to avow their disbelief in orthodox creeds.

of the middle ages; which makes philosophy ridiculous and religion an absurdity and a lie, every clergyman of the Church of England is bound to subscribe as a believer, and, thirteen times a year, to read in the services of his church. It asserts the co-equality of the Son with the Father, the identity of Jesus, as Christ, with God.

Here, then, with this precious document we terminate our enquiry. The sun itself is not more plainly visible in the bright blue sky of a summer's day, than is the fact evidenced to us by the religious history of the past two thousand years, that the dogma of "the Deity of Christ" is the product of the speculations of ancient heathen philosophy carried to insane and senseless lengths, and is not, as our clergy represent it to be, and as the English people are taught to regard it as being, a special revelation from God.

We put it as an alternative to our readers, either this dogma, which makes Jesus to be an incarnate God, is a revealed truth, or it is a blasphemous idolatry. If it be a revealed truth, we assert that God would have given sufficient and satisfactory evidences with a revelation so startling and so strange. We ask in vain for these evidences and the churches of whom we ask them, and in whose keeping they should be, if they were in existence at all, only threaten us with eternal damnation for our non-belief, and bid us believe in order to escape this terrible fate. This absence of real evidence should convince all reasonable minds, that this strange dogma was a figment of human fancy, if not the product of human fraud, should assure them that it was no truth of the eternal God. Moreover, we have evidence, clear, conclusive, irrefutable evidence, as to what this doctrine really is. We can trace its birth-place in the philosophic speculations of the ancient world, we can note its gradual development and growth,—we can see it in its early youth passing, through Philo and others, from

Grecian philosophy into the current of Jewish thought; then after resting awhile in the Judaism of the period of the Christian era, we see it slightly changing its character, as it passes through Gamaliel, Paul,—the writers of the Fourth Gospel, and of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—through Justin Martyr and Tertullian, into the stream of early Christian thought, and now from a sublime philosophical speculation it becomes dwarfed and corrupted into a church dogma, and finally gets hardened as a frozen mass of absurdity, stupidity, and blasphemy, in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. The dogma of the Godhead of Jesus, or the Deity of Christ, we now *know* to be a falsity and a fraud.* The clergy who teach it might and ought to know this as well as ourselves. And being false this dogma is a tremendous blasphemy. It is the shame and degradation of our enlightened age, that this the worship of a man in the place of God, is sanctioned and supported by law, and that the wealth of the English Church is devoted to its maintenance and dissemination. But for the wealth and prestige which attach to those who hold it, and the social persecution and hatred that attend its repudiation, this dogma would long since have died out. At heart, however, the nation, who bow in reverence before it, give only a lip service to it. But this is worse than all, for an earnest and heartfelt idolatrous worship is infinitely better than a hollow and formal hypocrisy.

We have shewn the doctrine to be false. The church that rests upon it, rests therefore on the sandy foundation of a known and proven lie, and the people who cherish it, in blind and senseless indifference, they nourish a canker at the heart of their religious life. A new reformation is evidently near at hand. "The times are ripe and rotten ripe for change." Religion is the life's-blood of all true and

* With the proven fallacy of the dogma of the Deity of Christ, the doctrine of the Atonement collapses also.

noble peoples, but a religion that is not true is no religion at all, and an idolatrous dogma seated on the throne which truth, and truth alone, should fill, is as poison in the waters of the well of life.

God is not a strange compound of co-equal personages, one of whom is a stern tyrant, and the other a loving friend; God is not a Jewish peasant who, centuries ago, under the name of Jesus, led a beautiful life filled with love and service, and the spirit of just and generous reform. God is the beneficent framer and upholder of the universe; the Father and the friend of man; is, as the recorded words of Jesus declare, an invisible and pervading Spirit, and they who would worship him aright, must worship him "in spirit and in truth." As a consequence of the false and fictitious character of the dogma of the Deity of Jesus, of the asserted identity of the Creator of ten-thousand worlds with a Jewish peasant, who lived in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, religion is in this nineteenth century divorced from the intelligence and reason of educated and thoughtful men, and is consequently ceasing to be a real power in the world. Still, underlying all these speculations, whose crystallisation into church dogmas, that are at once incredible and absurd, has done religion such grievous injury, there exists a grand and glorious truth. The "*Christ idea*" is the noblest thought that has stirred the human mind. It is the idea of a godlike humanity; of man sharing a divine nature and thinking the pure thought of God. It is this ennobled humanity that is the "first begotten of the Father," the true "Son of God." Humanity in its perfectness is the real Christ, and this is the great truth that the soul of Jesus discerned, and that the life of Jesus emphasized. To call Jesus God, is to do infinite injury to his memory. As God, his faith was a fiction, his example worthless, and his martyrdom a sham. It is only in his absolute humanity, that the worth and excellence of his life are seen. That life realised to the earnest

and devout thought of its age, the Christ ideal with which the minds of men were at that time filled, and the fault and folly of succeeding generations has been, that men have determined to discern in Jesus *alone*, those godlike attributes in which humanity at large are able and privileged to share.

The Sabellian heresy of the third century, which recognised a trinity of *attributes* rather than of *persons* in the Godhead, made a very near approach towards a truthful expression of the close relation with each other, which the human and the divine natures are able to sustain. This view imagined that one and the same Deity was manifested as Father, Son, and Spirit; as Father in the overruling Providence, as Son in the excellences of human character and conduct, as Spirit in the pervading influence of the divine thought. A system which finds clear and beautiful expression in the following lines of the American Poet, Whittier, and which we have no hesitation in offering to our readers, as a charming and admirable substitute for the perplexing dogmas and tremendous fallacies of the Athanasian creed.

TRINITAS.

At morn I prayed, I fain would see
How three are One, and One is Three—
Read the dark riddle unto me.

I wandered forth; the sun and air
I saw bestowed with equal care
On good and evil, foul and fair.

No partial favour dropped the rain;—
Alike the righteous and profane
Rejoiced above their heading grain.

And my heart murmured, "Is it meet
That blindfold nature thus should treat
With equal hand the tares and wheat?"

A presence melted through my mood,
A warmth, a light, a sense of good,
Like sunshine through a winter wood.

I saw that presence, mailed complete
In her white innocence, stoop to greet
A fallen sister of the street.

Upon her bosom, snowy pure,
The lost one clung as if secure
From inward guilt or outward lure.

“Beware!” I said; “in this I see
No gain to her, but loss to thee;
Who touches pitch defiled must be.

I passed the haunts of shame and sin,
And a voice whispered, “Who therein
Shall these lost souls to Heaven’s peace win?

“Who there shall hope and health dispense,
And lift the ladder up from thence
Whose rounds are prayers of penitence?”

I said, “No higher life they know;
These earth worms love to have it so;
Who stoops to raise them sinks as low.”

That night with painful care I read
What Hippo’s saint and Calvin said—
The living seeking to the dead!

In vain I turned, in weary quest,
Old pages, where (God give them rest!)
The poor creed-mongers dreamed and guessed.

And still I prayed, “Lord, let me see
How three are one, and one is three;
Read the dark riddle unto me.”

Then something whispered “Dost thou pray
For what thou hast? This very day
The Holy Three have crossed thy way.

“Did not the gifts of sun and air
To good and ill alike declare
The all-compassionate Father’s care?

“ In the white soul that stooped to raise
The lost one from her evil ways,
Thou saw’st the Christ whom angels praise !

“ A bodiless Divinity !
The still small voice that spake to thee
Was the Holy Spirit’s mystery !

“ Oh, blind of sight, of faith how small,
Father, and Son, and Holy Call ;—
This day thou hast denied them all.

“ Revealed in love and sacrifice
The Holiest passed before thine eyes,
One and the same, in threefold guise !

“ The equal Father in rain and sun,
His Christ in the good to evil done,
His voice in thy soul ;—and the Three are One.”

I shut my grave Aquinas fast ;
The monkish gloss of ages past ;
The schoolman’s creed aside I cast,

And my heart answered, “ Lord, I see
How Three are One, and One is Three,
Thy riddle hath been read to me.”

