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The Dying God

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The Dying God

The Hidden History of Western Civilization

David Livingstone

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Introduction
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Western Civilization

Few would acknowledge, given the state of our society's technological advance, that our understanding of history could be significantly inaccurate. The problem is that, due to a general lack of knowledge of the accomplishments of other civilizations, the history of Western civilization, presumed to have begun in Greece, progressed through Rome and culminated in modern Europe and America, is confused with the history of the world. While certain achievements are recognized for other cultures, the West is believed to have not only dominated modern history, but all of history, and therefore, has been the single greatest contributor of the accomplishments that have benefited mankind. Ultimately, Western values are presumed to have demonstrated their efficacy, and though the rest of the world is in possession of the potential to equal the West, it is yet mired in a more primitive stage of evolution, and consequently, it is supposed it must adopt Western ideologies and strategies in order to mirror our accomplishments.

However, our concept of "Western" civilization is the product of a need to create a specifically European version of history, resulting from a number prejudices that have plagued scholarship since the eighteenth century. Though, it has been so readily adopted that most scholars have largely failed to address its fundamental misconceptions. As Nicholas Campion describes:

> It was during the eighteenth century, when the Enlightenment began rewriting the past to justify their view of the present, that deliberate exaggeration crept into the story. Increasingly, the debt that Europe owed to other cultures, chiefly the Egyptian, was devalued, and even the Greek's own opinion that they had learnt much from the Egyptian priests was dismissed as harmless fantasy. By the mid-nineteenth century a myth had been created that Greek culture had developed out of nowhere as a consequence of some peculiar inherent collective genius. It was thought that this existed in almost total isolation from its neighbours and owed nothing to any other eastern Mediterranean culture.[1]

Essentially, Western scholars have committed the error of interpreting the past in terms of the West's own particular experience, that is, with Christianity. Having contributed to a doubt of the validity of the Bible account, science, or intellectual thought, came to be regarded as the method by which humanity rids itself of superstition. In addition, as a result of having theorized that nature is subject to a process of evolution towards higher forms, it was surmised that evolution takes place in all fields of human endeavor. Therefore, although progress can be demonstrated to take place only in technology, human intellectual thought was also deemed to be governed by a process of evolution. Thus, if the Greeks were our ancestors, then Greek philosophy must have been the birth of critical thought, regarded as the first rejection of religion. These traditions were then perpetuated by the Romans, before taking hold of modern Europe. Although early advancements took place at the time of the Crusades, it was not until the Renaissance, that a further rejection of religious superstition, and a revival of classical learning, led to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. It was then that new ideals of rights and freedoms were born, culminating in both the American and French Revolutions, the creation of a new system of government, and the final separation between Church and State.

However, the supposed link between Greece and the "West" is an artificial one. Rather, the Greeks and Romans had never acknowledged any sort of racial affiliation with the northern tribes that would later comprise modern Europe, but referred to them collectively as "barbarians", a term applied equally to the Persians and Egyptians. Instead, an attempt to more correctly present the past will reveal that those movements considered characteristic of Western civilization underwent a course significantly different from the one commonly touted. Rarely related by modern historians, it was Babylon that created those traditions that so impressed the Greeks. Moreover, the inhabitants of Europe had long been mired in barbarism, and though modern Europe certainly inherited much from classical civilization, it was by way of the Arabs, who erected a brilliant civilization and continued the traditions of the Greeks and the Romans, that were responsible for their final introduction to the West. As outlined by historian Jean Bottero:

> For if we discuss our civilization not as partisans but as anthropologists, and especially as historians, we see it gather and encompass not only the Greco-Latins, the heirs of Christianity, but also the Muslim world; in other words, almost the entire Arab world. A multitude of peoples, here

> and there, share too many concepts, values, principles, rational and emotional reactions, too may identical parameters, for us not to group them all, beyond their otherwise secondary divergences, under the heading of a single and same civilization, that is, our own: theirs as well as ours! Slowly but surely, and above all through its technological innovations – but everything comes out of that! – our civilization is well on the way to conquering the world. This does of course raise serious issues, not only for others but for ourselves, as well, especially in relation to others. Thus we have an additional reason to look at our civilization very closely once again and to attempt to form a just notion of it by witnessing its birth and the way in which it developed.[2]

More accurately, European civilization is no more than four hundred years old. Although certain preliminary achievements took place during the Renaissance, it was not until the eighteenth century that the coalescence of a distinct European civilization truly took place. And, though the West has certainly contributed to a number of remarkable accomplishments, essentially, the myth of "Western" history has fostered the delusion whereby Europeans and Americans have come to believe themselves as representing the pinnacle of human achievement. Ultimately, they have failed to recognize that they continue to be tinged by certain traits of the barbarism from which have they barely emerged, including the continuing existence of monarchies, nationalism, institutionalized racism, the degradation of women, etc.

The primary cause of the distortion of history by Western scholarship has its origin in the nationalistic tendencies of the eighteenth century. That century marked the emergence of Europe as a world power. Prior to that, Europe had merely been a collection of insignificant rivaling chiefdoms, whose very existence was threatened by the immense and expanding Ottoman Empire. Though, with the drastic advancement of Europe's military capabilities, the advance of the Turks was checked. These successes gave rise to a new nationalistic spirit, for no longer would Europe regard itself as lying on the outskirts of the world stage, but began to recognize itself as a powerful member, and even a significant contributor, to the course of history. Europe would no longer have to seek elsewhere for examples of high civilization, but now felt itself qualified to live by its own discernment.

Consequently, during the eighteenth century, known as the *Enlightenment*, European culture began to achieve its own particular outlines. The Enlightenment was also marked by a questioning of the legitimacy of Christianity, with recent scientific discoveries having cast doubt on the validity of the Bible account of creation. In addition, the new nationalistic tendencies among Europeans led to a rise in anti-Semitic sentiments, leading scholars to reject the Jewish version of history, with which they have been thoroughly indoctrinated, seeking instead to create a specifically European account of the past.

Inevitably, as Europeans surveyed the pageant of history, they were forced to acknowledge that, while the various great civilizations of the world had flourished, the Germanic and Celtic tribes that would eventually comprise modern Europe, were mired in a barbarism from which they would not emerge until the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, fueled by an obstinate nationalism, Europeans denied their essential absence from history, and, by grossly misinterpreting the facts, artificially created an ancient past, placing themselves far back in time, as far back as the beginning of human history, and in the ranks of the great civilizations. By inventing the myth of an Aryan race, European historians contrived the notion that the same racial component had been responsible for the birth of the civilizations of the Greeks and Romans, as well as that of the modern Europeans and Americans, and thus fabricated the myth of "Western" history, by excluding the contrbution of other civilizations.

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Chapter 1: The Sons of God

The Aryan Myth

Few are aware that the myth of the Aryan race did not belong solely to the delusions of the Nazis, but was a theory developed by European scholarship over several centuries. That racist theories were due in part to the nationalistic tendencies of the eighteenth century has been indicated by Leon Poliakov, in *The Aryan Myth*. In addition, however, as Ivan Hannaford has pointed out, in *Race: the History of an Idea in the West*, these theories were also influenced by pseudo-scientific tendencies derived from the occult. Though scholars have shied away from acknowledging its role in history, the occult, being a lore of secret knowledge pertaining to supernatural powers, and including magic, astrology and alchemy, has exercised a considerable influence on the direction of European scholarship.

In *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science*, John Henry remarked that, "a number of historians of science have refused to accept that something which they see as so irrational could have had any impact whatsoever upon the supremely rational pursuit of science. Their arguments seem to be based on mere prejudice, or on a failure to understand the richness and complexity of the magical tradition."[3] While a proper understanding of history can often not be achieved without an adequate consideration of its influence, unfortunately, except for the efforts of a few scholars, such as Frances Yates, it is not considered a reputable form of scholarship to explore the influence of the occult in history. On the other hand, when scholars treat occult topics that may aid our understanding of the past, in their adherence to occult teachings, they often concoct absurd theories in order to support their various myths or legends, and therefore, lack all semblance of sensible scholarship. Consequently, fearing a loss of credibility through association with a field dominated by quacks, mainstream scholars have generally avoided the subject, and therefore, have not only failed to correctly interpret various periods of history, but also to address those spurious claims that become popular superstition.

In Europe, to a great extent, occult doctrines were disseminated through a network of secret societies, like the Rosicrucians and Freemasons. Though claiming affiliation to Christianity, they adhered to complex belief systems quite distant from Christian teachings. Fantastic legendary accounts of their origin are provided to portray themselves as the inheritors of a secret occult tradition, dating back to the beginning of time, and incorporating themes borrowed from astrology, alchemy, Kabbalah and other ancient esoteric traditions. These closely guarded secrets were not regarded as mere legends, but as encapsulating truths that were the privilege of the few, and thus often influenced the thought and actions of its adherents. Such organizations became prominent from the time of the Renaissance, attracting not only members of the aristocracy, the political and religious establishment, but numerous prominent European intellectuals and scientists as well. Unbeknownst to the public, Leonardo Da Vinci, Francis Bacon, and Newton were avid students of the occult. Beethoven, Mozart, and Goethe were Freemasons, as were most of the prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment, including Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire, as was Benjamin Franklin, and many of the leaders of the American Revolution.

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "the Western tradition of occultism, as popularly conceived, is of an ancient "secret philosophy" underlying all occult practices. This secret philosophy derives ultimately from Hellenistic magic and alchemy on the one hand and from Jewish mysticism on the other."[4] That form of Jewish mysticism from which the Western occult tradition is derived, is known the Kabbalah, also spelled as either *Kabala*, *Qabbalah*, *Cabbala*, or *Cabala*. Although falsely claiming to date from some time prior to the great Flood, the system of the Kabbalah represented the appropriation of foreign doctrines into Judaism, adopted by the Jews in the great ancient city of Babylon, when they were held there in captivity in the early part of the sixth century BC.

The knowledge of the Kabbalah has long been suspected by scholars and others of being of Babylonian origin. According to the *Koran*, though it was claimed that the knowledge of the Kabbalah was

derived originally from King Solomon, it was demons who taught mankind such things, teaching them that which had been revealed to the angels Harut and Marut in Babylon. The *Koran*, chapter 2: 101-102 states:

> When a messenger was sent to them (the Jews) by God confirming the revelations they had already received some of them turned their backs (to God's message) as if they had no knowledge of it. They followed what the demons attributed to the reign of Solomon. But Solomon did not blaspheme, it was the demons who blasphemed, teaching men magic and such things as were revealed at Babylon to the angels Harut and Marut. But neither of these taught anyone (such things) without saying; "we are a trial, so do not blaspheme." They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife. But they could not harm anyone except by God' s permission. And they learned what harmed them, not what benefited them. And they knew that the purchasers of (magic) would have no share in the happiness of the hereafter. And vile was the price for which they sold their souls, if they but knew.

According to ancient authors, these teachings were recognized as the sacred knowledge of the Magi, the famous priests of the Persian Empire. When Babylon had fallen to the Persians in 539 BC, the Magi came into contact with the practices of the *Chaldeans*, the renowned Babylonian magicians and astrologers, amalgamating them to their own faith, the religion of Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism. This cult, known to the ancient world as that of the *Chaldean Magi*, was then spread to various parts of the known world with the expansion of the Empire of the Persians, particuarly to India, Egypt and Greece.

However, completely unaware of the true details of the Kabbalah's inception, European occultists regarded the legendary account of its propagation as truth. Essentially, the Kabbalah taught that its secrets were imparted to humanity before the Flood by a race of beings referred to in the Bible as the *Sons of God*, recognized in esoteric literature as the *Fallen Angels*, or the devil and his legions, who were cast out of Heaven. The Sons of God intermarried with the descendants of Cain, one of the two sons of Adam and Eve, who had been cursed for killing his brother Abel, giving birth to a race of giants, to whom they taught the knowledge stolen in their descent from Heaven. Following the Flood, the descendants of Cain were continued through Noah's son Ham, who was also cursed, and who were regarded as the keepers of the sacred tradition, or the *Ancient Wisdom*. Therefore, the Kabbalah insists on special status of certain strains of humanity, known as "root-races," the most important of which were the descendants of Cain, to whom is accorded the role of carrying humanity towards salvation.

Following the Protestant Reformation, and particularly after the accession in England of the occult oriented court of Elizabeth, in the sixteenth century, occultists began to formulate new accounts of history based ultimately on Kabbalistic sources. For, rooted as it was among the Germans, the Protestant movement, and its offshoot, the Church of England, had come to represent a national reaction against Catholicism. The division was also seen as rooted in deep racial differences, or as an expression of the superiority of the Germans over the Latins. Therefore, as Hannaford explains:

> In place of long-standing Catholic authorities, the Protestants substituted vicariously from the works of Luther and Calvin and, as the printing press made the literature of witchcraft, sorcery, and astrology more widely available, a new description of race was infiltrated into the old description from the fraudulent rehashing of the heretic, but extremely attractive, Chaldean version of the story of Noah, the transgression of Ham, and the division of the world.[5]

The study of anthropology in the West was largely influenced through a branch of occult philosophy, known as *Natural Philosophy*. A method of study that should be considered the birthplace of modern science, Natural Philosophy is a branch of magic that sought to study the universe in order to discover, and later manipulate, its occult properties. Through its influence, a nation's superiority came increasingly to be regarded as dependent not upon internal virtues, but on various physical factors, like body structure and features, dispositions formed supposedly by astrological and other occult influences. Thus, through the influence of occult ideas, a peoples' superiority came to be asserted, not on the quality of its institutions, but on the purity of its blood.

As Ivan Hannaford has pointed out, it was out of the notion of the exclusivity of the racial component of the Frankish people, in combination with the occult notions of racial superiority, that the idea of race was born.[6] It had become common throughout the Middle Ages to present legends tracing European ancestry back to the heroes of the Trojan War. Thus the Franks and Germans had come to regard themselves as descendants of the Merovingians, a dynasty that ruled much of France beginning in the fifth century AD, and which, according to legend, was descended from Priam of Troy, and ultimately from Cain.

The legend of the Trojan origin of the Franks was first mentioned in *Fredegar's Chronicle*, compiled in the seventh century, and was greatly popularized during the Renaissance by Jean Le Maire de Belges. The English too were able to assert a similar inheritance, through their German ancestry by way of the Saxons.

Further influenced by the Kabbalistic art of physiognomy, being the analysis of facial features in an attempt to recognize the physical characteristics of the elect, occultists became obsessed with determining the identifying traits of the Europeans' special status as the descendants of Cain. Known in the Kabbalah as the *Doctrine of the Countenance*, the study of the hair, forehead, eyes, lips, face, lines of the hands, and the ears, based on shape, size, or colour, was believed to reveal the hidden nature of a human being. Moreover, in the Kabbalah, the cosmos is ordered in a hierarchy, where descending grades of spiritual purity are reflected in the colours of humanity, representing the different levels of proximity to the divine. Darkness, or the colour black, is associated with matter and evil, while the colour white is associated with spirit and purity. Therefore, the features of the Europeans, of white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes, became the features of the race of Cain, and the defining characteristics of their superiority.

During the Enlightenment, however, these early theorizes were influenced by attempts to identify the ancestors of the Europeans with civilizations with which they had recently come into contact with through colonialism, and whose pasts came increasingly to be idealized. Though Renaissance scholars had tended to regard Egypt as the fount of the Ancient Wisdom, colonization opened India to the West, and many *Upanishads* and other Vedic literature became available, and, therefore, in "a desire to discover in the ancient Orient a rival society to that of the Hebrew,"[7] scholars of the Enlightenment turned to that region of the world as the possible origin of all occult knowledge. The Deist school of the seventeenth century tried at first to prove that Moses had robbed his revelations from the Egyptians. Voltaire turned the theory in favour of the Indians, and strove to demonstrate that Adam had taken over everything, even his name from them. He considered that all occult knowledge was ultimately of Indian origin: "…I am convinced that everything has come down to us from the banks of the Ganges, astronomy, astrology, metempsychosis, etc. …"[8] The *Encyclopedie* of Diderot, in the article on India, suggested that the "sciences may be more ancient in India than in Egypt." Famous German philosopher, Kant, was also taken with India. Kant placed the origin of mankind in Tibet, because "this is the highest country. No doubt it was inhabited before any other and could even have been the site of all creation and all science. The culture of the Indians, as is known almost certainly came from Tibet, just as all our arts like agriculture, numbers, the game of chess, etc., seem to have come from India."[9]

Growing interest in India stimulated further linguistics inquiries. The Frenchman, Anquetil du Peyron, set out for India as a common soldier in order to study the language of Zend, and in 1771, completed the translation of the *Zend-Avesta*, the scriptures of the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism. Finally, the mysteries of the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit were revealed. About 1780, the Brahmins of Bengal were given orders to translate into English the ancient laws and sacred writings of India. In 1783 the English poet and jurist, William Jones, was appointed Justice of the High Court of Bengal. He set himself to study Sanskrit and soon recognized certain similarities with Greek, Latin, Celtic and Germanic languages. Later, Franz Bopp showed that Avestan, Armenian, and the Slavic languages were also related. These hypotheses were somewhat disputed, but eventually approved by most orientalists. For convenience, these languages were referred to as Indo-German, by most German authors, while other countries preferred the term Indo-European. Though initially asserted as merely a linguistic relationship, it was eventually theorized that, if there had once existed an "original" Indo-European language, there must also have been an "original" Indo-European race, later termed Aryans.

Ultimately, recognizing the presence of doctrines similar to those sacred to the occult tradition among the ancient Egyptians, Indians, Greeks and Celts, European occultists falsely presumed them to represent the vestiges of the *Ancient Wisdom*. Though, unable to accept that non-white civilizations would have produced these traditions locally, they surmised rather that they must have been implanted in these regions by foreign invaders. The identity of these invaders, of course, must have been the ancestors of the Europeans, the same race that had supposedly been responsible for guarding and disseminating this sacred knowledge since the beginning of time. Therefore, from a supposed linguistic relationship, it was possible to propose the existence of an original "Indo-European" people, or Aryans, who must have invaded those regions, and, subjugating the inferior populations, imparted to them their advanced knowledge. As Robert Drews summarizes:

> It is an unfortunate coincidence that studies of the Indo-European language community flourished at a time when nationalism, and a tendency to see history in racial terms, was on the rise in Europe. There was no blinking the fact, in the nineteenth century, that most of the world was dominated by Europeans or people of European descent. The easiest explanation for this was that

> Europeans, or at least most members of the European family, were genetically superior to peoples of darker complexion. It was thus a welcome discovery that the ancient Greeks and Persians were linguistically, and therefore, one could assume, biologically, "related" to the modern Europeans. The same racial stock, it appeared, had been in control of the world since Cyrus conquered Babylon. This stock was obviously the white race. India, it is true, presented a problem and required a separate explanation. Aryans had invaded India no later than the second millennium BC, and successfully imposed their language on the aboriginal population, but the Aryan race had evidently become sterile in that southern clime and was eventually submerged by the aboriginal and inferior stock of the subcontinent.[10]

Essentially, the *Ancient Wisdom* is the Kabbalah, but occultists refused to regard as Jewish, but as representing the lost wisdom of the Aryan race. The Bible account of the Sons of God intermarrying with the descendants of Cain was thought to refer to the creation of the Aryan race on Atlantis, where they were taught all occult knowledge, including astrology, alchemy, magic and the belief in reincarnation. Thus, borrowing from the account of Noah, following the Flood, the same catastrophe that sunk Atlantis, the Aryans escaped and sought refuge in the highest mountains in the world. The Aryans later emerged from the region and swept forth, invading the known world. Bringing everywhere with them, not only the Indo-European language, but the knowledge rescued from their former abode, the Aryans invaded India, where they were responsible for the wisdom of the Brahmins, who then became the instructors of the Egyptians and the Jews.[11]

Long popular in occult circles, the Atlantis myth was first mentioned by Plato, referring to a lost continent that had existed in the Atlantic Ocean. Mediaeval European writers, who received the tale from Arab geographers, believed the mythical island to have actually existed, and later writers tried to identify it with an actual country. When America was discovered, the Spanish historian Francesco Lopez de Gomara, in his *General History of the Indes*, suggested that Plato's Atlantis and the new continents were the same, a theory repeated by Rosicrucian, Sir Francis Bacon, in his utopian romance, *The New Atlantis*.

In 1779, Jean Bailly, a prominent occultist, and member of the Masonic lodge called *Neuf Soeurs* in Paris, in his *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, developed a theory of migrating races, which he based on certain recurrent errors in astronomical tables brought back by missionaries from India, errors, he maintained, which could not have been drawn up from observations made in India, but in central Asia. Bailly concluded that Atlantis was Spitsbergen in the Arctic Ocean, which in ancient times had a warm climate, but its subsequent cooling made the Atlanteans migrate south to Mongolia. Later, this race of giants dwelt in the Caucasus and laid the foundations for all the ancient civilizations of Asia. In 1803, Bory de Saint-Vincent published his *Essai sur les iles fortunees et l'antique Atlantide*, in which he set forth the conventional Atlantis story. Saint-Vincent assumed that Atlantis was the original home of civilization, and when subjected to a cataclysm, its inhabitants were forced to conquer the known world in search of new territories.[12] In 1805, Francis Wilford advanced a hypothesis according to which, in order to account for the occult teachings of the Celtic Druids, the British Isles must have been a remnant of a former Atlantic continent, where the events of the Old Testament had actually taken place.

The term *Aryan*, borrowed a little earlier from Herodotus by Anquetil du Peyron to designate the Persians and Medes, gained widespread usage due to Freemason Friedrich Schlegel, justified by connecting the root *Ari* with the German word *Ehre*, or "honour." Schlegel supposed that, as a result of mingling, a new people had formed itself in northern India, and that this people, motivated "by some impulse higher than the spur of necessity," had swarmed towards the West. Wishing to trace the origin of this people back to Cain, he then theorizes, "must not this unknown anxiety of which I speak have pursued fugitive man, as is told of the first murderer whom the Lord marked with a bloody sign, and have flung him to the ends of the earth?"[13] To Schlegel, "everything, absolutely everything, is of Indian origin." He carried his conviction a step further, suggesting that even the Egyptians were educated by Indian missionaries. In turn, Egyptians founded a colony in Judea, though, the Jews were only partially indoctrinated with the Indian truths, since they seemed to have been ignorant of a significant doctrine of the occult tradition, the theory of reincarnation, and especially, of the immortality of the soul.[14]

In the early nineteenth century, the Romantic movement emerged, largely as a German Protestant nationalistic response against the perceived excesses of the Enlightenment. The Romantics considered that the racial superiority of the German people, or *Volk*, was imbedded in its language and culture, its folklore. Of the most influential promoters of this new nationalism was Jacob Grimm. Thus, Jacob Grim, and his brother, compiled the famous *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, a collection folktales thought to represent the occult lore of the German people, and that included *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. Though the brothers argued that folktales should be recorded and presented in print in a form as

close as possible to the original mode, recent evidence has shown that while the content of the tales was collected, the Grimms enhanced and inserted their own expression into them. In the *History of the German Language*, Jacob Grimm claimed that:

> All the people of Europe and, to begin with, those which were originally related and which gained supremacy at the cost of many wanderings and dangers, emigrated from Asia in the remote past. They were propelled from East to West by an irresistible instinct (*unhemmbarer Trieb*), the real cause of which is unknown to us. The vocation and courage of those peoples, which were originally related and destined to rise to such heights, is shown by the fact that European history was almost entirely made by them.[15]

Such ideas finally caught on in the rest of Europe. In his *History of Rome*, Jules Michelet, a French nationalist historian, who was interested in the occult and wrote the classic *Satanism and Magic*, stated: "follow the migrations of mankind from East to West along the Sun's course and along the track of the world's magnetic currents; observe its long voyage from Asia to Europe, from India to France… At its starting point, in India, the birthplace of races and of religions, *the womb of the world*…"[16] The chief propagandist of the Aryan myth in France was Ernest Renan, philosopher, historian, scholar of religion, leader of the school of critical philosophy in France, and Freemason, who began training for the priesthood, but eventually left the Catholic church after reading Goethe's *Faust*. According to Renan:

> We salute those sacred summits, where the great races, which carried the future of humanity in their hearts, contemplated infinity for the first time and introduced two categories which changed the face of the world, morality and reason. When the Aryan race, after thousands of years of striving, shall have become masters of the planet which they inhabit, their first duty will be to explore that mysterious region… No place in the world has had a comparable role to that of the nameless mountain or valley where mankind first attained self-consciousness. Let us be proud… of the old patriarchs who, at the foot of *Imaus* [Himalayan mountain], laid the foundations of what we are and of what we shall become."[17]

Though England was not fond of the notion of a patronage with its colonial subjects in India, the Aryan myth was finally popularized largely through the efforts of German Orientalist and language scholar Max Mueller, who was one of the most renowned scholars of the nineteenth century. Originally a student of Sanskrit, Mueller eventually began studying the Zoroastrian *Avesta*, which led him to the study of comparative religion, and to the editing of the most ancient of Hindu sacred hymns, the *Rigveda*. Though, his principal achievement was the editing of *The Sacred Books of the East*, translations of major Oriental scriptures. He was appointed deputy professor of modern languages at Oxford in 1850, and professor of comparative philology in 1868. He wrote:

> The Aryan nations, who pursued a northwesterly direction, stand before us in history as the principal nations of northwestern Asia and Europe. They have been the prominent actors in the great drama of history, and have carried to their fullest growth all the elements of active life with which our nature is endowed. They have perfected society and morals; and we learn from their literature and works of art the elements of science, the laws of art, and the principles of philosophy. In continual struggle with each other and with Semitic and Turanian races, these Aryan nations have become the rulers of history, and it seems to be their mission to link all parts of the world together by the chains of civilization, commerce and religion.[18]

The Caucasians

Patriotic pride in European and American civilization has not only blinded modern scholars from a correct assessment of history, but, because certain long-held preconceptions cater to their nationalistic sentiments, they continue to maintain, without proper verification, bizarre superstitions originally conceived in occult circles. It is truly astounding that, regardless of the supposed progress that Western science and scholarship has undergone, we still find mention of these absurd theories. Modern scholars continue to profess as truth the myth, based on the occult tale of the Atlantean origins of the Aryans, that sought to place the emergence of the Indo-Europeans in the mountains of Asia, or in southern Russia in the Caucasus. According to William H. McNeil, in his *History of Western Civilization*:

> The Indo-Europeans (with extensive inmixture of other peoples) were to be the principal bearers of the subsequent classical and western civilizations. During the course of some 1500 years (2000-500 BC), wave after wave of semi-nomadic tribesmen conquered nearly all of Europe, while other groups ruled over shifting areas of the Near East and India. Their early military successes were connected with the fact that the Indo-Europeans had tamed the horse, and used it, with terrifying effect, as an animal of war. In many areas, the Indo-European conquerors became a military aristocracy ruling over an indigenous population.[19]

The author proceeds to make an astounding assumption: supposedly, it should naturally be presumed, regarding the inherent superiority of the European race, that whatever civilization the Aryans entered, they must necessarily have come to represent the dominant class. McNeil declares (and it must be emphasized that he begins with the word "probably"): "probably all of these new states were ruled over by Indo-Europeans, though the underlying strata of society, *the tillers of soil*, *hewers of wood* and *drawers of water* [my italics], were of different language." Similarly, the supposed invasion of the Aryans continues to be professed to account for the caste system of India, that stratifies its citizens based on colour, proffering greater advantage to its lighter skinned members, by supposing that the Aryans, after subjugating India, imposed their consciousness of race on the local inhabitants.

Therefore, according to the *Columbia History of the World*: "it is probable that as the Aryan invaders battled their way down from the northwest through the Ganges Valley, they conquered and enslaved local peoples most of whom were darker and smaller than their Aryan foes. The most archaic word for slave is *dasa* (dark), and the classical word for caste if *varna* (color). The principle became the basis for a further development."[20] Further assumed is that, as a consequence of their invasion of India, the most ancient scriptures of the Hindus and the Buddhists, the famous *Vedas*, were not indigenous productions, but were originally derived from a more ancient culture introduced by the Aryan invaders. Also in the *Columbia History of the World*, we discover: "the Aryans ("noble ones") were part of a larger Indo-European migration which left a common cultural heritage from Greece through Iran into India. The religious and social institutions of these invaders are reflected in the oldest stratum of the *Veda* (sacred "knowledge"), the most revered sector of traditional Hindu religious literature."[21]

We naively presume, considering the state of our society's technological expertise, that the theories of alleged "experts" are well substantiated. However, the statements made by McNeil and *The Columbia History of the World*, are without sources or references. They are stated without proof. As David Frawley points out, in his appraisal of the Aryan myth, along with such assertions, never do we find a discussion of what type of civilization the Aryans would have emerged from, nor of how a civilization could have originated in so desolate an area, nor how the use of the chariot could ever have been amenable to the region of the Caucasus Mountains. Never is evidence provided, nor does the theory have any basis in scientific fact. It is completely unjustifiable, and any archeological evidence at all has yet to surface. The only shred of proof provided to substantiate the theory is a highly ambiguous reference in the *Vedas* to a battle between the forces of "light" and the forces of "darkness."

There may have once existed an original Proto-Indo-European language, but it could have been shared across many cultures and races. Nevertheless, modern scholars, like Marija Ginbutas, Colin Renfrew and Robert Drews, all continue to pursue their attempts to locate a home for this hypothetical language in southern Russia. However, as David Frawley and the authors of *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization* have indicated, "more recently, an excellent case has been made in favor of eastern Anatolia, in modern-day Turkey, which reverses the presumed migratory route: Now the Indo-Europeans are thought to have spread out from East to the West. With this the myth of the blond Aryan superman has been safely put to rest, for the physical types of Anatolia are more like the Mediterranean type."[22]

Nevertheless, the baseless assertions of these scholars have had dire consequences. Based on the mythical account of the Aryan people, scholars have created a specifically "Western" version of history, by highlighting the role of the Greeks and Romans, their supposed ancestors, at the expense of other civilizations, thus completely distorting the true account of history. Finally, as F.M Roberts insists, in the *Penguin History of the World*:

> The peoples who are the actors of early history in the Near East all belonged to the light-skinned human family (sometimes confusingly termed Caucasian) which is one of the three major ethnic classifications of the species Homo sapiens (the other being Negroid and Mongoloid). Linguistic differences make it possible to distinguish them further. All the peoples in the Fertile Crescent of early civilized times can be assigned either to the Hamitic stocks who evolved in Africa north and north-East of the Sahara, to the Semites of the Arabian peninsula, to the Indo-Europeans who,

from southern Russia, had spread also by 4000 BC into Europe and Iran, or to the true "Caucasians" of Georgia. These are the *dramatis personae* of early Near Eastern history.[23]

It is difficult to fathom that, in a society that considers itself as liberal and as morally progressive as our own, modern scholars present ideas as blatantly offensive as these. These theories are not the rabid ravings of neo-Nazi fanatics. These are the purportedly sober theories of mainstream intellectuals. However, their claims are no different than the lunacies formerly upheld by Hitler. The only matter that differentiates modern scholars from that scoundrel is the manner in which their ideas were implemented. Nevertheless, how many casualties have resulted from the belligerence of Western nations, who impose their ideology on others out of an arrogance justified by the corrupt view that Europeans have been the leading proponents of human history. Ultimately, a lack of knowledge of the true history of the rest of the world, has prevented a proper assessment of the dilemma debilitating the impoverished world, for Western citizens have been deluded into the misconception that the Third World is not suffering from the stifling consequences of Western greed, but merely lagging in a more primitive stage of evolution.

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Chapter 2: Venus

Babylon

According to the Bible, throughout the early centuries of their existence, God had repeatedly warned the them that if they failed to worship alone, and not abandon their persistent paganism, that he would repeal the covenant he ratified with them, and banish them from the Promise Land. The Exile in Babylon, in the sixth century BC, was a fulfillment of that threat. However, once in Babylon, instead of repenting for their past errors, a faction of heretical Jews insisted that the covenant was binding forever, and that, despite the temporary punishment, because they were God's chosen people, they would eventually restored to the Promised Land, and be appointed rulers of humanity, at the advent of their awaited Messiah. This Zionist interpretation was then assimilated to the heretical worship of the dying-god, in which the Israelites had persisted for nearly a thousand years and for which they were condemned. With the further addition of Babylonian astrology and magic, this new interpretation of Judaism would come to be known as Kabbalah.

In *Ancestor of the West*, Jean Bottero, a renowned scholar of Mesopotamia, declares: "if I wish to reveal the most distant origins of our civilization that are known today, it is to Mesopotamia that I will now take us."[24] It was due to the Kabbalah's eventual influence that it is to Babylon, the ancient city of Mesopotamia, not Athens in Greece, to which we must trace the ideas that exercised the formative influence behind those movements thought to characterize Western civilization, such as, Greek philosophy, Christianity, and the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. Our knowledge of Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, was once very limited. Fortunately, after years of work by many scholars, we have discovered an immense wealth of monuments and of manuscripts written in clay, known as cuneiform texts, bearing witness to civilizations much older than that of the Greeks. Mesopotamia, where the earliest signs of civilization were found, appearing suddenly and fully developed at around 3500 BC, was not only the birthplace of religion, but of science and literature as well.

First peopled by Sumerians, another group gradually moved into Mesopotamia from the south and west. Their leader was Sargon of Akkad, who built the first great Mesopotamian empire in 2400 BC. At first, Sumer in the south and Akkad in the north were unified, but this empire lasted only about two hundred years, when the Amorites gradually took over, and Babylon, near the present day city of Baghdad in Iraq, became the capital. A regime was established by Hammurabi, the famous law-giver, around 2100 BC. Thus the Babylonian empire was born, lasting, with only few interruptions, until 745 BC.

Meanwhile, the Assyrians appeared in the north, and for a long time had an independent kingdom there. Throughout the ninth century BC, Assyria was gathering strength. Finally, in 745 BC Tiglath-pileser III conquered Babylon and established a new capital at Nineveh, and a series of leaders, among them Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon, then united most of the Middle East, from Egypt to the Persian Gulf, under Assyrian rule. The last great Assyrian ruler was Ashurbanipal, who died in 627 BC. In 606 BC, the Assyrians were overthrown by a combined force of Persians and Medes, from the north and the east, and the Chaldeans, from the south and east. Nineveh, with its palace and great library, was sacked, and a new Babylonian, or *Chaldean*, Empire was established under Nebuchadnezzar II, comprising the full Fertile Crescent, from Sinai to the Persian Gulf.

Nebuchadnezzar's capital, Babylon, which at one time may have held as many as 250,000 inhabitants, was the greatest city in the ancient world. According to the Bible, the city was founded by Nimrod, builder of the Tower of Babel, from which it derived its name, and was famed among the Jews and the later Greeks for its sensual living. Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fourth century BC, described: "Babylon lies in a wide plain, a vast city in the form of a square with sides nearly fourteen miles long and a circuit of some fifty-six miles, and in addition to its enormous size it surpasses in splendor any city of the known world."[25]

The occult wisdom of the Babylonians was revered throughout ancient times as the special skills of the *Chaldeans*, a term that originally referred to the inhabitants of Chaldea, but which was eventually

understood to refer to the Babylonian priesthood. Their practices were described by Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian of 80 to 20 BC, and author of a universal history, *Bibliotheca historica*:

> …being assigned to the service of the gods they spend their entire life in study, their greatest renown being in the field of astrology. But they occupy themselves largely with soothsaying as well, making predictions about future events, and in some cases by purifications, in others by sacrifices, and in others by some other charms they attempt to effect the averting of evil things and the fulfillment of the good. They are also skilled in the soothsaying by the flight of birds, and they give out interpretations of both dreams and portents. They also show marked ability in making divinations from the observations of the entrails of animals, deeming that in this branch they are eminently successful.[26]

The ancient Mesopotamians saw any unusual natural event, or omen, as a form of divine communication which could be read by the diviners. Celestial phenomena, the movements of clouds, the direction of winds or shooting stars, the birth of malformed animals or children, the occurrence of lightning, thunder, earthquakes or floods, revealed the desires of the gods. From divination from omens, more particularly, astral omens, the pseudo-science of astronomy was born. While this divination from astral omens was a long way from what we would categorize as astrology, the foundations of the art were being formulated.

Though astrology was falsely regarded as an early invention of the early Babylonians, as Bartel van der Waerden has indicated, in *Science Awakening II: The Birth of Astronomy*, its emergence should be dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.[27] Before the eighth century BC, as scholars have pointed out, the science of astronomy was basically impossible due to the absence of a reliable system of chronology, which the Babylonians did not arrive at before the eighth century BC. It is only from that time onward that the records of eclipses begin which Ptolemy used, the oldest being dated to 721 BC. But more specifically, those innovations directly related to the cult of the *Chaldeans* were developed in the sixth century BC. According to noted historian of ancient history, Franz Cumont, "it may be regarded as proved that this astral religion succeeded in establishing itself in the sixth century BC, during the period of the short-lived glory of the Babylonian empire, and after its fall, when new ideas derived from East and West were introduced, first by the Persians and afterwards by the Greeks, into the valley of the Euphrates."[28]

These developments coincided with the period known as the Exile, or the Captivity, when the great majority of the Jewish people were in Babylon. From the end of the eighth century BC, to the beginning of the sixth, the Jews of ancient Palestine were attacked by the Assyrians and deported to Mesopotamia. According to the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser, 13,750 of the wisest and most skilled of the Israelites were deported by 733 BC, while 27,290 more Israelite sages, musicians and artisans were brought to Babylonia by Sargon II in 727 BCE BCE. Finally, between 598 and 596 BC, Nebuchadnasser captured Jerusalem, sacked the famous Temple of Solomon, and deported much of the remaining population to Babylon. The Jews would eventually remain in Babylon for half a century, until their release in 538 BC, when nearly 50,000 of them returned to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a substantial portion chose to remain in Babylon, where they would continue to be an important community of the Jewish Diaspora for many centuries.

Scholars recognize the Exile as that period in which the Jews may have come into contact with Babylonian influences. While orthodox Judaism never condoned the practice, there are numerous references to astrology in the *Talmud*, and indisputable evidence of Jewish astrology has now been provided with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[29] According to Epiphanius, a Christian bishop of the fourth century AD, "both Fate and astrology are practiced zealously among them."[30] In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus, Jewish historian of the first century AD, maintained that the seven-branched candlestick, the Menorah, corresponded to the seven planets, and that other sacred accoutrements of the Temple were "made in way of imitation and representation of the universe."[31] As Edwin Goodenough pointed out, in his classic work, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, "that the religion of early Israel was filled with solar and astral elements is now commonplace, however much experts may disagree about the details."[32]

While scholars often acknowledge Babylonian influence on Judaism, there is rarely a suggestion of the reverse. However, according to the Bible, Jews had already begun to worship the planets prior to the Exile. II Kings 23:5 recounts that the Jews offered incense "to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and to all the forces of heaven." Nevertheless, Shaul Shaked, a renowned scholar of Babylonian influences on Judaism, maintains that astrological and other foreign ideas cannot be attributed to the Biblical times, but were acquired in Babylon. Shaked noted that, "it does not seem at all likely that so many similarities could have been formed in parallel independently, and, despite the chronological difficulties of the

documentation, in most of the parallel points one may feel quite confident that these ideas were indigenous to Iran."[33]

However, as we have noted, astrology was not a product native to the ancient Babylonians either. While the Babylonians had long studied the heavens, the many developments in the pseudo-science of astrology took place only during the Exile. Moreover, we know that the Jews in Babylon had become substantial citizens, and that some had achieved minor administrative positions. Therefore, considering the size and prominence of the Jewish population living in Babylon, and taking into account the important role that astrology played in esoteric Judaism and the Kabbalah, it may be supposed that Jews themselves contributed to many of these innovations. In fact, in the *Book of Daniel*, Chapter 2:48, Daniel is made chief of the "wise men" of Babylon, that is of the Magi or *Chaldeans*, and yet remains faithful to the laws of his own religion.[34]

A table dated to 523 BC shows the astounding advances in astronomy that were made during this period. For the first time, the relative positions of the Sun and the Moon are calculated in advance. The conjunctions of the Moon with the planets and of the planets with each other, and their situation in the signs of the Zodiac, which appear definitely established, are noted with precise dates. The scientific discoveries achieved in this period enabled the astrologers to predict events with a level of certainty that was unattainable through other forms of prognostication. Therefore, divination by means of the stars became elevated in prestige above all other methods known, leading to a transformation in Babylonian religion.

The ancient theology of the Babylonians had no connection to astrological theories. Nevertheless, the new astral cult did not completely eliminate the myths about the gods, but rather assimilated them with the stars and the seven known planets.[35] The original Babylonian religion was headed by a trinity: Sin, Shamash and Ishtar. Sin, became the Moon god, considered to have fathered many children, among whom were twins, brother and sister, Shamash and Ishtar, which became, respectively, the Sun and Venus.[36] Ninurta was Saturn, the brother of Mars. Mars was Nergal, god of war, lord of the dead, and god of the Underworld. Mercury was Nabu, messenger of the gods, presiding over wisdom, writing, accounts, and patron of scribes and writing. Jupiter is Bel, or Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon.

Bel was the origin of a myth that would come to pervade, not only the mystical systems of antiquity, but which would transform Western religion and philosophy, that of the dying-god. Every spring, at their most important festival, the *Akitu*, or New Year's festival, corresponding to our Easter, the Babylonians celebrated the death and resurrection of their chief god Marduk, also known as Bel. Three important ceremonies were performed for Bel. These acts of worship were fertility rites, referring to the agricultural cycle of nature, with the death of crops in winter and the return of life in the spring, but were also viewed as actually recreating the cosmos itself.

First, the *Enuma elish,* the epic of creation, was read, recounting a struggle between Bel, the Sky or Thunder-god, against the goddess Tiamat, who is the Dragon, or the Sea and the powers of chaos. There was a dramatic representation of the conflict between Bel and Tiamat, during which the god is vanquished and slain, but is raised from death by magical ceremonies, and eventually overcomes the Dragon. Secondly, the king is brought before the image of Bel, his insignia are removed, and he is slapped in the face by the high-priest. An omen was taken at this point, that if the blow produced tears, the year would be prosperous and vegetation would grow. Finally, in a ceremony known as a *sacred marriage*, the king, acting the part of the god, practiced ritual copulation with a priestess, symbolizing the union of the god and the goddess.

To the Moon, the Sun and the five known planets was given the name of *Interpreter God*s, because, while the fixed stars follow a single circuit, these follow each their own course, and thus, above all others make manifest to man the purpose of the gods. Worship was also conferred on all the constellations, as the revealers of the will of Heaven, and in particular the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the thirty-six decans, which were called *Counsellor Gods*. Outside the Zodiac, were twenty-four stars, twelve in the northern, and twelve in the southern hemisphere. Those which are visible they assigned to the world of the living, and those which are invisible, to the world of the dead, and so they called them *Judges of the Universe*. The *Chaldeans* also worshipped the earth, the oceans, the winds, and fire, sources of all things, which they confounded with the stars under the name of the Four Elements.

From the consistency of the planetary revolutions, the *Chaldeans* also inferred the pantheistic idea of the eternity of the world, and its governance according to Fate, which was superior to the gods themselves, since all movements were subject to it. As Diodorus explained:

> Now, as the Chaldeans say, the world is by its nature eternal, and neither had a first beginning nor will at a later term suffer destruction; furthermore, both the disposition and the orderly arrangement of the universe have come about by virtue of a divine providence, and today whatever

takes place in the heavens is in every instance brought to pass, not a haphazard nor by virtue of any spontaneous action, but by some fixed and firmly determined divine decision.[37]

Though, through the use of purifications, sacrifices, and incantations, in other words, magic, the *Chaldeans* believed they could divert Fate. Also among their beliefs was that the stars were apparently subject to an inflexible law which made it possible to calculate in advance all that they would eventually cause. The *Chaldeans* perceived the life of the universe as being composed of vast repeating periods. As it appeared to govern the regular movements of the heavenly bodies, the *Chaldeans* deified Time. They conceived of a cycle composed of a Great Year, wherein the planets were thought to return to their original places. Thus, they believed that the universe was a living breathing entity and could be measured in breaths. The basic unit for cosmic time was the *Soss* of 60 years, then the *Ner* of 600 years, and the *Sar* of 3,600 years. A great *Sar* equaled 216,00 and represented one breath. But as the universe must breathe in as well as out, the entire life of the universe was thought to be 432,000 years. Beyond these is the period of 12,960,000 years. Thus, astrology was closely associated with mathematics, numbers being regarded as sacred.

The Magi

The history of the Persians is practically undocumented prior to their conquest of Babylon under Cyrus the Great. The Persians are regarded as an Indo-European people who, by the sixth century BC, had settled in *Parsa*, Greek *Persis* or modern Fars, the mountainous region east of the Persian Gulf's northern coastline, or much of what is today known as Iran. Cyrus' career began in 560 BC, when, as heir to the ruling Persian Achaemenid dynasty, the official name for the Persian royal family, he inherited the title of king. In 547 BC, he defeated Croessus, the king of Lydia, who had ruled all of Asia Minor west of the Halys River, and brought the Greek cities of Ionia on the coast into his realm. He briefly turned his attention to the east before aiming towards the principal power in his path, Babylon, which he took in 539 BC, without casualties, inaugurating the Neo-Babylonian empire.

The Persians were followers of the religion of Zoroastrianism, founded by Zarathustra, or Zoroaster to the Greeks, which also emerged in the sixth century BC, and which exercised a formative influence on many of the philosophical and religious systems of antiquity, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The exact date of Zoroaster's mission though is unknown. He was thought by the Greeks to have lived several thousands of years before the fall of Troy, but according to Zoroastrian accounts he flourished "258 years before Alexander." Alexander conquered Persia in 330 BC. Therefore, Zoroaster's birthdate would have been 628 BC, if, as according to tradition, he was forty years old when he converted the king Vishtaspa, in 588 BC. It was then that he had received a vision from Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, who appointed him to preach the truth, but he was apparently opposed at first by the religious authorities in the area in which he preached. However, after the conversion of Hystaspes, Darius' father, he remained at the king's court, and other officials were converted.

Zoroastrianism is believed to have been originally monotheistic, but to have later been modified by its priests, the Magi. Thus, while most religions posit the existence of an evil principle inferior to the good God, Zoroastrianism became the origin of a type of dualism wherein evil is elevated to the rank of a god, equal but opposite to the good, both existing eternally at war with each other. One is Ahura Mazda, the God, lord of goodness and of light. The other is Ahriman, the Destructive or Tormenting Spirit, lord of evil and darkness. According to Diogenes Laertius, Greek scholar of the third century AD, "Aristotle in the first book of his work *On Philosophy* says that the Magi are more ancient even than the Egyptians, and that according to them there are two first principles, a good spirit and an evil spirit, one called Zeus and Ahura Mazda, the other Hades and Ahriman."[38]

The principle sources on Zoroaster's teachings consist of the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian scripture, which contains the *Yasna*, *Visparad*, *Videvdat*, and the *Yashts*, and a collection of later religious documents, such as the *Bundahishn*, *Denkard*, *Zadspram*, and many more. While the *Avesta* may retain a few of the features of the original teachings of Zoroaster, it is believed to have derived its authority from "faithfully preserved" older traditions. However, these sources were mostly compiled after the eighth century AD, and as Nigosian comments, "how much of its contents date from the earliest period, and how much of it was re-written to make the past agree with the realities and beliefs of the time in which it was composed is, of course, open to question."[39] Therefore, a number of non-Zoroastrian ancient sources are important to an understanding of the early Zoroastrianism, mainly from Greek and Roman writers.

However, those ideas attributed to the Magi by the ancient Greeks and Romans, are not reflected in the Zoroastrian texts. This has puzzled scholars and led them to believe that the Greeks invented the ideas they attributed to the Magi. However, a perusal of their accounts shows that the ideas attributed to

them were consistent. The problem was solved by Franz Cumont and Joseph Bidez, in *Les Mages Hellenises*, of "The Hellenized Magi", but the work remains untranslated. Also useful is the world of RC *Zaehner, Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma*. Essentially, these scholars have discovered that those with whom the Greeks had become acquainted with were not orthodox Zoroastrians, but heretics, who had altered Zoroaster's original teachings, and among whom we find the first indication of what would later comprise the teachings of the Kabbalah: a ritual of death and rebirth, a divine trinity associated with the Sun, Moon and Venus, dualism, pantheism, numerology, astrology, and the belief in reincarnation.

As Yamauchi describes, "the relationship of the Magi to Zoroaster and his teachings is a complex and controversial issue."[40] Ever since the early days of the Achaemenid empire, there had existed an antagonism with the proponents of true Zoroastrianism and the Magi. Essentially, when the Persians conquered Babylon, the Magi had come into contact with the *Chaldeans*, whose beliefs and teachings they introduced into their version of Zoroastrians. Therefore, as long as the Persian empire lasted, there was always a distinction between the Persian Magi, the official priestly caste, and the Babylonian Magi, who were often considered to be outright impostors. From the time of Xerxes however, they began to receive increasing favour at court, until the title of Magi eventually lost its heretical connotations. As the French Assyriologist Lenormant noted, "to their influence are to be ascribed nearly all the changes which, towards the end of the Achaemenid dynasty, corrupted deeply the Zoroastrian faith, so that it passed into idolatry."[41]

From the fourth century BC on, the Magi were increasingly associated with the *Chaldeans* as sorcerers and astrologers. The Greek and Latin words for magic, *mageia* and *magia* was originally derived in reference to the supposed arts the Magi. As a reflection of this reputation, a Hippocratic treatise from the late fifth century BC, declares that the Magi are the sort of persons who "profess to know how to bring down the moon, to eclipse the sun, to make storm and sunshine, rain and drought, the sea impassable and the earth barren."[42] Through the association of Zoroastrianism with the Magi, Zoroaster became renowned as a great sage, and numerous pseudepigraphical books on religion, magic and astrology were ascribed to him.[43] The Greeks saw in Zoroaster's name the word "star," and it was explained by Hermodorus, a pupil of Plato, as meaning "star worshipper." By the first century AD, in his *Natural History*, Pliny made Zoroaster the founder of magic:

> Undoubtedly magic began in Persia with Zoroaster, as authorities are agreed. But there is insufficient agreement about whether he was the only man by that name, or whether there was another and later Zoroaster. What is particularly surprising is that the tradition and craft should have endured for so long; no original writings survive, nor are they preserved by any well-known or continuous line of subsequent authorities. For few people know anything by reputation of those who survive only in name and lack any memorials, as, for example, Apusorus and Zaratas of Media, Marmarus and Arabantiphocus of Babylon, or Tarmoendas of Assyria.[44]

Though the Magi had continued the magical traditions of the *Chaldeans*, they were primarily recognized as specialists in theurgy, or necromancy, that is, divination by means of summoning the spirits of the dead, or as Plato defined the practice, in the *Alcibiades* I, "the service of the gods." Pliny transmitted a definition of magic by a famous Magi named Osthanes: "there are several forms of it (i.e. magic); he professes to divine from water, globes, air, stars, lamps, basins and axes, and by many other methods, and besides to converse with ghosts and those in the underworld."[45] Therefore, when Roman satirist Lucian wishes to send one of his characters down to the realm of the dead, he resorts to the renowned experts: "as I was puzzling over these matters, it occurred to me to go to Babylon and ask one of the Magi, Zoroaster's disciples and successors. I had heard that they could open the gates of the underworld with certain spells and rites and conduct and bring back up safely whomever they wished."[46]

Though communion with evil spirits was strictly forbidden in the orthodox version of the faith, the accounts of Greek authors accord in many respects with the doctrines of those referred to in the *Avesta*, and other Zoroastrian literature, as a certain people hostile to the orthodox community, called "sorcerers" or "deava worshippers", or devil-worshippers. As the *Greater Bundahishn* criticized, the prime object of worship the false Magi was Ahriman, for "by the religion of the sorcerers (Ahriman) so inclines men to love him and to hate Ahura Mazda that they abandon the cult of Ahura Mazda and practice that of Ahriman."[47] In essence, through his knowledge of evil, the sorcerer seeks to subdue to the devil to his will, and to force him into his service, or if he is less competent, to appease him with sacrifice and prayers. The earliest reference to the cult in the west of Persia, is an inscription of the emperor Xerxes in which he appears to boast of having destroyed a *deava* temple.

The worship of Ahriman was partly justified by a heresy created by the Magi, known as Zurvanism, whereby the simple cosmic dualism of two opposing gods was altered into a more subtle sort of

dualism. It is according to Zurvanism that Ahriman becomes the lord of this world, the original conception of the devil as the "Prince of this World." The teachings of Zurvanism however, can only be pieced together from scattered sources, and it is not known at what date precisely they emerged. Dr. I Gershevitch, however, has demonstrated that *Zurvan* existed as god of Time already by the end of the sixth century BC.[48] Mary Boyce indicated that the heresy seems to have been adopted as the true orthodoxy by the late Achaemenid kings, and their successors the Sassanians.[49]

The first account of Zurvanite doctrine is derived from the fourth century BC, from Eudemus of Rhodes, a pupil of Aristotle, though surviving only through Damascius, a philosopher of the sixth century AD. A further reference is found in the so-called *Hymn of the Magi*, reported by Dio Chrysostom, a Greek philosopher and rhetorician of the first century AD.[50] Theopompus, a Greek historian of the fourth century BC, though not mentioning Zurvan by name, recounted a Zurvanite doctrine linked to a version of the astrological Great-Year. According to Plutarch, a Greek author of the first century AD:

> Theopompus says that, according to the Magians, for three thousand years alternatively the one god will dominate the other and be dominated, and that for another three thousand years they will fight and make war, until one smashes up the domain of the other. In the end Hades [Ahriman] shall perish and men shall be happy; neither shall they need substance nor shall they cast a shadow, while the god who will have brought this about shall have quiet and shall rest, not for a long while indeed for a god, but for such time as would be reasonable for a man who falls asleep. Such is the mythology of the Magians.[51]

Zurvan Akaran, Boundless Time or Fate, was seen as the father of twin sons, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, who battle each other for twelve thousand years, divided into four cycles of three thousand years, with each millennium governed by a sign of the Zodiac. During the first three thousand, ruled by Aries, Taurus and Gemini, Ahura Mazda created light, patterned after the celestial light. The second three, Cancer, Leo and Virgo, is the period of the creation of life in the material world: vegetation, fire, the primeval bull, and Gayomart, the primordial man. In the third period, Ahriman, who has been imprisoned in darkness, is revived by the Whore, and renews his assault on Ahura Mazda and his creation.

Ahriman creates all evil creatures, such as scorpions, toads, and vipers, and destructive forces, storms, drought, disease, and death, and destroys vegetation, the fire, the bull and Gayormart. Then the spiritual beings bound Ahriman and carried him off to Hell. Ahura Mazda now brings about the resurrection, and from the corpse of the Bull the sterile land is fertilized, the fire is rekindled, and from the dead Gayomart creates the ancestors of mankind. The first couple have free will and at first choose to serve Ahura Mazda, but Ahriman tempts and deceives them, introducing corruption into the world. And the war goes on, dominating man's history until the coming of Zoroaster, whose advent begins the final period to last until the Day of Judgment, with the coming of the saviour, when a flood of molten metal shall burn the wicked, while the righteous will pass unharmed, and good and evil are finally separated from one another.

The Mysteries of Mithras

In late antiquity, the wisdom of the Magi was thought to have been concealed within secret rites of initiation, known as the *Mysteries of Mithras*, that were popular throughout the Roman empire. However, most scholars have suggested that the Mithraic Mysteries were a later development, and not a reflection Magian teachings, but rather a result of the syncretism of later centuries. While all evidence of these mysteries belongs to the end of the first century AD and later, many elements involved in Mithraism can be traced back to those Kabbalistic ideas attributed to the Magi by ancient authors. Moreover, the ancient Magi were known to practice mystery rites, and though their exact nature is not known, they would have been practiced as rites of sorcery, and presumably dedicated to Mithras, the ancient Iranian god worshipped by the Achaemenids of Persia, who seems to have been identified with Bel the dying-god of the Babylonians.[52] Therefore, we are allowed to assume that the Mithraic mysteries represented a cult as was practiced by the Magi from early on, to a greater extent than scholars have tended to acknowledge.

Mithras was an ancient Persian deity, worshipped in India as Mitra, which the Magi reintroduced into Zoroastrianism. According to Jeffrey Burton Russell:

> In his effort to move toward monotheism, Zarathustra emphasized the power of Ahura Mazda to the point of ignoring Ahura Mithra, and we have no idea what the prophet thought of this deity. His followers restored Mithras to power, assimilating him to Mazda and worshipping him as a manifestation of the god of light. But apparently the unregenerate daeva-worshippers untouched

by Zarathustra's reforms also continued to worship Mithras, and some of the later Magi may have been drawn in this direction.[53]

Mithras was assimilated by the Magi to the Babylonian Sun-god, Shamash, who also identified Bel. Mithras was one of three gods adapted from the trinity of a father, mother and son-god, worshipped by the Babylonians, and identified with the Sun, Moon and Venus, which the Magi assimilated to their own ancient Persians deities. According to Cumont:

> Babylon…being the winter residence of the sovereigns, was the seat of a numerous body of official clergy, called Magi, who sat in authority over the indigenous priests. The prerogatives that the imperial protocol guaranteed to this official clergy could not render them exempt from the influence of the powerful sacerdotal caste that flourished beside them. The erudite and refined theology of the Chaldeans was thus superposed on the primitive Mazdean belief, which was rather a congress of traditions than a well-established body of definite dogmas. The legends of the two religions were assimilated, their divinities were identified, and the Semitic worship of the stars (astrolotry), the monstrous fruit of long-continued scientific observations, became amalgamated to the nature-myths of the Iranians. Ahura-Mazda was confounded with Bel, who reigned over the heavens; Anahita was likened to Ishtar, who presided over the planet Venus; while Mithra became the Sun, Shamash.[54]

The earliest indication of the worship of the god Mithras among the Persians is found in a sculptured tablet above the tomb of Darius I, who took the throne in 521 BC, in which the symbols of Mazda and of Mithra were placed in equally conspicuous positions, a practice that was continued by his successors. The fact that the Persians worshipped a god named *Mitra* was known to Herodotus, who mentioned that "Zeus, in their system, is the whole circle of the heavens, and they sacrifice to him from the tops of mountains. They also worship the sun, moon, the earth, fire, water, and winds [the Four Elements], which are their only original deities: it was later that they learned from the Assyrians and Arabians the cult of Uranian Aphrodite. The Assyrian name for Aphrodite is Mylitta, the Arabian Alilat, the Persian Mithra." However, as Mary Boyce and Lenormant have indicated, while Herodotus mistook Mithras for the Persian Aphrodite, Mithras and the goddess Anahita, as symbols of the Sun and Venus, were held in close association, and were therefore often confused, or taken as the same god. According to Strabo, Greek geographer of the first century AD:

> Now the Persians do not erect statues or altars, but offer sacrifice on a high place, regarding the heavens as Zeus [Ahura-Mazda]; and they also worship Helios [the Sun], who they call Mithras, and Selene [Anahita or the Moon] and Aphrodite, and fire and earth and winds and water [the four elements]… But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. To fire they offer sacrifice by adding dry wood without bark and by placing fat on top of it; and then they pour oil on it and light it below, not blowing with their breath, but fanning it; and those who blow the fire with their breath or put anything dead or filthy upon it are put to death.[55]

The expeditions to Syria and Turkey for astrological research by Franz Cumont, who essentially single-handedly founded the study of Mithraism, led to discoveries of drawings and inscriptions on monuments, and revealed a significant relationship between the Mediterranean cult of Mithras and Persian Zoroastrianism. He believed the Mysteries of Mithras to have evolved by way of Magi in Asia Minor, who combined Babylonian astrology and heretical Zoroastrianism.[56] In fact, Plutarch had mentioned that mystic rites dedicated to Mithras were in evidence among the pirates based in southeastern Asia Minor, during the first century BC. However, most modern scholars of Mithraism disagree with Cumont hypothesis of a Zoroastrian origin, and maintain that it was a creation of the Roman period. Nevertheless, though their later form, as practiced in the Roman Empire, may indicate the introduction of certain newer elements, the Mysteries of Mithras certainly would have borrowed their primary themes from the Magi.

Mithraism seems to have been a combination of Zurvanite Zoroastrianism and Chaldean astrology, centered around the worship of Mithras, who, through his assimilation to Bel, became a dying god. Therefore, he was associated with the return of fertility in the spring, as represented in the most common scene of Mithraism, where Mithras is depicted slaying a bull, out of which sticks of wheat are seen to issue from its tail and from its wound. Essentially, Mithras is a saviour-figure who, after the great conflagration of the world, at the end of a Great Year, re-creates the cosmos through the sacrifice of the Bull. The slaying of the bull was also known to the *Avesta*, where, at the end of time, Saoshyant, the Zoroastrian saviour,

assists the Good in its conquest over Evil. When the dead rise from their graves, according to the *Bundahishn*, the saviour will slay the magnificent bull, and serve mankind an ambrosia mixed from its fat and the juice of the *Haoma*.[57]

The heretical Magi, according to Bidez and Cumont, based on an apocryphal work titled the *Apocalypse of Hystaspes*, taught that the life of the world was divided into seven millennia, each under a planet and bearing the name of an associated metal. For six millennia, the God of good and the Spirit of Evil fought over the earth, until the Evil Spirit established his dominion and spread calamities everywhere. Zeus, or Ahura Mazda, decided to send Apollo, named Mithras, to kill the wicked with a torrent of fire, resurrect the dead, and establish a reign of justice and felicity. The seventh millennium, that of the Sun, would assure a prosperous Age of Gold, at the end of which the Sun-Power ended, and all the domination of the planets. The eighth millennium brought about a general conflagration, in which Fire took in and resolved the other three elements, when earth was renovated and all corruptibility eradicated.[58]

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Chapter 3: Baal

The Bible

Cyrus had regarded it as a religious duty to reverse the policy of deportations and temple destruction of his predecessors, and, after half a century in captivity, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Despite Cyrus' commitment, the first return in 538 BC was a failure. A second effort, with the full backing of Cyrus' son Darius, was made in 520 BC, under Zeurubbabel, who was appointed Persian Governor of Judah. The Bible records that 42,360 exiles returned, including a large number of priests and scribes. Work on the rebuilding of the Temple began immediately, although not in the same grand style as the original. In 458 BC, the initial returns were reinforced by a third wave, led by Ezra. Finally, in 445 BC, Ezra was joined by a powerful contingent headed by a leading Jew called Nehemiah, who had held a high office at the Persian court, and was appointed governor of Judah, now a part of the Persian empire.

Though many had left Babylon, as Franz Cumont stated, "ever since the Captivity, constant spiritual relations had existed between Judaism and the great religious metropolis,"[59] and it would appear that Jews had absorbed a number of Zoroastrian and *Chaldean* tenets into their faith. Though derived from earlier sources, it was during this period, known as the Second Temple period, that the Bible was compiled and edited. Moreover, it has been recognized that during this process the text became corrupted, both accidentally and deliberately, and that a number foreign concepts seem then to have been incorporated into Judaism. Ever since the initial suggestion of Count Constantin in 1791, the importance of the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism was promoted at the beginning of this century by the History of Religions School. Currently, many important scholars continue to maintain the thesis of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism, including Duchesne-Guillemin, Gherardo Gnoli, John Hinnels, Anders Hultgard, Joseph Kitagawa, Saul Shaked, David Winston and Mary Boyce.

Jews and Zoroastrians share many ideas, including the concept of an opponent to God. Ahriman, like the Jewish Satan, brought death to the world and is the cause of bodily deformities and afflictions. He is called the father of lies and is the leader of a legion of demons.[60] According to the Zoroastrian myth, the serpent was the form assumed by Ahriman, in order to penetrate into the heaven of Ahura-Mazda.[61] Pagan nations generally believed in a cyclical process of time, that right and wrong were not easily defined, because life to them was an unfathomable series of haphazard events subject to the changing will of the gods. The Zoroastrians, on the other hand, share with the Jews the idea of the progress of history as part of the development a divine plan. Evil would reign only for a time, and Good ultimately prevail. It is man's duty to choose between right and wrong. In the end, at the advent of the Saviour, Good would defeat Evil, and man will be resurrected in the body and judged according to his deeds.

The lack of coherence in the Bible text had been recognized early on. The *Pentateuch* or *Five Books of Moses*, including *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy* were thought, in early Jewish or Christian tradition, to have been written by Moses himself. Yet, several contradictions eventually became apparent. The texts included things that Moses could not have known or was not likely to have said. In the third century AD, the Christian scholar Origen had responded to objections raised as to Moses' authorship, and the early rabbis of the following centuries argued that apparent contradictions could be explained, though, in order to account for the multiple inconsistencies, these explanations became increasingly convoluted.

Throughout the centuries that followed, tentative attempts were made to explain the authorship of the *Pentateuch*. Eventually the basic theory was devised that the Books of Moses were compiled by different authors, and using older sources. This theory allowed scholars to explain the presence of doublets, cases of the same story being told twice. It becomes apparent that certain biblical stories often appear with variations of detail in two different places in the Bible. There are two different stories of the creation of the world, two stories of the covenant between God and Abraham, two versions of the Flood, and more.

Investigators found that one version referred to God consistently as *Yahweh*, while the other version referred to God as *Elohim*. They mirror each other in many ways, but in several instances they contradict each other. In the first version of the creation story, God creates plants first, then animals, then man and woman. In the second version, God creates man first, then plants, then animals. And finally, after the man does not find a satisfactory mate among the animals, God creates woman. The story of the Flood can also be separated into two separate versions. Again, one version always refers to the creator as *Elohim*, while the other always refers to Him as *Yahweh*. One mentions one pair of each kind of animal entering the ark, the other, seven pairs of clean animals, and one pair of unclean animals. In one version the Flood lasts a year, the other suggests forty days and forty nights. In one, Noah sends out a raven. In the other, a dove. Each has its own language, its own details, and even its own conception of God.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two-source hypothesis was expanded. It was finally discovered that there were not two but four sources. Two scholars had found that in the first four books of the Bible there were not only doublets, but a number of triplets as well. Then, a young German scholar, W.M.L. De Wette, observed that the book of *Deuteronomy* was strikingly different from the other four books. For simplification, the four documents were identified by alphabetic symbols. The document associated with the name *Yahweh* or Jehovah was called *J*. The document associated with God as *Elohim* was called E. E was discovered to be really two sources. This third and largest document concentrating on matters having to do largely with priests, was referred to as P. The source for *Deuteronomy* was called D.

This model came to be known as the *Documentary Hypothesis*. J is thought to have originated in the kingdom of Judah, when the Jewish population was divided into the two kingdoms of Israel in the north and Judah in the south. E is thought to originate from the kingdom of Israel. Each version reflects the respective religious differences of these two regions. P was composed not long after J and E, perhaps in the time of king Hezekiah, around 715 to 687 BC. D may have been written by Jeremiah and Baruch, in the seventh century BC.

The final element is R for "redactor", that is, the person who brought together and edited the older sources. This process took place following the Exile, in the fifth century BC, possibly by Ezra, who had been empowered by the Persian Emperor Artaxerxes I, to administer the *Law* to his people. According to an ancient tradition preserved in a work called the *Fourth Book of Ezra*, dating from around 100 AD, the original scroll of the *Torah* was burned in a fire that destroyed the Temple in the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, but that Ezra was able to restore it by a revelation. The Bible says of Ezra that, "… he had set his heart on seeking out Yahweh's *Torah*,"[62]and that "he was a ready scribe in the *Torah* of Moses."[63] Chapter 8 of the *Book of Nehemiah* describes how all the citizens assembled to hear a series of readings from the "book of the law of Moses." As a result of the readings, which caused intense emotion, a new covenant was ratified. The new covenant was a commitment to compile an official, authorized, accurate and verified version of the scriptures. This in turn meant sorting through, selecting and editing the vast literature of history, politics and religion the Jews had accumulated.

However, according to Professor Ernst Wurthwein, it is apparent from a number of texts now in our possession that in addition to editing, the process of preservation also contributed to a further degree of corruption. Until the end of the first century AD, several versions of the Old Testament were in circulation. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, three groups of texts may be distinguished, related either to the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, the Greek translation known as the *Septuagint*, and the traditional Masoretic text. The problem with the *Samaritan Pentateuch* is that it differs from the Masoretic text in six thousand instances. Although many of these differences are trivial and do not affect the meaning of the text, it is significant that in about nineteen hundred of these instances, the *Samaritan Pentateuch* agrees with the *Septuagint* against the Masoretic text.[64]

Although the account of the *Septuagint*'s translation is legendary, the date suggested in the famous *Letter of Aristeas* may be accurate, placing the translation in the first half of the third century BC. It was probably produced to serve the need for a Greek version of the Hebrew text for the prominent Jewish community in Egypt. However, the translations of the individual books were not at all uniform. It is probable that in the *Pentateuch* each book was the work of a single translator, or group of translators, but no two books were by the same translator. Many books are almost literal translations, while others such as *Job* and *Daniel* are quite liberal. The Greek *Jeremiah* lacks nearly 2,700 words not found in the Hebrew, and the order of the text differs somewhat as well, it is evident that the difference is due not simply to the translator, but to its Hebrew original, which must have been different from the Masoretic text we have today.[65]

Finally, as part of the great Jewish revival which marked the decades after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and the sacking of the Temple by the Romans, the canonical status of certain disputed books of the Old Testament was defined at the Council of Jamia, in the late first century AD, and an authoritative text of

the Old Testament was also established. The final analysis is, however, that many generations of scribes and translators participated in the transmission of the text of the Old Testament. There are, therefore, a great number of scribal errors, such as would undoubtedly occur in any form of manuscript transmission. These would have been caused by errors of reading, errors of hearing, orthographical mistakes, and defective sources.

However, it should also be recognized that actual textual changes took place due to other causes as well. In the *Text of the Old Testament*, Professor Wurthwein indicated that, while some changes were accidental, others were deliberate.[66] Wurthwein further explains:

> First, the canonization of the Old Testament books did not involve or imply a standardized form of their text in our sense of the term. Prior to canonization, which may be dated about AD 100, their text was still fluid. This was because the scribes, who were theologically educated and interested, would often write the texts from memory (a practice that was later forbidden) and did not regard their work as restricted to mechanical transcription. They were permitted to make certain changes in the wording if they did not distort the sense of the text, as they understood it.[67]

It is in this manner that we should understand that there was possibly an attempt to alter the original text, in order to allow it to conform with newly acquired Chaldean and Magian ideas, which would later be termed Kabbalah. The doctrines of the Kabbalah, however, are not explicitly evident in the Bible. Linguistically, Kabbalah is a Hebrew word meaning "received tradition," as in oral tradition, and is thought to represent a knowledge transferred secretly from initiate to initiate. In addition, however, Kabbalists also claim to decipher meanings encrypted within the text of the Bible. Basically, according to a system of decipherment named *Gematria*, each letter of the Hebrew alphabet represents a numerical value, and through a complex procedure of letter combinations and permutations, a Kabbalist claims to be able to reinterpret the hidden meanings of the text.[68] Therefore, the text would have had to be subtly altered to encrypt such information, in order that the intended meaning could be decoded by Kabbalists, thus avoid attracting unwanted scrutiny from the orthodox.

The Anakim

Though much of Bible is indeed historical, and probably founded on an orthodox version of Judaism, the many bizarre, enigmatic or morally offensive tales present in it, are either outright inventions, or altered versions of their originals, often designed to conceal Kabbalistic meanings. Though unavailable to the non-initiate, we may discern the basic outline of certain Kabbalistic teachings from a set of works, known as the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocrypha, which made their appearance during the Second Temple period. The Apocrypha, from the Greek word *apokryptein*, meaning "to hide away," refers to a body of Biblical literature that was excluded from the orthodox canon of the Old and New Testament. The *Septuagint* contained a number of books that later Jewish religious leaders rejected from the Old Testament, but that the early Christian Church preserved as Apocrypha, inserting them between the Old and New Testament. There is no complete list of these works, and some are more important than others.

Among those usually classified in Old Testament Apocryphal literature are the *Psalms of Solomon*, the Jewish portions of the *Sibylline Books*, the *Book of Enoch*, the *Assumption of Moses*, the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, the *Testament of Job*, several writings on the subject of Adam and Eve, the *History of Johannes Hyrcanus*, and various other legendary and apocalyptic works. Still other works survived. The majority of these, in an attempt to give them legitimacy, were attributed to various biblical personalities from the distant past, rather than their actual authors. Because of this falsely ascribed authorship, these works became known as Pseudepigrapha. Their literary form makes dating most of them difficult, but the majority reflect doctrines introduced since the Babylonian Exile. Most of them date from between 200 BC and 100 AD, and were derived from later copies either in the original language, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, or in translated versions found in archaeological excavations.

It is from these works that we should seek to understand the significance of the curious and paradoxical story of the descendants of Cain, a race, if we trace the genealogy of the Bible, who were closely involved in the history of the Jewish people, from the Exodus from Egypt in the middle of the second millennium BC, to their final conquest by the Babylonians, in the sixth century BC. For, according to Kabbalistic interpretation, the descendants of Cain were the keepers of a sacred tradition, imparted to them before the Flood by the Sons of God.

However, according to the Bible, Cain was cursed. Following their expulsion from the garden, Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Out of jealousy, Cain murdered his brother, and God said to him:

> And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand; When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth; And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear! Behold Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me." So the Lord said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord appointed a mark for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.[69]

The Bible recounts that after Abel was unjustly slain by his brother, Adam and Eve had a third son, Seth. Therefore, there were two branches that developed to populate the earth, a righteous generation descended from Seth, and another branch descended from Cain, which filled the earth with violence and corruption. According to the Kabbalistic legend, the race of Cain intermarried with the Sons of God, the *Bani Elohim* in Hebrew. In the Bible, however, the story is mentioned only briefly, and fails to state that the Sons of God intermarried with the Sons of Cain. Their offspring were a race of giants, referred to as the Anakim. Unaware of the story's true significance, translators of the Bible have struggled with this subject, and consequently, have often translated the size of the Anakim as referring to other qualities. Hence, they are usually translated as "Mighty Men of Renown," or "Mighty Ones of Eternity." In *Genesis* 6:1-4:

> Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful; and they took them wives of all which they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years. The *Nephilim* were upon the Earth in those days and thereafter too. Those sons of the gods who cohabited with the daughters of Adam, and they bore children into them. They were the Mighty Ones of Eternity (*Anakim*).

According to the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, however, the Sons of God were identified as Fallen Angels. The story of the Anakim is often thought to be possibly connected to the Sumerian myth of the *Annunaki*, seven judges of the Underworld, the children of the god Anu, who had once lived in heaven but were banished for their misdeeds. Similarly, as recounted in the Dead Sea Scrolls, two hundred angels known as the *Watchers*, or Guardians, once descended from heaven to sample the pleasures of earth, and were, according to the *Book of Jubilees*, led by *Mastema*, or Satan. It is they who taught men knowledge brought with them in their descent from Heaven: magic and astrology. According to the *Book of Enoch*, the Sons of God, "took wives, each choosing for himself; whom they began to approach, and with whom they cohabited; teaching them sorcery, incantations, and the dividing of roots and trees."[70] The text explains:

> ... Azazyel, taught men to make swords, knives, shields, breastplates, the fabrication of mirrors, and the workmanship of bracelets and ornaments, the use of paint, the beautifying of the eyebrows, the use of stones of every valuable and select kind, and of all sorts of dyes, so that the world became altered. Impiety increased; fornication multiplied; and they transgressed and corrupted all their ways. Amazarak taught all sorcerers, and diviners of roots; Armers taught the solution of sorcery; Barkayal taught the observers of the stars; Akibeel taught signs; Tamiel taught astronomy; and Asaradel taught the motion of the moon.[71]

To satisfy their enormous appetites, the Anakim roamed the earth, slaughtering every species of bird, beast, reptile and fish. Finally, the ravenous creatures turned on one another, stripping each other's flesh from their bones and quenching their thirst in rivers of blood. As this wave of destruction washed over the earth, the anguished cries of mankind reached four powerful archangels, Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, who upon orders from God brought about a swift solution. First Uriel descended to earth to warn Noah of a coming Flood, advising him to prepare an ark to carry his family and a load of creatures to safety. Raphael then fell upon a leader of the Watchers, bound him hand and foot, and thrust him into eternal darkness. Next, Gabriel, charged with slaying the corrupt race, encouraged them to fight each other. Finally, Michael rounded up the remaining Watchers, forced them to witness the deaths of their progeny,

and condemned them to eternal torment. Only then did the heavens open up and the waters of the Great Flood washed away the last traces of the destruction that the Fallen Angels had wrought.

However, the Anakim were not entirely annihilated by the Flood. The *Book of Jubilees* recounted how a remnant of the Anakim were spared. Some time after the Flood, Noah learned that evil spirits, born of the Fallen Angels, were misleading his grandchildren and killing some of them. God then orders the archangels to imprison the demons inside the earth. But Mestama (the devil) pleads with God: "Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me, and let them hearken to my voice, and do all that I shall say unto them; for if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will upon the sons of men." And Yahweh replies: "Let the tenth part of them remain before him, and let nine parts descend into the place of condemnation." And so, the angels bind nine of ten of the evil spirits in the darkness but the tenth part remain so that "they might be subject before Satan on the earth."[72]

The sparing of a number of Fallen Angels allowed for the legend of the Kabbalah according to which the race of the Anakim was continued through the descendants of one of Noah's grandsons, Canaan. Canaan too was cursed. According to the Bible, Noah had survived the Flood with his three sons, Shem, Japheth and Ham. After a bout of drunkenness, Noah fell asleep without covering himself. When his son Ham came into his tent, he saw his father naked, but laughed. His two other brothers, Shem and Japheth, were wiser and entered backwards into their father's tent to cover him. For his sin, Ham was cursed by Noah, but due to his nearness in relation to him, he placed the curse not on Ham, but on Ham's son, Canaan, and his descendants. Noah then pronounced, according to the Bible, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers"[73]

Though it appears unjust that Canaan should have been punished for the sin of his father, the Bible makes no attempt to qualify the curse pronounced upon him. Effectively, the curse of Canaan was employed to contrive an account of the continuation of a line of descendants from Cain, for interpreted Kabbalistically, the curse of Canaan was the perpetuation of the curse of Cain. In the great Mediaeval Kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*, we find, "therefore, Noah, said, cursed be Canaan, since through him the curse returned to the world. A slave of slaves he shall be," in words that correspond to the curse addressed to the Serpent.[74] Interpreted Kabbalistically, therefore, the descendants of Canaan, known as the Canaanites, were the continuation of the Anakim, and perpetuated the knowledge of the *Ancient Wisdom*.

The Exodus

According to the Bible, God intended to punish the Canaanites by commanding the Jews to conquer them and possess their land, then comprising much of Lebanon and Palestine, a land He had promised to the descendants of Abraham. In *Genesis* 15:18-21, God tells Abraham that He has given to his progeny the land of the Canaanites and all their descendants: "to your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the land of Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadomite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

Abraham, the forefather of the Jewish nation, was descended from Noah's son Shem, hence the name *Semites*. And, the promise to his descendants was in reward for his recognition of the one God and his rejection of the paganism of his community of Ur in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, through alteration of the Bible text, Abraham too was identified with the occult tradition. According to the Bible, Ur was in the Chaldees. However, the reference to the Chaldees, is anachronistic. The Chaldeans did not enter Mesopotamia until towards the end of the of the second millennium BC, and Abraham is dated much earlier, closer to its beginning.[75] Nevertheless, that Abraham was a "Chaldean" was used to imply that he was adept at astrology, an art which he then supposedly introduced to the Egyptians.

Abraham's son Jacob, later renamed Israel, fathered twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel, who also were understood mystically. According to apocalyptic writings, and the later generations of Rabbis, the twelve tribes were associated with the twelve astrological signs.[76] Like the Zodiac, the twelve tribes were divided into four camps of three, each accorded a particular astrological sign, in accordance with the four seasons of the Zodiac, divided according to the Four Elements. Thus, Reuben, who is compared to running water, with Simeon and Gad, are Aquarius. Judah, the lion, with Issachar and Zebulon, are Leo. Benjamin, Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Jacob compares to the ox, are Taurus. Naphtali, Asher and Dan, whose device is the scorpion, synonymous astrologically with the eagle, are Scorpio. These four signs would be associated with the "creatures" that uphold the Chariot of God in Ezekial, figured with the head of a lion, the body of a man, with cloven feet, and the wings of an eagle.

Of Israel's sons, Joseph was his favorite, making for him a coat of many colors. Joseph had a dream in which he saw the Sun and the Moon and eleven stars bowed down before him, signifying that he

would be greater than his brothers. Out of envy, they sold Joseph into slavery. He was finally taken by his captors to Egypt where he became the Pharaoh's chief minister. Stricken by famine, Israel and his remaining sons were forced to migrate to Egypt, where they joined their brother Joseph. After several centuries, the Jewish nation became so substantial that Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt threatened by them. Though, God still intended to fulfill His promise to their forefather Abraham, and due to the oppression inflicted upon them, sent Moses to plead with Pharaoh to release the people of Israel. After several horrible afflictions sent by God upon the Egyptians, as a sign that they should comply with Moses' request, Pharaoh finally conceded, and Moses guided the Israelites across the Red Sea and north to the Promised Land.

Shortly following the Exodus, and soon after having crossed the Red Sea, while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the Jews became concerned that their prophet was tarrying far too long on the mountain. They approached Moses' brother Aaron, demanding: "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."[77] Aaron advised them to collect their jewelry, and melting it, formed a statue of a calf, and said to them "this is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."[78] When Moses returned from the mountain, upon seeing the spectacle, he smashed the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

The Golden Calf worshipped by the Israelites appears to have been in emulation of the worship of Apis, the sacred bull of the Egyptians. As Apis-Atum, he was associated with the solar-cult and was often represented with the Sun-disk between his horns. Although those responsible for the incident were punished for their idolatry, once the Israelites had entered the Promised Land, they once again came into contact with a similar cult of the solar-bull, in the Canaanite gods Baal and Astarte. Ultimately, it was their constant lapse into this cult which became a continuing dilemma, comprising the principle theme of the Bible, from the Exodus, up until the final conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and their Exile to the city of Babylon in the sixth century BC.

According to the Bible, the Jews were commanded to possess the land of the Canaanites, who are evidently likened to the Anakim. According to *Deuteronomy* 9:1-2, "Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, "Who can stand before the sons of Anak?" Similarly, according to Josephus, at that time in Palestine, "there were still then left a race of giants, who had bodies so large, and countenances so entirely different from other men, that they were surprising to the sight, and terrible to the hearing."[79] In *Deuteronomy* chapter 3 we are told: "For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the *Rephaim*; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubit its breadth, according to the common cubit."

When Moses sends out a reconnaissance team to gather information about the land of the Canaanites, upon their return from the mission they report:

> We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.[80]

After an unsuccessful first attempt to attack Canaan, during which time the Jews transgress once again, God is angered, and informs the Israelites that those He brought out of Egypt will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land. Rather, they will have to wander in the *Wilderness*, and after forty years, following the death of the last of their generation, their children will be the ones to fulfill the covenant promise and occupy Canaan. Neither would Moses lead the Jews in the conquest of Canaan. It would be his appointed successor Joshua, that would lead the Israelites in an invasion across the Jordan River. The Jews first attacked Jericho. In deliberate reference to astral themes, perhaps to be understood as a magical act, Joshua ordered seven priests, like the seven planets, to circle the city seven times a day. On the seventh day, they blew the trumpets of rams' horns, which are said to have resounded with the magical "music of the spheres", and when all the Israelites shouted together, the city's walls fell. They then captured other towns in the north and south until most of Palestine was brought under Israelite control.

The Canaanites

Following their conquest of Canaan, according to the Bible, God repeatedly warned the Jews not to follow the religion of their Canaanite neighbours. In *Exodus* 23:23, God commands, "For my angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and will completely destroy them. You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them, and break their sacred pillars in pieces." In *Deuteronomy* 7:2-3, He commands: "when the Lord your God hands these nations over to you and you conquer them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them, and don't let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters."

The Canaanites worshipped Baal, the Semitic name for Bel of the Babylonians, a species of dying god, so prevalent in the ancient world, and whose death and resurrection was celebrated annually at a New Year's festival. It was Sir James Frazer, in his famous work *The Golden Bough*, who first identified the recurring myth of the dying-god in various mythologies around the world. The dying-god was found in all parts of the ancient Middle East, and along the coast of the Mediterranean, but worshipped under many different names, depending on the locality. For, contrary to the attitude of modern scholars, who tend to regard ancient civilizations as islands divided by more than territorial distance, these civilizations shared many of the same gods, though, at times, merely according to varying accounts.

The dying-god cult would become the basis of rites known in Ancient Times as Ancient Mysteries, and which, through the influence of the Kabbalah, would be spread through other occult schools to later become the basis of the Western occult tradition. Based on the premise of imitative magic, where a like action was thought to influence another, worshippers believed that by engaging in rites of an orgiastic nature they were imitating the acts of the gods, and helping to promote fertility. Such rites were referred to in the instance of the Golden Calf as "pagan revelry". The most heinous aspect of the cult was the killing of a child, in imitation of the death of the god. Votives would beat themselves into a frenzy, supported by loud music to drown out the screams of the suffering child. Its flesh, which had either been boiled or baked as bread, would be eaten, by which the god was believe to be resurrected in the worshippers, and its blood drunk, symbolized as "wine", because the god was thought to represent the "lifeblood" of nature.

The dying-god was symbolized by the constellation of Orion. Orion is one of the most conspicuous constellation. Lying along the celestial equator, it is visible from practically all the earth, in the beginning and end of the year. Therefore, Orion is the subject of many ancient myths and legends, and seems to have been considered the center of the universe. The Assyrian Adad, the Hurrian Teshub, the unnamed Hittite weather-god, and the Canaanite Baal, all had similar appearances and mythological themes identifying him with Orion. He was known to the Egyptians as Osiris, who was associated with Apis, the bull-god of the Golden Calf incident. Bel, the dying-god of the Babylonians, was believed to have been the legendary founder of Babylon, the giant Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, referred to in the Bible as "a mighty hunter before the Lord," which Jewish tradition identified with the constellation of Orion.

Throughout the ancient Near East, the dying-god formed part of a trinity, representing a father and daughter who have a son. Therefore, the son is also brother to the goddess, as well as her spouse. The three represented the Sun, the Moon and Venus. The dying-god was not the father-god, he nevertheless became the focus of the cult, and assumed the father-god attributes. Therefore, although Bel was commonly identified with Jupiter, he was also assimilated to the Sun-god Shamash. The dying-god was consistently identified with a bull or other horned animal. Therefore, several hymns call Bel the "bull-calf of the Sun." On the end of the fifth day of the Akitu festival at Babylon, the king and the high priest sacrificed a white bull while chanting, "Divine Bull, splendid light that illuminates the darkness…"[81]

The worship of Bel or Marduk seems to have been derived from the cult of Tammuz, revered in Babylon and Syria, known as the "Shepherd", and identified with Orion, whose death was mourned annually, and who was also symbolized by the bull. One hymn begins:

> The wild bull who has lain down, lives no more,
> the wild bull who has lain down, lives no more,
> Tammuz, the wild bull, who has lain down, lives no more,
> ...the chief shepherd, lives no more,
> the wild bull who has lain down, lives no more....[82]

Mesopotamian myth recounts the death of Tammuz, or Dumuzi, and his lover the goddess of war, Ishtar, or Inanna. When Tammuz is killed by a boar, Ishtar descends to the Underworld to rescue him. While she is away from the earth, the crops fail, the cattle become sterile, and men and women lose the ability to procreate. At each of the seven gates of the Underworld, she is forced to take off a piece of

clothing, until she enters the realm of the dead naked. As a result of her plea, Tammuz is reborn, and when Ishtar returns to earth, fertility is finally restored. Tammuz' marriage to the goddess Ishtar was dramatically reenacted during February-March, where the king actually took on the identity of the god and, by copulating with a priestess, incarnating the goddess, he was thought to fertilize all of nature for the year.

Similarly, Baal was one of three gods worshipped among the Canaanites, forming a trinity, composed of the father El, his daughter Astarte, and Baal, their son. El, the father, the Sun, is also identified with the bull, though he was also confounded with Baal. The daughter is Venus, or the Moon, whose crescent shape was also symbolized by the cow's horns. Venusis the brightest star at dawn, and is therefore identified with the Sun. This was represented mythologically, in that the dying-god and the goddess were twins, and therefore were often believed to represent twin aspects of a single androgynous god, and identified interchangable with the Sun and with Venus. They were both symbolized by the bull because at the resurrection of the god from the Underworld, celebrated at the spring equinox, the Sun and Venus rose in the constellation of Taurus.

The mythology of Baal, is best illustrated in the longest of the known Canaanite myths the *Baal Epic*, discovered by archeologists at the ancient site of Ugarit, now Ras Shamra on the Mediterranean coast of northern Syria. The *Baal Epic* provides the basic account of the dying-god struggle with the dragon of the sea, and also mirrors much of the account of the *Enuma elish*, the Babylonian account of the struggle between Bel and Tiamat. The first episode begins with Sea's demand that the assembly of the gods surrender Baal to him. The council of the gods was terrified by the menacing approach of Sea's envoy, and despite Baal's willingness to act as the god's spokesman, it was El, the head of the assembly, who replied to the messengers and promised to hand Baal to Sea. Despite El's promise, Baal does not submit, but aided by two clubs fashioned by Kothar-wa-Hasis, slaughters Sea, the Dragon, or *Lotan*, the Serpent.

Baal, though supreme in power, has no house like those of the other gods. Kothar builds and equips a house for him with gold and silver. Baal then declared his sovereignty and refused to pay tribute that was due to Death. Baal sends messengers to Death, but Death's reply to them implies that Baal's defeat of Sea caused cosmic collapse, and his punishment would be that he would have to enter the throat of Death. Baal was intimidated by his messengers' reports and surrendered to Death. After he had sexual intercourse with the goddess, in the form of a cow, he descended into the Underworld accompanied by his sons and daughters. El mourned when he heard the news. Anat, Baal's sister, another form of Astarte, and Sun, buried Baal. With the descent of the fertility god into the Underworld, drought and sterility afflicted the land. Anat responded by killing Death, by which Baal was revived and fertility was restored.

The primary feature of the fertility rites of the ancient Middle East highlighted the love between the dying-god and the goddess, and his death or sacrifice. Baal, came to represent the sky-god, the god of thunder, who fertilizes the goddess, mother earth, to bring forth life. Thus, Baal was often symbolized as an erect penis in the form of a pillar. This became the symbol of the single androgynous god, with both Baal and Astarte generally being represented by a pillar, known as an *Asherah* in the Bible, a Hebrew word, also a common noun, meaning a sacred tree or pole used in the goddess cult.[83] A priest and priestess would undergo a mock death and resurrection, and in a rite called a sacred marriage, the priest and priestess would copulate, symbolizing the union of the god and the goddess.

The custom of sacred prostitution followed a similar belief. The kings of Babylon went through a sacred marriage each year with the great goddess Ishtar, considered essential for the fertility and the prosperity of the community. Prostitutes gathered at the temples of fertility goddesses in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, and their activities were thought to contribute to abundant harvests. In Babylon, every woman, whether rich or poor, had once in her life to offer herself to a stranger at the temple of the goddess Mylitta. The sacred precinct was crowded with women waiting to offer themselves, with the less attractive ones, according to Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian of the fifth century BC, waiting longer than the others. At Byblos, where there stood a tall phallic obelisk, the holy image of the goddess Astarte, people shaved their heads to mourn Tammuz, and women who refused to sacrifice their hair had to fornicate with strangers.

The Exile

Although warned time and again to the contrary, the Jews nevertheless repeatedly submitted to the worship of the Canaanite fertility gods, Baal and Astarte. Already in *Judges* 3:1-7 we learn, "So Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizites, and Hivites, and Jebusites; and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of their Lord. They forgot about the Lord their God, and they worshipped the images of Baal and the *Asherah* pillars." Therefore, despite the prohibition against such intermarriage, the entire line of Jewish kings were purportedly descended from the Canaanites. However, this claim must be

relegated to later interpolation by Kabbalist scribes, and should be attributed to an attempt to trace the lineage of the Jewish kings back to the descendants of Cain and the Fallen Angels, the Anakim.

The entire line of Jewish kings were descended from Joseph and Tamar, his daughter-in-law, a Canaanite woman who had disguised herself as a prostitute in order to seduce him. Their son Perez was David's ancestor. Solomon, to whom much of Kabbalistic tradition is attributed, was the son of David from Bathsheba, a Hittite woman. Blamed on his marriage of foreign princesses, Solomon, who reigned from 968 to 928 BC, also fell victim to a lapse into occult worship. However, as the doctrines of the Kabbalah were not only heretical, but largely developed in the sixth century BC, this claim again must be dismissed as part of later interpolation. The Bible nevertheless claims, "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women; from the nation concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love."[84] Then, "For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Moloch the detestable idol of the Ammonites."[85] *II Kings* recorded that the high priest Hilkiah destroyed the shrines to the goddess *Ashtoreth* which Solomon had erected all over Israel.[86]

God apparently also gave Solomon, riches, honor and wisdom surpassing that of all other men, "even all the wisdom" of those most renowned for their knowledge of magic, the Egyptians.[87] He was believed to have owned a magic ring with which he controlled all nature, all men and all spirits. The ring was inscribed with a pentagram, or five-pointed star, known as the *Seal of Solomon*, and was supposed to render to him the power to subdue the demons. According to Jewish legend, King Solomon forced Asmodeus and the other demons to build the Temple at Jerusalem. Asmodeus, derived from a Zoroastrian archdemon *Aeshma Daeva*,[88] was the king of the demons, lived on a mountain top, and liked to go up to heaven every day to take part in discussions there. Asmodeus took his revenge when Solomon foolishly allowed him to seize the magic ring in which his power resided. Asmodeus promptly hurled the ring down to the bottom of the sea, sent Solomon into exile and reigned in his place. But Solomon recovered the ring from the belly of a fish, and imprisoned Asmodeus and the other demons in a large jar.[89]

The construction of the Temple of Jerusalem Solomon built, as described in the Bible, was in a manner quite foreign to the doctrines of the Israelites. The Bible maintains that Solomon had sent a message to the king of Tyre asking if he could hire the services of the king's master builder Hiram, a Canaanite, skilled in geometry. Hiram was referred to as a "son of a widow", a term traditionally used to refer to priests of the goddess. Two bronze pillars, *Boaz* and *Jachin*, were erected at the door of the Temple, the double pillars sacred to the dying-god and the goddess. Temples dedicated to the goddess in Tyre are said to have featured stone pillars of phallic design at their entrances, which were the focus of fertility rites performed in honour of Astarte at her special festivals. Herodotus described two pillars in the temple of a god he referred to as the "Phoenician Hercules", meaning the Canaanite Baal.

After Solomon, the Israelites persisted in their paganism. Political differences divided them between the kingdom of Israel in the north, comprised of ten tribes, and Judah in the south, composed of the two remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin. When Jeroboam became king in Israel, the worship of pagan gods briefly abated. Unfortunately this Jeroboam soon reverted to the worship of the bull, brining down the anger of God on the people of Israel. Jeroboam was concerned that in going to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple, the Israelites would come to offer their allegiance to King Rehoboam of Judah, instead of himself. Therefore, on the advice of his counselors, he made two golden calves at the southern and northern ends of Israel, and said to the people, "It is too much trouble for you to worship in Jerusalem. O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!"[90]

Under the rule of Jeroboam's successor, Omri, the goddess-cult was further reinforced with the arrival in Israel of princess Jezebel, who was the daughter of the Canaanite king of Sidon, and a pagan priestess. Jezebel was the original *scarlet women*, whose repuatation as a shameless stems from the sexual or orgiastic rites she performed to the goddess. Omri, the king of Israel, married his son Ahab to Jezebel. Under her influence, King Ahab of Israel built an altar to Baal and a sacred grove to the goddess.[91] It is said that 850 priests of Baal and Ashtoreth were entertained at a banquet organized by the new queen. She worshipped Astarte, and in the streets of Jerusalem sacred fires were lit, spiced honey cakes baked, libations of wine were poured on the ground, and incense was burnt as a sacrificial offering to the goddess.

However, the orthodox tradition was reaffirmed in Israel by the charismatic Elijah, who was critical of the paganism of the House of Omri. Chapter 18 of the *I Kings* describes the dramatic scene when Elijah gathered an immense crowd of Israelites on Mount Carmel, and challenged the priests of Baal to a rain-making contest. The priests of Baal went through all their rituals, cutting themselves with "knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them"; but nothing happened. Then Elijah built his altar and offered sacrifice to Yahweh, and immediately "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice." Then all

the people "fell flat on their faces and said: The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God." Still, Elijah was unable to eradicate paganism, or destroy the House of Omri, though he did predict its downfall.

Elisha, Elijah's successor, conspired with Jehu, one of Ahab's generals, and had him anointed king. Jezebel was then thrown from the window of her palace by her eunuchs, "and some of her blood was sprinkled on the walls, and on the horses; and he trod her underfoot." Ahab's seventy sons were decapitated and piled "in two heaps at the entering-in of the gate." Jehu massacred Ahab's royal house, "and all his great men, and his kinsfolk, and his priests, until he left him none remaining." The priests of Baal were slaughtered, "And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day."[92]

Though Jehu was followed by several generations of righteous kings, God's anger remained due to the pagan practices of the reign of Menahem, and He punished the Israelites through an attack led by the Assyrians, under Tiglath-Pileser, and eventually, under Shalmaneser, who successfully invaded the city of Samaria, and exiled the people to Assyria. According to *II Kings* 17:16-20, this disaster came upon the nation of Israel because:

> They defied all the commands of the Lord their God and made two calves from metal. They set up an Asherah pole and worshipped Baal and all the forces of heaven. They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters in the fire. They consulted fortune-tellers and used sorcery and sold themselves to evil, arousing the Lord's anger. And because the Lord was angry, he swept them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained in the land. But even the people of Judah refused to obey the commands of the Lord their God. They walked down the same evil paths that Israel had established. So the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until they were destroyed.

Though the Assyrian king Sennacherib attacked Judah, Jerusalem had survived a fierce siege in 701 BC. Their rescue was brought about by an outbreak of bubonic plague, carried by mice into the Assyrian camp. The account is paralleled in a slightly different version offered by Herodotus, according to whom, during the night, field mice invaded the Assyrian camp and gnawed the quivers, bow-strings and leather shield handles, thus disarming the military force, as a consequence of which many of the soldiers were killed while others fled.[93] In *II Kings*, the victory is seen as the result of a miracle: "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians and hundred four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning behold, they were all dead corpses."

Hezekiah, who ruled in Judah at the time, "did what was pleasing to the Lord." *II Kings* 18:4 recounts that "he removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and knocked down the *Asherah* poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it. The bronze serpent was called *Nehushtan*." Together with certain images of his Canaanite goddess-spouse, the Asherah pillars, the serpent god of bronze was in those days worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem. Its presence was justified by:

> Yahweh sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against Yahweh and against you; pray to Yahweh, that he may take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And Yahweh said to Moses, "make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he could look and the bronze serpent and live."[94]

Babylonian boundary-stones of the late second and early first millennium BC already contained pictorial representations of which the Sun, the Moon, and Venus are often clearly identifiable, and associated with them is a huge serpent. Similarly, both Baal and Astarte were associated with the Serpent, or sea dragon. Therefore, references are also found in the Old Testament, though predominantly in the post-exilic texts, where Yahweh takes on the aspect of a Thunder-god who vanquishes the Dragon.[95] His war with Leviathan is commonly recognized as drawn from Baal's battle with the sea-god, Wotan, a myth related to that of the Babylonian sea god, the dragon Chaos, or Tiamat, defeated by Bel. According to *Isaiah* 27:1, God will destroy "Leviathan, the swiftly moving serpent, the coiling, writhing serpent, the dragon of the Sea." In *Psalm* 74:13 God, "broke the serpent heads on the waters, smashed up the heads of Leviathan." In Canaanite texts, the defeat of the sea-god or creature is associated with the defeat of a seven-headed serpent or dragon, and with the victory over *Ltn*, related to the Biblical "Leviathan."

Esoterically, Leviathan, the "coiling serpent", was identified with the constellation Draco, which circles the north pole, and whose head is stepped on by Hercules, or in Babylon, Bel. Symbolically, therefore, the Asherah poles, or phallic pillars entwined by the serpent, became symbols of the dying-god, who was equated with the the pole or axis of the world around which the constellation of Draco coils.

The serpent, helped represent the darker aspects of the dying-god. The dying-god was considered to have dual aspect. While he was represented by the Sun, the dying-god was also equated with Saturn, "the nocturnal Sun", to represent his darker aspects. As god of the Underworld, he presided over the souls of the dead. And, because primitive paganism elevated this evil to the level of a god, it was regarded as necessary to also render him worship. This involved rites of apotropaic magic, meaning to avert evil. While the good god required the performance of good, the evil god demanded the performance of evil. Therefore, to prevent his evil, or to direct it, or that of his minionsamong the demons, against ones enemies, it was necessary to perform evil sacrifices, the most powerful of which was the slaying of a child.

Thus, the Israelites were also accused of worshipping the Canaanite god Moloch, another title for Baal. Moloch was identified with Saturn, whom the Babylonians regarded as the "star of the Sun."[96] Moloch was represented as a huge bronze statue with the head of a bull, which was hollow, and inside there burned a fire which made it glow red. Children were placed on the hands of the statue. Through an ingenious system the hands were raised to the mouth, as though Moloch were eating, and the children fell into the fire and were consumed by the flames. As the children suffered, the people gathered before Moloch and danced to the loud sounds of flutes and tambourines to drown out the screams of the victims.

Such a regular antagonist Baal had become that, as god of the Underworld, he came to be identified with the enemy of God in the Bible, Satan. Thus, other names for Satan have been Baal-Zebub, or Beelzebub, meaning "Lord of the Flies", or "Lord of those that fly". In the New Testament he is referred to as Belial. As the Sun, and the twin-brother of the goddess, Baal is often associated with the planet Venus, which appears at dawn and sunset as the brightest star in the sky, also known as the Morning Star. As such, other names for Satan have included *Prince of Dawn* or *Son of the Dawn*. Thus, in the *Book of Isaiah*, referring to Satan, we find:

> How you have fallen from heaven, bright morning star,
> felled to the earth, sprawling helpless across the nations!
> You thought in your mind,
> I will scale the heavens,
> I will set my throne high above the stars of God,
> I will sit on the mountain where the gods meet
> in the far recesses of the north.
> I will rise high above the cloud-banks
> and make myself like the Most High.
> Yet you shall be brought down to *Sheol*,
> to the depths of the abyss.[97]

Though Judah had escaped the initial onslaught at the hands of the Assyrians, ultimate punishment was immanent, for the prophet Isaiah warned of catastrophe, saying: "the time is coming when everything you have, all the treasures stored up by your ancestors, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord"[98] According to a Talmudic tradition, Isaiah was murdered by Hezekiah's successor, the idol-worshipping King Manasseh. The Bible relates that when Manasseh became king, "he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected alters to the Baal and made *Asherah* poles, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven and served them."[99] In *II Kings* 21:4-5 we are told, "He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the Lord, the place where the Lord had said his name should be honored. He built these altars for all the forces of heaven in both courtyards of the Lord's Temple." Manasseh's victims were so many that Jerusalem was filled with the blood of the innocent. "He even sacrificed his own sons in the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. He practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery, and dealt with mediums and psychics…"[100]

Manasseh' son Amon repeated the practices of this father, though his son Josiah sought to eradicate the pagan cult. When Hilkiah, the high-priest, found a book of ancient writings outlining the covenant between God and Israel that held terrifying curses, King Josiah "rent his clothes" and ordered a total reform of religious practice.[101] According to *II Kings* 23:4: "then the king instructed Hilkiah the high priest and the leading priests and the Temple gatekeepers to remove from the Lord's Temple all the utensils that were used to worship Baal, Asherah, and all the forces of heaven." Again in 23:7, "He also tore down the houses of the shrine prostitutes that were inside the Temple of the Lord, where the women wove

coverings for the Asherah pillar." Finally, in 23:10, "Then the king defiled the altar of Topheth in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so no one could ever again use it to sacrifice a son or daughter in the fire as an offering to Moloch."

Nevertheless, God had resolved to keep his promise to destroy the people of Jerusalem, because of His continuing anger against the deeds of Manasseh. When Hezekiah's successors again had done what was "evil in the sight of the Lord," God sent against them their great enemy, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians, who devastated Jerusalem in 589 BC. The Temple was destroyed, its contents taken away, and most of the people, except the very poor, were carried into exile in Babylon, the few remaining eventually fleeing with Jeremiah to Egypt.

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Chapter 4: Hercules

The Phoenicians

Part of the reason for which Greece has been presented as the so-called "cradle" of Western colligation may be revealed in the fact that it was largely the product of the colonization of a peoples from Palestine and Lebanon called Phoenicians, who were of Canaanite origin, and therefore, esoterically, from the Anakim. Though, this is not expressly accepted. Rather, the Greeks are believed to be of Indo-European origin. However, ancient Greek and Roman historians consistently referred to the Greeks as the inheritors of the traditions of the Near East. For that reason, until at least the Renaissance, scholars had always regarded Greece as the inheritor of Middle Eastern tradition, particularly from ancient Babylon and Egypt.

The German Romantics of the nineteenth century, however, perceiving what they believed was an affinity between the Greek and German languages, came increasingly to regard Greece as the lost *Golden Age* of Aryan civilization they had been longing for. They therefore dismissed the validity of the ancient sources, and can be accounted for the ignorance that persists on the subject. Greece was, nevertheless, fundamentally a Middle Eastern civilization. Contact between Semitic peoples and the Greeks goes back to the second millennium BC, in Minoan and Mycenaean times, and though the foreign origin of ancient Greece was widely recognized in ancient times, scholarship over the last few hundred years tended to bury the evidence, in favour of the Aryan version of history.[102] Fortunately, more recently, several studies by the last century's foremost scholars, have begun to elucidate the extent of Greece's debt to foreign nations.

According to M. L. West, though a number of foreign elements were derived from other parts of the Near East, it was the Semitic West specifically, composed of the land of the Canaanites and the Jews, which exercised the greatest degree of influence on Greek culture. Ancient Greeks evidenced no actual knowledge of the Jewish people, and therefore applied the term "Phoenician" to refer indiscriminately to the inhabitants of Palestine, whether Canaanite or Hebrew. It is recognized that there was definitely a significant Semitic element among the Phoenicians. Essentially, *Phoenician* would refer to that group of people resulting from the extensive inmixture of the Jews and Canaanites, for both archeology and Biblical indications confirm that both nations held close ties to each other. Jews and Phoenicians spoke the same language, Canaanite, of which Hebrew is a remnant, and later Aramaic. In any case, both nations intermingled extensively, and Jews were so often committed to the worship of the gods of their Canaanite neighbours, that they would, in effect, have been indistinguishable from each other.

Though intermarriage was strictly forbidden in the Bible, all the sons of Jacob, except Joseph, married Canaanites. From that time, down to the *Book of Judges*, there was an acknowledged general intermarrying among the Jews and Canaanites. When King David carried out a census, Jews were known to inhabit many Canaanite cities, including Tyre and Sidon in Lebanon.[103] Hiram of Tyre was an ally of David and Solomon, and Solomon appealed to him to help build the temple in Jerusalem. In the ninth century BC, the Phoenician kings of Tyre had intermarried with the kings of Israel and Judah, establishing important dynastic alliances. Ithobaal of Tyre married his daughter Jezebel to Ahab, and Jezebel's daughter Athalia married Joram of Judah. Phoenician builders regularly assisted the kings of Israel, and in the time of Omri and Ahab, we see their work in the famous stables, once thought to be Solomon's, now attributed to Omri.[104] By the fifth century BC, Ezra would lament:

> …the Jewish leaders came to me and said, "Many of the people of Israel, and even some of the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the other peoples living in the land. They have taken up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. For the men of Israel have married women from these people and have taken them as wives for their sons. So the holy race has become polluted by these mixed marriages. To make matters worse, the officials and leaders are some of the worst offenders."[105]

Throughout the classical period of ancient Greece, the Jewish nation did not exist as a consolidated empire, but was subject to the Persians. Moreover, there is no reference to Jews by the Greeks specifically until the third century BC. Therefore, Herodotus does not mention them, but discusses the "Phoenicians" and the "Syrians" of Palestine who practiced circumcision.[106] He further mentioned that, "these people have a tradition that in ancient times they lived on the Persian Gulf, but migrated to the Syrian coast, where they are found today. This part of Syria, together with the country which extends southward to Egypt, is all known as Palestine."[107]

The Phoenicians were famous throughout the ancient world as sea merchants, and had become an important trading power in the Mediterranean, by the beginning of first millennium BC. Their reputation persisted until the time of Homer, who would write in the *Odyssey*: "Thither came the Phoenicians, mariners renowned, greedy merchant men, with countless gauds in a black ship."[108]According to Herodotus:

> These people came originally from the so-called Red Sea; and as soon as they had penetrated to the Mediterranean and settled in the country where they are today, they took to making long trading voyages. Loaded with Egyptian and Assyrian goods, they called at various places along the coast, including Argos, in those days the most important place in the land now called Hellas [Greece].[109]

Seafaring is generally not a recognized activity of the ancient Jews, and there are relatively few references to ships and seafaring in the Bible. The few mentions included *1 Kings* 9:26-7, where it is stated that: "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-Gebner which is beside Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea in the Land of Edom. And Hiram, a Phoenician, sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of sea, with the servants of Solomon." In the *Song of Deborah* two of the twelve tribes are associated with the sea: "and Dan, why does he sojourn by the ships? Asher dwelt at the shore of the sea, and abides by its bays."[110] The traditional interpretation of this passage explains that, in an hour of danger, Dan embarked his boats with all his belongings and fled across the Jordan for safety.[111]

However, Raphael Patai, in *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times*, explains that the limited number of references to seafaring is due to the religious focus of the Bible, that disregarded the subject of sea trade as irrelevant. Patai maintains: "this being the case, we are justified in assuming that, despite the paucity of biblical references, once their control extended to the Mediterranean coastline, the Hebrews engaged in shipping and fishing to no less an extent than the other peoples whose towns and villages bordered the Great Sea."[112] Important evidence corroborating the role seafaring in the life of the Jews in ancient Palestine became available in 1982, and was discovered by a Israeli archaeologist, Nahman Avigad. It was a Hebrew seal depicting a sailing ship that dated from the eighth or seventh century BCE. The curved prow of the ship ends in the shape of an animal probably a horse, a type of ship known to the Greeks as *hippoi*, or "horses". Because the ship had no oars, it could not be the depiction of a warship, but would most likely represent a merchant's vessel.

Phoenician merchants traded a range of sophisticated goods, fashioned by artisans in their own cities, with techniques and designs usually borrowed from other nations. Byblos became a distribution center for goods from Egypt, their chief trading partner, including papyrus. This led the Greeks to adopt the name of the city as their word for book. From Byblos eventually came the English word *Bible*. But the Phoenicians' most famous products were textiles. In vivid contrast to the plain garments of the Egyptians and the Greeks, Phoenician fabrics were dyed in brilliant colors. Especially admired was the Tyrian purple. So valued was cloth dyed the deepest shade of violet that for centuries it was called *royal purple* and in many regions was reserved for kings and others of high rank. The source of the dye was a small sea mollusk called the murex.

According to Jewish tradition, the murex was the special favor of one the sons of Jacob and a father of one the twelve tribes, Zebulon. A Talmudic explanation of the *Blessing of Moses* maintains that the tribe of Zebulon made their fortune through the purple snail (murex), the manufacture of white glass, and various rare things that came out of the sea.[113] In a *Midrash*, a form exegetical text based on oral tradition, the *Blessing of Moses* which said "Rejoice, Zebulon, in thy going out", was interpreted as: "Zebulon was a go-between for his brethren; he would take from his brethren and sell to the gentiles, and from the gentiles and sell to his brethren."[114] The *Blessing of Moses* continues: "[Zebulon] shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hidden in the sand"[115] The *Blessing of Jacob* states: "Zebulon shall dwell at the shore of the seas, yea he shall be a shore of ships, and his border shall be unto Sidon."[116]

From the cities of Tyre, Aradus, Berytus (Beirut) and Sidon, the Phoenicians launched their fleets of merchant vessels. At first, most of the Phoenician ships remained in the familiar waters of the eastern

Mediterranean. Their vessels sailed to Cyprus, less than 150 miles away, to trade for the island's copper. West of Cyprus, at the Greek island of Rhodes, their traders bartered for wool that had been brought from nearby Anatolia, now Turkey. Sailing southwest to the Egyptian port of Memphis, the Phoenicians continued to barter for Papyrus, linen, and ivory. It is said that they were the first to undertake regular trips beyond the sight of land, traveling at night navigating by the stars. During the late tenth century BC, they founded more than a dozen permanent posts along the North African coast that in time became important cities.

The most important of the new colonies was Carthage, which had been founded by a band of settlers from Tyre. In response to the Assyrian advances, Carthage was strengthened by a constant stream of refugees. By 700 BC, Carthage was sufficiently prosperous and powerful to sever formal ties with Tyre, and gradually took over leadership of the western outposts and colonies. The Phoenicians colonized many cities along the Mediterranean coast of Europe as well, most famous of them being Marseilles. Sailing through the Strait of Gibraltar they turned south and began to trade with the people of the Moroccan coast. They also turned north, up the coast of the Iberian peninsula, discovered Cadiz, called *Gadir*, an island that gave easy access to the rich silver mines of southern Spain. According to Herodotus, Necho II, a sixth century Pharaoh of Egypt, sent a fleet of Phoenician ships around Africa, and it is also thought that the Phoenicians founded a second outpost on the Iberian coast, from which they voyaged north to Ireland and England, trading for tin and other metals, and perhaps even sailed to America.[117]

Danaus and Cadmus

In classical times, the Greeks recognized three great divisions among themselves: Aeolian, Ionian, and Dorian. According to Greek mythology, the Ionians and Dorians both derived their origin from a foreign source, the Phoenicians. It was believed that the Greeks, or Hellenes as they called themselves, originated with Hellen, not to be confused with Helen of the Trojan War. Hellen was the first born of Pyrrha and Deucalion, the son of a giant, the Titan Prometheus. Zeus sought to eliminate mankind by flood, as a punishment for the insolence of Prometheus, who, against his wishes, had presented humanity with the gift of fire. All perished except Pyrrha and Deucalion. Hellen fathered Aeolus, Dorus, and Xuthus, the forefathers, respectively, of the Aelians, Dorians and Ionians.

In the *Iliad*, Homer refers to the Greeks as Achaeans, who were believed to be descended from another son of Xuthus, named Achaeus. The Achaeans though, were also related to the Danaans, a people descended from a Phoenician named Danaus. According to Greek mythology, Zeus loved Io, but out of jealousy, his wife Hera turned her into a cow, and had her chased into Egypt by a gadfly. Having settled in Egypt, Io made a statue of Demeter, and this goddess was then called Isis by the Egyptians, her symbol being a cow. When in Egypt, Io bore a son called Epaphus. Epaphus had a daughter named Lybia who bore twins to Poseidon. Of these, Agenor went to Phoenicia, and Belus, or Baal, married a daughter of the Nile and also begot twins, Egyptus and Danaus. Egyptus and Danaus each had fifty children, Egyptus sons and Danaus daughters. A marriage was proposed between the two families, but either Danaus or his daughters rejected it and fled to Argos in Greece, where the Arcadians accepted Danaus as king. The sons of Egyptus pursued their brides across the sea, and Danaus pretended to consent to the marriage, but ordered his daughters to kill their husbands on the marriage night and bring him their heads, which he buried separately. Then, Danaus found husbands for his daughters among the Greeks of Argos.

The other great branch descended from Io are traced back to Cadmus, the son of Agenor the king of Tyre. In some cases, Cadmus is the son of Phoenix, from whom the name *Phoenician* is derived. By the fifth century BC, in any case, the myth was established that he came from Tyre. According to Greek mythology, when Zeus, taking the form of a bull, carried off Europa, her brother Cadmus was sent off to find her. Unsuccessful, he consulted the oracle at Delphi, which ordered him to abandon the quest, follow a cow, and build a town on the spot where it lay down. The cow led him to Boeotia where he founded Thebes. Later, Cadmus planted the teeth of a dragon he had killed, from which issued a warlike race called *Sparti*, to whom the noble families of Thebes traced their descent.

According to Herodotus, the Persians, who were "best informed in history," did not accept the mythical account of the Greeks, but believed that Io was seized together with other women by Phoenician merchants. The Persians agreed that the abduction of Io was a wrong that Asia committed against Europe, and therefore, when the Europeans later carried off the Phoenician princess Europa, Asia and Europe were then even. Again the Persians did not believe the Greek version by which Europa was said to have been whisked away by Zeus in the form of a bull. According to the Persians, the Europeans were guilty of a second offense, when they sent the Argonauts to the city of Aea in Colchis, and carried off the princess Medea. When the Colchians demanded the restitution of Medea, the Greeks merely answered that they had

been refused reparation for the abduction of Io. In retaliation, the Trojan prince Paris decided to make a Greek woman his wife and abducted Queen Helen of Sparta, setting off the Trojan War.

The Trojan War, celebrated in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, was a legendary conflict between the Greeks and the people of Troy, in western Asia Minor, dated by later Greek authors to the twelfth or thirteenth century BC. In the traditional Greek accounts, Paris, the son of the Trojan king, ran off with Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta, whose brother Agamemnon then led a Greek expedition in retaliation against Troy. The ensuing war lasted ten years, finally ending when the Greeks pretended to withdraw, leaving behind them as a gift, a large wooden horse with a raiding party concealed inside. The contingent of the Achaeans, or Greeks, that were hidden inside the hollow horse, according to Homer, were Danaans. When the Trojans brought the horse into their city, the hidden Danaans opened the gates to their comrades, then sacked Troy, massacred its men, and carried off its women.

Although deriving from Egypt, Danaus and Cadmus were not perceived by the Greeks as native Egyptians, but were equated with the colonizers named Hyksos. According to Egyptian sources, the Hyksos, meaning "Shepherd-Kings," were a dynasty of foreign invaders who ruled a northern portion of Egypt, from the eighteenth to the sixteenth centuries BC. They established themselves at a town called Abydos, and were finally expelled by the Egyptians in 1450 BC, and eventually settled the lands of Palestine. Though most of their names seem typically Semitic, such as *Khyan*, *Yakubher*, for example, their precise ethnic identity remains a controversial matter.[118]

Manetho, an Egyptian priest who lived around 250 BC, who wrote a history of Egypt in Greek, which remains the basis of historical studies of ancient Egypt, equated the Hyksos with the Jews of the Exodus, explaining that they possessed Egypt for five hundred and eleven years, until the were finally expelled by the Egyptians:

> …they went away with their whole families and effects, not fewer in number than two hundred and forty thousand, and took their journey from Egypt, through the wilderness, for Syria: but that, as they were in fear of the Assyrians, who had then the dominion over Asia, they built a city in that country which is now called Judea, and that was large enough to contain this great number of men, and called it Jerusalem.[119]

Scholars have been unable to assert conclusively that the Hyksos were the Israelites of the Exodos. As Martin Bernal noted in *Black Athena*, however, ever since late Antiquity, writers had seen links between the Egyptian records of the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt, the biblical tradition of the *Exodus*, and the Greek legends of the arrival of Cadmus and Danaus. Heccataeus of Abdera, a Greek historian of the fourth century BC, and important source to Diodorus of Sicily, set out his view that the traditions of the Egyptian expulsion of the Hyksos, the Israelite Exodus and that of Danaus' landing in Arcadia, were three parallel versions of the same story. Referring to the Egyptians he says:

> The natives of the land surmised that unless they removed the foreigners their troubles would never be resolved. At once, therefore, the aliens were driven from the country and the most outstanding and active among them branded together and, as some say, were cast ashore in Greece and certain other regions; their teachers were notable men, among them being Danaus and Cadmus. But the greater number were driven into what is now called Judea, which is not far from Egypt and at that time was utterly uninhabited. The colony was headed by a man called Moses.[120]

According to Bernal, the references to Egypto-Phoenician colonization in the Hellenistic period were extensive. He claims, "debates were not on the existence of the landings but on their specifics: the nationality of the leaders, their points of departure or their dates."[121] The ancient Greek historian Thucydides, in the introduction to his *History of the Peloponesian War*, does not mention Cadmus or Danaus, although he does mention that at one time "Carians and Phoenicians inhabited most of the islands," and he referred to the Danaans and to Cadmeis as an old name for Boeotia.[122] Thucydides also described the early kings of Arcadia as descendants of Perseus, whom Herodotus had seen either as a "genuine Egyptian" or as an "Assyrian." Finally, some modern scholars have supposed that Epaphus, the son of Io, was a distortion of the Egyptian bull god Apis, or of Manetho's Aphophis, the name of two or three historical Hyksos kings.[123]

The Dorian Invasion

The Dorians, who were believed to have invaded Greece, were also believed to have been of Phoenician origin, and their colonization conforms with the general upheavals that involved the dispersion of the

Israelites. Known as the *Dorian Invasion*, they settled in most of the Peloponnessus, Crete, the southwestern coastline of Asia Minor, and some of the smaller islands of the Aegean.[124] The German Romantics, however, inspired by their ideal of racial purity, had increasingly emphasized their relationship with the Dorians, as opposed to the "corrupt" Ionians, and by the end of the nineteenth century, writers saw the Dorians as pure-blooded Aryans from the north, possibly even from Germany.[125] It is surmised that, due merely to the fact that many place names in the Aegean were given by non-Greek people, the Dorians were Indo-European invaders who supplanted an original non-Greek population, with scholars struggling ever since to find archaeological justification for the theory.[126]

According to Thucydides, the invasion of the Dorians took place in the eightieth year after the Trojan War, being the 329th year before the First Olympiad, dating it at around 1104BC. Scholars therefore recognize that the invasion of the Dorians may be connected with the devastation wrought by the controversial *Sea Peoples* referred to in Egyptian records, who also assaulted most of Palestine, Asia Minor and Greece in the twelfth century BC. Their conquests marked the extraordinary collapse of Late Bronze Age culture, an onslaught that would lead to the disappearance of *Hatti*, the Hittite Kingdom in Asia Minor, and the fall of the New Kingdom in Egypt. An entire network of trade that bound together the Near East and its neighbours, including Cyprus and Greece, simply collapsed. Many populations appear to have migrated, their movements sometimes accompanied by great violence. Numerous major cities throughout northern Syria would be destroyed, and the classical Canaanite civilization in Palestine and coastal Syria would become eclipsed.

However, as with the Hyksos, there continues to be a great deal of debate among modern scholars over the exact ethic identity of the Sea Peoples. Some believe the Sea Peoples to have come from Mycenean Greece, and to be associated with the persistent enemies of the Jews, the Philistines, who settled in southern Palestine, or *Philistia*. Among the people mentioned in association with the Sea Peoples in the ancient records are the *Peleset* (the Philistines), *Tjeker*, *Shekesh*, *Denyen*, the *Sikils*, and *Weshesh*. However, the Philistines were one part of the group called Sea Peoples by the Egyptians, but an earlier contingent of Sea Peoples fought the Egyptians under Pharaoh Merneptah in the late thirteenth century BC, and Egyptian records do not list the Philistines among them.[127] More likely, the Philistines are related etymologically to the the native population of Greece said to have been displaced by the invading Danaans, the Pelasgians, who would have settled Palestine.

The Danaas are usually identified with the *Denyen*, mentioned in the records of Ramses III. Although, scholars also recognize the *Denyen* Sea Peoples, as one of the twelve tribes of Israelites, the tribe of Dan, or the Danites. The tribe of Dan was one of two tribes, along with the tribe of Asher, whose characteristic mode of trade was seafaring. Furthermore, it has been proven archeologically that the conquests by the Israelites mentioned in the Bible, following the exodus from Egypt, took place throughout the thirteenth and twelfth century BC, coinciding with the ravages of the Sea Peoples. Yet, as Stager mentions:

> Archaeologists agree that dramatic cultural change affected not only parts of Canaan but also much of the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BC). How much of that change was brought about by the migrations and/or invasions of newcomers to Canaan, and specifically by invading Israelites, is still an open question.[128]

Nevertheless, a number of sites counted among the conquests of the Sea Peoples are identical with those known to have been accomplished by the Israelites. Among them, Dor, on the coast of Palestine, mentioned in *Joshua* 12:23, taken by the *Sikils* in the twelfth century BC, and Aphek mentioned in *Joshua* 12:18.[129] Although, the Sea Peoples were known to have devastated a broader range of territory than that described in the Bible. However, though such conquests are not recounted in the Bible, the Jews were commanded to conquer all the lands of the Canaanites and their affiliate peoples, which included the Hittites, known to have inhabited most of Asia Minor, or modern Turkey, and if the Pelasgians were Philistines, perhaps as far as Greece.

The Trojan War may thus have been a conflict between the ancient Israelites from the Tribe of Dan, known to the Greeks as Danaans, or *Denyen* Sea Peoples, against Hittites. The ancient city of Troy was located in the region known as the land of Troas, within which was also found, just several kilometers to the north, the city of Abydos, named after another city by the same name in Egypt, that had formerly been the capital of the Hyksos. Many scholars had believed that Troy was merely a fictitious place based on myth. The general location of Troy was well known from references in works by ancient Greek and Latin authors, but the exact site of the city remained unidentified until modern times. A large mound, called Hisarlik by the Turks, had long been known to hold the ruins of a city named Ilion that had

flourished in Hellenistic and Roman times. In 1822 Charles McLaren suggested that this was the site of Homeric Troy, but it was not until the excavations of the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann that the site was positively identified as the location of the ancient city. Archeology has confirmed that Troy vanished altogether by 1100 BC, and remained virtually abandoned for about the next four centuries, until about 700 BC, when it was newly settled by Greeks, and given the Hellenized name of Ilion. With the excavations by Korfmann in the 1990's, a seal was discovered, inscribed on both sides in the Hieroglyphic Hittite script, the first securely identifiable example of writing yet to have been unearthed in a prehistoric level at Troy.

Therefore, while unconfirmed by archeology, the historical record suggests that the invasions of the Dorians were conquests of the Pelasgians of Greece by Israelites, or *Denyen* Sea Peoples, who were recognized as Phoenicians. A measure of the broader impact of these conquests is provided by the renaming of territories after various groups of Sea Peoples. After the invasion of Cyprus, its name was changed from *Alashiya* to *Yadanana*, "the isle of the Danunians/Danaoi/Denyen." The *Sikils*, who settled at Dor, also sailed west and gave their name to Sicily, and the *Sherden*, gave their name to Sardinia.[130]

Hercules

The *Dorian Invasion* was often termed *The Return of the Heraklids*, their calling themselves Heraklids being a claim, not only of descent from Hercules, but also to Phoenician ancestors. According to Greek myth, the ancestor of the Heraklids was Perseus, who was of known to have been of Syrian origin. According to Greek myth, Perseus is descended from Danaus, because of the daughters of Danaus, all had murdered their husbands, except Hypermestra, who spared Lynceus. He became king of Arcadia after Danaus, and was succeeded by his son Abas, whose twin sons, Proitos and Acrisios, contended for the throne. Acrisios finally prevailed, and when an oracle foretold that he would be slain by his daughter Danae's son, he had her locked away in a dungeon. Though, Zeus came into her and she bore Perseus.

When Zeus laid with a mortal woman, Alcmena, a descendant from Perseus, to conceive Hercules, he swore that the next son born of that line would become ruler of Greece. But by a trick, Zeus' wife Hera had another child, Eurystheus, born first and declared king. It was Eurystheus who imposed upon Hercules his Labours, later arranged in a cycle of twelve. First among these was the slaying of the Nemean lion, whose skin he then wore; second, the slaying of the nine-headed Hydra of Lerna; third the capture of the stag of Arcadia, and fourth of the wild boar of Mt. Erymanthus; fourth, the cleansing in a single day of the cattle stables of King Augeas of Elis; fifth, the shooting of the man-eating birds of the Stymphalian marshes; seventh, the capture of the Cretan bull, and eighth, the man-eating mares of King Diomedes of the Bistones; ninth, the seizure of the girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons; tenth, the seizing of the cattle of the three-bodied giant Geryon who ruled the island Erytheia; eleventh, the fetching of the golden apples of Hesperides, and twelfth, bringing back from the Underworld the triple-headed dog Cerberus.

The Phoenician origin of Hercules is relatively undisputed, he being regarded as the equivalent of the Canaanite Melqart, another name for Baal. In the myth of Hercules we find the descent into the Underworld typical of the Near Eastern dying-gods. According to one account, Theseus, a Greek hero, descended to the Underworld, where he was held until released by Hercules.[131] Like Baal, Hercules was associated with the sacred twin pillars. Hercules set up two mountains, the *Pillars of Hercules*, or, according to another version, divided one mountain into two, forming the Strait of Gibraltar. Similar to the Temple of Solomon, in the temple of the "Phoenician Hercules", Herodotus saw two pillars: "one was of pure gold; the other was as of emerald which gleamed in the dark with a strange radiance," and noted historian Walter Burkert of Ancient Greece asserted that, "…since Herodotus, the equation of Herakles with the Phoenician god Melqart has been beyond question, which is why the Melqart Pillars in the temple at Gadeira/Cadiz became the Pillars of Hercules."[132]

The defeat of a lion was a traditional heroic accomplishment of the Near Eastern heroes, as was the slaying of a seven-headed serpent, like Tiamat, the dragon or the sea vanquished by Bel, or the Leviathan of the Bible. Referring to Hercules' exploits, Burkert further remarks that:

> Oriental motifs have obviously entered this complex. It is open to question whether the early Greeks ever had a chance to see a live lion, but the migration of the lion image and the lion fight scene is well documented archeologically. In addition, the serpent with seven heads which was smitten by a god is familiar in Ugaritic and Old Testament mythology and already appears on Sumerian seal images.[133]

T. W. Doane, in *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, has brought attention to the similarities that existed between Hercules and the story of Samson in the Old Testament. The two heroes were already compared in antiquity by Eusebius, St. Augustine and Filastrius. Samson, or *Shamash*, is the

solar-hero of the Bible, his name meaning "belonging to the Sun."[134] Like Hercules he is credited with great strength and remarkable exploits. The Old Testament narrative about Samson, alluding only to his "twenty years" activity as a judge, presents a few episodes, principally concerned with the beginning and the end of his activity. Before his birth, his parents, members of the tribe of Dan, learned that he was to be dedicated to the life of a Nazirite, that is, set aside for God by a vow to abstain from strong drink, and from shaving or cutting his hair. The moral of Samson's story relates the disastrous loss of his strength to the violation of his Nazirite vow. He first broke his religious promises by feasting with a woman from the neighboring town of Timnah, who was also a Philistine, one of Israel's enemies. Several remarkable deeds followed: his routing of the Philistines in a private war; on another occasion he repulsed their assault at Gaza, where he had gone to visit a harlot; he finally fell victim to his enemies through love of a Philistine woman named Delilah, who tricked him into revealing the secret of his strength. As he slept, she had his hair cut, thus taking way his power.

Samson was captured, blinded and enslaved by the Philistines, but in the end he was granted his revenge, and here we have the most striking similarity to the Pillars of Hercules. The Philistines brought Samson out of prison to entertain themselves at a feast for their god Dagon, who is related to Baal. They placed Samson between two pillars supporting their Temple. Through the return of his strength, taking one pillar in his right hand, the other in his left, he demolished the great Philistine temple at Gaza, destroying his captors and himself.[135] Similarly, the Greek version of the story, as reported by Herodotus, recounts that when Hercules came to Egypt, he "…was taken away by the Egyptians to be sacrificed to Zeus, with all due pomp and the sacrificial wreath upon his head; and how he quietly submitted until the moment came for the beginning of the actual ceremony at the alter, when he exerted his strength and killed them all."[136]

Samson and Hercules are both species of solar-heroes, identified with Orion, and derived from the Babylonian figure Gilgamesh, who also killed an invincible lion and accomplished other great tasks. The story of Gilgamesh, in various Sumerian versions, was originally widely known in the third millennium B.C. After a long history of retellings, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* story was standardized in Akkadian, in the seventh century BC, and stored in the famous library of King Assurbanipal, who reigned from 668 to 627 BC. The poem is divided into twelve books, which probably correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac, with which the twelve great "labors" of Hercules have usually been associated. The epic begins with a prologue in praise of Gilgamesh, part divine part human, the great builder and warrior, knower of all things on land and sea. The epic tells that Gilgamesh, the young ruler of Uruk, drives his subjects so hard that they appeal to the gods for relief. The gods create a wild man, Enkidu, who at first lives with the animals in the desert but is lured away from them and becomes Gilgamesh's friend. Together they vanquish the terrifying gorgon Huwawa, set by Enlil to guard the cedar forest in the West. Gilgamesh, who had returned to Uruk, rejected the marriage proposal of Ishtar. When he rejects her she sends against him the Bull of Heaven which Gilgamesh and Enkidu manage to kill. Angered, the gods cause Enkidu to die. Saddened, Gilgamesh seeks to escaped death by finding immortality.

The quest brings him to the portal guarded by the terrifying scorpion-men who allow him to pass but warn him of the increasing difficulties of the way. He comes to a tree covered with precious stones and bearing beautiful fruit, beyond which is the sea where he meets a maiden who tells him that his search for immortality is vain, and that he should rather eat, drink and be merry. Nevertheless, he expresses his determination to go on, she unbars the portal and he continues his course until he comes to another sea and even to the waters of death, over which no one but Shamash has crossed. Although the current is very strong, twelve strokes bring him to his desired haven and he stands face to face with Utnaphistim, the survivor of the flood, who has in addition become immortal. Utnaphistim relates the story of the deluge and then, in pity for the hero, puts him to sleep for six days and seven nights. Still Gilgamesh has not found the secret of immortal life. At last he is told about a plant that rejuvenates and gives old men their youth again, found in the sea underworld. Though, as soon as he finds it, a serpent snatched it away. Gilgamesh is obliged to return to Uruk without having obtained the object of his quest.

Enumerating the many similarities between Hercules and his Babylonian prototype, Gilgamesh, M.L. West remarked:

> He, like Hercules, has a divine parent (albeit a mother, not a father). He kills lions an (perhaps) wears a lion—skin to roam the world. He goes on a journey to kill a monstrous opponent who occupies a certain forest. He is assisted in this by a comrade, as Heracles is assisted in some of his Labours by Iolaus. By himself he goes to the world's end, where there is a wonderful gem-garden presided over by a divine female, and he crosses the waters that only the Sun normally crosses, seeking eternal life. He does not attain it, and his mortal life ends in the course of time; yet he has divine status, and can be appealed to for deliverance from evil.

Perseus too holds several similarities with Gilgamesh. He is known in mythology as the hero who successfully killed the Gorgon Medusa, and though there are no Near Eastern precedents for the myth of Perseus and the Gorgon, as Burkert noted, its representation in art was strongly influenced by oriental models. In any case, in the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, it is said of that if Humbaba looked at you, "it was the regard of death!" Similarly, Gilgamesh cuts off the ogre's head and takes it back as a trophy, as Perseus does with Medusa.[137] After slaying the Medusa, Perseus fell in love with Andromeda, the beautiful daughter of the vain Queen Cassiopeia and her husband King Cepheus of Palestine. In punishment for her vanity, the Queen was forced to chain her daughter to a rock on the beach as a sacrifice to the sea monster Cetus. Andromeda is Ishtar, who was chained to a rock while Marduk prepared to do battle with her ally Tiamat. Andromeda was saved by the hero Perseus, became his wife and the mother of Perses who founded the kingdom of Persia, and great grandmother of Hercules.

Ultimately, as related by Herodotus, the Persians traced the ancestry of Hercules to Perseus, whom they believed to be an "Assyrian."[138] He maintained:

> … if we trace the ancestry of the Danae, the daughter of Acrisius, we find that the Dorian chieftains are genuine Egyptians. This is the accepted Greek version of the genealogy of the Spartan royal house; the Persians, however, maintain that Perseus was an Assyrian who adopted Greek nationality; his ancestry, therefore, was not Greek; and the forebears of Acrisius were not related to Perseus at all, but were Egyptian, which accords with the Greek version of the story. But there is no need to pursue this subject further. How it happened that Egyptians came to the Peloponnese, and what they did to make themselves kings in that part of Greece, has been chronicled by other writers.[139]

It may have been on this basis that, sometime around 300 BC, Areios, King of Sparta, wrote to Jerusalem: "To Onias High Priest, greeting. A document has come to light which shows that the Spartans and Jews are kinsmen descended alike from Abraham."[140] Both books of *Maccabees* of the *Apocrypha* mention a link between the Spartans and Jews. *Maccabees 2* speaks of certain Jews "having embarked to go to the Lacedaemonians (Spartans), in hope of finding protection there because of their kinship." In *Maccabees 1*, "It has been found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews that they are brethren and are of the family of Abraham."[141]

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Chapter 5: Prometheus

Tyranny and Oligarchy

For several centuries following the Dorian invasion, the Greek world of the Homeric poems, referred to by scholars as the Mycenaean civilization of the second millenium BC, was eclipsed, and entered what is known as the Dark Age of ancient Greece. The Bronze Age though, the culture that emerged following the Dark Age, does not seem to represent a direct continuation of Mycenaean civilization. There is no apparent relationship between the religion of the Mycenaeans, and the later developments following Greece's emergence from the Dark Age. As McNeill has conceded, "the rediscovery of Cretan and Mycenaean civilization is one of the romances of archeology; but the problem of the relation of these civilizations to the people whom we, with the Romans, call Greeks, but who called themselves Hellenes, is much disputed."[142]

While Greek myths refer generally to events that took place in Mycenaean times, they were not compiled until much later. Therefore, whether or not the myths of Danaus and Cadmus actually reflected knowledge of early contacts between the Near East and the early Greeks is difficult to ascertain. In fact, the actual systemization of Greek mythology, particularly of the works of Homer and Hesiod, took place only in the sixth century BC, during a period which coincided with a proliferation of Near Eastern influences. As demonstrated in the *Orientalizing Revolution*, by professor Walter Burkert, recognized as perhaps the foremost scholar of Greek religion, the emergence from the Dark Age was brought about through cultural contact with Phoenicians. There were already acknowledged contacts with the East in the twelfth century BC, and then again in the ninth and eighth centuries BC, when Greek traders established settlements in Syria. Modern archaeologists are nearly all agreed in suggesting contact with Phoenician craftsmen in several parts of Greece from the ninth century onward.[143] However, the real breakthrough happened about 700 BC, coinciding with the Assyrian advances into the Middle East, contributing to a flow of refugees from there and into Greece and Asia Minor.

The newly landed immigrants exercised a powerful and disruptive influence on Greek society. Archaic Greece had been thoroughly aristocratic, ruled over by kings, assisted by a council of noble warriors. Warriors of noble blood constituted a superior class among whom the kings were not much more than their equals. About 800 BC, the Athenian kings began to lose their power to the nobles. These were men who acquired landed estates through purchase rather than inheritance, and were recruited from among successful merchants and money-lenders. Greek political theorists called such a form of government an oligarchy. Under this system of rule, wealth, measured by possession of land, replaced aristocratic family connections.

The new status of the nobles was challenged with the arrival of wealthy Phoenicians. The commercial status of the newly landed merchants was enhanced by their introduction of sophisticated trading practices, particularly that of money-lending and money-changing. The introduction of such novel monetary practices, which according to Oskar Seffert were "generally in the hands of resident aliens,"[144] aggravated a situation that was already volatile. In a bad harvest year, small farmers might be compelled to go into debt, and could give only their land or their bodies as collateral, and thus debtors who found themselves unable to repay a loan might lose their land or even become slaves. This process tended to enlarge the estates of the noble and rich who were in the best position to make loans.[145] Finally, the aristocracts refused political equality to the landless traders and manufacturers, the peasants were oppressed by the rich and encouraged to get into debt and then were reduced to slavery and exile, and slaves began to compete with free labor. Ambitious individuals capitalized on this discontent to overthrow the established government and install themselves as tyrants in all the Greeks cities, except Sparta.[146]

As Professor Heichelheim explained, "these tyrants were for the most part members of the nobility themselves who had made the grade using the new political and economic possibilities of their time to

overthrow their own equals and to subdue their whole home state temporarily."[147] McNeil described the situation that presented itself:

> In many cities complaints of oppression at the hands of the magistrates who decided legal cases led to the writing down of the law so that all might know the principles which guided the judge. But mere definition of the law failed to solve the social conflicts which were tearing apart the city states of Greece; and many of them, especially in those leading the commercial and industrial development, successful revolutionary movements broke out in the course of the seventh and sixth century. Leaders of such movements were called tyrants. In most cases they were members of the nobility who turned against fellow nobles, became champions of the popular cause, and established a personal government drawing support from the industrial, trading, and impoverished agricultural classes. Tyrants regularly banished or executed political rivals, and sometimes seized the estates of noble families, and distributed the land among the poor.[148]

In 594 BC at Athens, debt-ridden farmers and others who had lost their land and wanted a complete redistribution of property and cancellation of debts, appointed Solon as magistrate. He implemented sweeping political and monetary reforms, canceled all debts and forbade enslavement for debt in the future. Unfortunately, Solon was not able to quell all discontent, and disorder continued for the next thirty years until Peisistratus, supported by merchant interests, established a tyranny about 560 BC. After the seizure of power by Peisistratus, Solon lamented of the ulterior motives of those who backed the coup, "But of themselves in their folly the men of the city are willing our great city to wreck, being won over by wealth. False are the hearts of the people's leaders." And, "those who had power and made men to marvel at their riches.[149]

The Orientalizing Revolution

The Phoenician influence on Ancient Greece was such that In *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, M.L. West, remarks that, "Near Eastern influence cannot be put down as a marginal phenomenon to be invoked occasionally in explanation of isolated peculiarities. It was pervasive at many levels and at most times." Burkert states that the impact on Greek art in this period is evident in imported objects as well as by new techniques and characteristic motifs of artistic imagery, though, the prejudices of modern scholars have led them to disregard the overwhelming evidence. He continues:

> Even expert archaeologists, however, sometimes appear to feel uncomfortable about this fact and indeed advise against using the expression "the orientalizing period." The foreign elements remain subject to a policy of containment: There is hardly a standard textbook that has oriental and Greek objects depicted side by side; many of the oriental finds in the great Greek sanctuaries have long remained, and some still remain, unpublished.[150]

The most important contribution of this interaction was the adoption by the Greeks of the Phoenician script. The Greeks did not begin to use letters for writing until about 700 BC, and only scraps have survived from before 600 BC. The Greeks borrowed their alphabet, with only slight innovations, from a letter system that had been used equally by Hebrews, Phoenicians and Aramaeans. The Greeks themselves called their alphabetic letters "Phoenician," which had supposedly been introduced to them by Cadmus. The Greek names of the letters *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, etc., are Semitic words, "bull", "house" and so on, which have no sense at all in Greek. Modern European alphabets are, in fact, all descended from Phoenician by way of the Greeks, and our modern word "alphabet" is derived from the same root as the Hebrew letters, *aleph* and *beth*. The Greek language has a large proportion of words that have no satisfactory Indo-European root. Before the fifth century BC, over a hundred words, of good phonetic correspondence and semantic fit, can be connected to a Semitic source. These include the name of animals, plants, minerals, containers, fabrics and garments, various other articles, as well as terms used in trade and in religious ceremony. There are also several place-names which may be Semitic, such as Salamis, Salmone, Karnos, Karthaia, Stageira, Abdera, Melite, Killa.

During this period, two gods not known in the Mycenaean times make their appearance: Apollo and Aphrodite. Apollo, the most widely revered and influential of all the Greek gods, was identified by the Greeks with the Canaanite god *Reshep*, who was a major deity of the Phoenicians in Cyprus.[151] His cult, corresponding to Baal and Tammuz, was that of a seasonal figure whose death was mourned by his lover Aphrodite, and by his female worshippers.[152]Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, the Greeks knew came from

Cyprus. She was the Greek equivalent of Astarte or Ishtar.[153] Her Phoenician origin was known to Herodotus, and the geographer Pausanias related that, "the first men to establish her cult were the Assyrians, after the Assyrians the Paphians of Cyprus and the Phoenicians who live at Ascalon in Palestine."[154]

Another Greek god of eastern origin was Adonis, a beautiful youth admired by the goddess Aphrodite, whose death and resurrection was celebrated in Babylonia and Syria under the name of Tammuz. Hesiod mentions Adonis as the son of Phoenix, the Phoenician. The name Adonis is believed to be of Phoenician origin, derived from the Semitic *Adon*, meaning "Lord," and in the Old Testament the name Adonai, "my lord", is often used for Jehovah. Annual festivals called *Adonia* to commemorate Adonis were held at Byblos and elsewhere. Thus, according to Sappho, the great Greek poet of the sixth century BC: "Woe is Adonis! Dying, Cythera, is the delicate Adonis! What can we do? Beat, maids, your breast, and rend your chitons!"[155] Similarly, the Old Testament speaks of the cult among the Jews as an abomination, with women sitting by the gate of the Temple weeping for Tammuz, or they offer incense on rooftops on which were pleasant plants.[156] Likewise, the Adonis cult, which was restricted to women, was celebrated on flat roof-tops on which "Adonis gardens" were placed.[157]

The major gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon, which were located on Mount Olympus, were headed by Zeus, who, although commonly thought to have been introduced to the native Pelasgians by Indo-European invaders, was a "thunder-god" derived from Baal or Marduk. Athena, patron of Athens, who presided over fertility cults, and Greek goddess of war, was a replication of the armed goddesses of the Near East, related etymologically to Anat of the Canaanites, Anahita of the Persians, and Neith of the Egyptians. Pallas Athena corresponds iconographically to the Syrian warrior statuettes with helmet, shield, and raised weapon.[158]

As M. L. West further remarked, "the religious institutions and usages of Greece from the Mycenaean to the Archaic age show particular connections with those of Syria and Palestine."[159] Like the Canaanite practices described in the Old Testament, in Greece, many sacred precincts were distinguished by a special tree, each associated with a goddess. Another feature was the sacred pillars, a regular component of the Canaanite sanctuary, related to the *massebah*, mentioned in the Old Testament. A link is assumed between *bamah* and the Greek word *bomos*, which usually means altar, but in Homer, sometimes a raised platform or base. A *bamah* was the common Old Testament term for a cult site of the Canaanites, usually translated as "high place." It was a man-made altar of earth or stone, whether on hillsides, in groves, or in towns, serving as places for incense offerings, prayer, and animal sacrifice. In at least seven places in the *Septuagint*, translators have used the Greek term *bomos* to render *bamah*.

Certain specifically Jewish influences are also discernible. At Delphi and many other places, often associated with sanctuaries, there were buildings called *leskhai*, which were used as public common-rooms or social centers where people congregated. The Jews erected chambers for the same purpose and gave them essentially the same name: *lishkah*.[160] Furthermore, the normal sanctuary from the eighth century BC onwards is characterized by the presence of an alter for burnt offerings, by the temple, usually housing a cult image. Burkert explains:

> … it is striking that in the Near East both the temple with cult image and the altar for burnt offerings had long been customary. The burnt offering is a specialty of the West Semitic area; here fire sites in front of the temple entrance and also stone altars with burnt offering and sacral meal, the combination of food offering, libation, and burning of parts of the slaughtered animal connects *Old Testament* and Greek sacrificial practice.[161]

Though the Greeks make no mention of Jews until the time of Alexander, Greek ships and Greek traders appeared on the coast of Palestine as early as the ninth century BC. A Babylonian text records a payment made to Jehoiakin, the son of the king of Judah, and to seven Greek carpenters who worked at the Babylonian court. In addition, as Momigliano mentioned, "the Jews had other opportunities for contacting Greeks in Mesopotamia as well as Egypt."[162] Egypt came under Assyrian, or "Neo-Babylonian", rule from 729 until 650 BC, when the country was finally united under Psammetichus's son Necho. According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, Jewish soldiers helped Psammetichus who had the support of Greeks in his campaign against the Ethiopians, and there were Greek mercenaries in the Egyptian army of Necho who killed Josiah in 608 BC. According to Herodotus, at the beginning of the sixth century BC, the Pharaoh Amasis of Egypt favoured the Greeks and granted them a number of privileges, including the founding the city of Naucratis as a commercial headquarters for any who chose to settle in the country. There were thirty-thousand Greeks, according to Herodotus, in the army of the Egyptian king Necho's grandson Apries, who tried to relieve Babylonian pressure on Palestine in 588 BC. Greek pottery found at Bet-Zur, on the road from

Jerusalem to Hebron, indicate steady trade in the first part of the fifth century BC.[163] Several ethnic personal names are found, especially at Athens, which supplied much of the evidence and had a comparatively large number of foreign slaves and metics. Among potters and painters we find Lydos, Skythes, Kolchos, Thrax, and Syrikos. An actual case of a Jewish name is found in the poet Ananios or Ananias, who wrote iambi in the late sixth century BC. The name is a Greek translation of Hananyah, "Yahweh is gracious", or Ananyah, "servant of Yahweh."[164]

Homer and Hesiod

Scholars have now come to acknowledge the striking similarities between Mesopotamian mythology and the works of the greatest of the Greek poets, Hesiod and Homer.[165] Hesiod, believed to belong to the eighth century BC, was the author of the *Works and Days*, a long didactic poem describing the routine of farming, and the *Theogony*, a systematization of early Greek mythology. Although attributed to Hesiod, the *Theogony* seems rather to be the work of one of his successors, who starts the poem with an account of his graduation in the poetical school of Hesiod, and this later date may account for the interference of foreign influence.

Hesiod's *Theogony* outlines a succession myth, an account of how the first gods were displaced by a new order. According to Hesiod, Chaos first came into being, then Gaia or Earth, Tartara and Eros. Through her son Ouranos, Gaia gave birth to six gods and six goddesses, giants known as the Titans. Ouranos, who hates his children, keeps them from coming to light by confining them inside of Gaia. After Gaia calls upon her children to punish their father, Kronos slices off Ouranos' genitals, setting the young gods free. From the drops of blood of the genitals are born the Erinyes, the Giants, and the Meliai, whilefrom the genitals themselves, which Kronos threw into the sea, is born Aphrodite. Kronos has six children from his sister Rhea, but because of a prophecy that one of them will supplant him, he swallows all of them successively.

The motif that the present rule of the gods came to power by overthrowing an older one is especially Near Eastern. According to M.L. West, "Hesiod's integration of a dynastic history of this sort with a divine genealogy, starting from the beginning of things and ending with the king of the gods established in glory, has its closest parallel in *Enuma elish*, a poem of similar length to the *Theogony*."[166] The text of *Kingship in Heaven*, published in 1946, presents the myth of the castration of the god of heaven by Kumarbi, similar to Hesiod's tale about Ouranos and Kronos.[167] The *Song of Kumarbi* was written in Hittite about five hundred years before Hesiod. According to Burkert, "since the song of Kumarbi discovery it has been well known that the concept of ancient, fallen gods connects Greek mythology with the Hittites, the Phoenicians, and the Babylonians.[168] Three gods in the *Song of Kumarbi* correspond to Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus: Anu's name, Kumarbi and Tesshub. Anu, like Ouranos, has his genitals cut off, and consequently removes himself from heaven. From the genitals, other gods spring to life, while in the *Theogony*, several divinities are born from the blood of Ouranos' genitals, cut off by Kronos.

The myth of Kronos swallowing his children was compared to the Carthaginian worship of Moloch, or Saturn, by Diodorus:

> Among the Carthaginians there was a brazen statue of Saturn putting forth the palms of his hands bending in such a manner toward the earth, as that the boy who was laid upon them, in order to be sacrificed, should slip off, and so fall down headlong into a deep fiery furnace. Hence it is probable that Euripides took what he fabulously relates concerning the sacrifice in Taurus, where he introduces Iphigenia asking Orestes this question: "But what sepulchre will me dead receive, shall the gulf of sacred fire me have?" The ancient fable likewise that is common among all the Grecians, that Saturn devoured his own children, seems to be confirmed by this law among the Carthaginians.[169]

Rhea smuggles Zeus, the sixth child, to Crete, and presents Kronos a stone wrapped up like a baby which he swallows hastily. Zeus somehow causes Kronos to disgorge the stone and the swallowed gods. Zeus sets the stone in the earth at Delphi as a sign to mortals. The Titans are finally defeated after a ten year war with the younger gods, and are locked away far beneath the earth in Tartarus. Like the defeat of Tiamat by Bel, Zeus with his thunderbolts defeats the monster Typhon and has him flung to Tartarus, and Zeus is proclaimed king of the gods.[170]

The Titans correspond to the Anakim, or the Anunnaki of the *Enuma elish*, and to the Hittite *Former Gods*, the same term used by Hesiod to refer to the Titans, which are twelve in number, the same quantity as the Titans.[171] When the Titan Prometheus stole the fire of the gods, wishing to impart to man what was forbidden him, like the Bible's Satan, Zeus finally punished the Titans for their insolence by

sending the Flood. Of the connection between the myth of Deucalion, the Greek Flood hero, and Noah, according to M. L. West, "this Greek myth cannot be independent of the Flood story that we know from Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hebrew sources, especially from *Atrahasis*, the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh epic, and the Old Testament."[172]

Similarly, according to M. L. West, the inspiration for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the poems of Homer, the earliest Greek author whose works survive, have Near Eastern precedents. Even the name Homer itself is not Greek, and is thought to be the Hellenization of the Semitic word *'omer*, meaning "speaker", "declarer."[173] Nothing certain though is known about Homer's life and personality. He never mentions his name or gives any biographical information about himself. The ancient biographies, which give details of his family and career, are of late date and differ widely. Many states claimed to be his birthplace. Of these, Smyrna and Chinos in Asia Minor were the most strongly supported in antiquity. Ancient chroniclers were equally uncertain about his date: some made him a contemporary of the Trojan War in the early twelfth century BC, but Herodotus placed him in the mid-ninth century BC. Though, there is widely held opinion that Homer was a series of poets rather than an individual. According to those who hold this opinion, the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, took about two hundred years to complete, from 750 to 550 BC, while others maintain that "Homer" was nearly complete at the end of the eighth century.

According to M. L. West, it was Gilgamesh's character that was the model for Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*, but it was as wanderer that he inspired Homer's other work, the *Odyssey*. Homer's *Odyssey*, its scenes ranging from Troy to Egypt, North Africa, the Peloponnese, Ithaca, and the western Mediterranean, relates how its hero Odysseus, king of Ithaca in western Greece, after many perilous wanderings and adventures, returns home. Essentially, the *Odyssey* is a tale of the dying god, as an allegorical account of the hero who, like the Baal epic, descends to the Underworld and is later resurrected through the assistance of the goddess. The female principle in this case is represented twice, Athena is the guide of the mystic, who aids him to return home, but the goal is reunion with the goddess, in the guise of his wife Penelope.

Aeneas

Many royal and noble families traced their descent from Homeric heroes on both the Greek and the Trojan sides of the Trojan War. There were kings and nobles in the neighborhood of Troy who claimed descent from a Trojan named Aeneas. He was also claimed as ancestor for those many doubtful Greek cities on the way to Italy, where he was already known in the fifth century BC. During the first millennium BC, when the first cities that were later to comprise the Roman Empire were being founded, here too, the early Romans connected themselves with Aenaes, to establish their standing among the Greeks with a heroic ancestor. It was Virgil, in the first century BC, regarded as the greatest Roman poet, who produced the various forms of the legend related to Aenaes in the form they have possessed ever since. The family of Julius Caesar, and consequently Virgil' patron Augustus, claimed descent from Aenaes.

Aenaes is again a Baal figure, Virgil's *Aeneid* being another form of mystic quest. The *Aeneid* of Virgil tells in twelve books of the legendary foundation of Lavinium, parent town of Alba Longa and of Rome, by Aeneas, a Trojan who had left the burning ruins of Troy to found, under supernatural guidance, a new city with a glorious destiny in the West. Aenaes was son of the goddess Aphrodite and Anchises. He began his long voyage, touching at Thrace, Crete, and Sicily, which culminated in shipwreck on the coast of Africa near the Phoenician city of Carthage. There he was received by Dido, the widowed Carthaginian queen. Dido was sister of Pygmalion, the Phoenician king of Tyre, whose great-grandfather, Ithobaal, was the father of Jezebel. Aenaes told Dido his story and they fell in love. Yet, Aenaes lingered in Carthage only until sharply reminded by Mercury, messenger of the gods, that Rome was his goal.

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Chapter 6: Dionysus

Onomacritus

Throughout the classical period, ancient Greece was merely a collection of small rivaling city-states, while the Persians erected an empire that, at its height, spanned an immense territory, including the whole of the Middle East, Egypt, parts of India, Armenia, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Asia Minor and Thrace. Towards the middle of the sixth century BC, Western Asia was divided into three kingdoms: the Babylonian Empire, Media, now northwestern Iran, and Lydia, which comprised northwestern Asia Minor. After seizing control of the Median Empire, Cyrus invaded Assyria and Babylonia in 549 BC. In 546 BC, he attacked Croesus of Lydia, defeated him, and annexed Asia Minor to his realm, followed by the gradual conquest of the small Greek city-states along the coast. Cyrus then conquered Bactriana, and in 539 BC, marched against Babylon.

Cyrus' son Cambyses, added Egypt in 525 BC, and after him, in 522, Darius came to power and set about consolidating and strengthening the Persian empire. From 521 to 484 BC, Darius expanded the empire further with conquests in India, central Asia and European Thrace. Darius did not achieve all that he wished though his work rivaled that of Cyrus. The empire was decentralized, divided into twenty provinces, each under a satrap who was a royal prince or great nobleman. Royal inspectors surveyed their work and their control over administration made easier by the institution of a royal secretariat to conduct correspondence with the provinces. Aramaic, the old language of the Assyrians, was adopted as the official language, well adapted to imperial affairs because it was not written in cuneiform, but in the Phoenician script.[174]

These conquests resulted in a general spread of Magian tenets that was far-reaching, falsely identified with an ancient occult tradition disseminated by the early migrations of the Aryans. The Persian presence in India resulted in the transfer of astrological literature to that country, including the material in *Enuma Anu Enlil*, in the fifth century BC. The first traces are found in Buddhist texts of the period, and Buddhist missionaries carried this material to Central Asia, China, Tibet, Japan and Southeast Asia.[175]Egypt came under Persian rule with the conquest of Cambyses, in 525 BC, and remained as such, except for an interruption of sixty years, until the conquest of Alexander at the end of the fourth century BC. Evidence for a transmission of lunar omens to Egypt in this period is found primarily in a demotic papyrus based on an original from about 500 BC. The penetration of Magian teachings was such that, in subsequent centuries, it was in Egypt, not Babylon, that the study of magic and astrology was further developed.

Contact between Greeks and the Magi was effected through the Persian conquest of the Greek city-states of Ionia in Asia Minor. With Cyrus came the settlement of many Medes and Persians accompanied by their Magi.[176]The *Royal Road*, built by the Persians after the fall of the Lydian empire in 546 BC, linked Sardis directly with Susa, capital of the Persian empire. Royal messengers, who, according to Herodotus, were stopped by "neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night," due to a system of relays traversed the entire road in nine days, while normal travel time was about three months. Under Darius I, Asia Minor was divided into a number of provinces, or satrapies, including Armenia, Cappadocia, where religion was characterized by a blend of Persian, Greek, and indigenous elements. The Persian deities of Mithra and Anahita were honoured in Armenia. In Cappadocia, or east-central Asia Minor, Persian influence was clearly discernable in the names of the local rulers and in religious practices reported by classical authors. The earliest records from Cappadocia date from the sixth century BC, when it was dominated by a Persian feudal nobility and Zoroastrian temple cults were widespread.

The sixth century BC marked not only the expansion of the Persian Empire, but also the release of the Jewish people from captivity in Babylon, some of whom may possibly have found their way to Greece. A Greek historian named Cherilus, who was a contemporary of Herodotus, maintained that the Jews had come to the assistance of Xerxes in his expedition against Greece.[177]And, if certain Jews had migrated from Babylon to Greece, they presumably would have been known there as either "Phoenicians" or "Magi", with

both of whom they shared not only a number of the same doctrines, but the same language, Aramaic. Moreover, the tyranny of Peisistratus seems to have been an important period for the introduction of Magian doctrines, during which, although composed from earlier material, Greek mythology reached its present form. Myth was important in Greece for maintaining and determining lines of aristocratic descent, and therefore, considering the power the new Phoenician merchant-class exercised on the society, we may suppose that it was such interests, instrumental in bringing Peisistratus to power, that sought to legitimize their presence in Greek culture, with the production of myths of Phoenician colonization and by the incorporation of foreign religious doctrines.

Scholars tend to regard Homer as representing an ancient strata of Greek lore, though, his works display clear Magian influences, and, therefore, must have been subjected to later interpolation. It was possibly Onomacritus, a notorious forger, and one of four authors commissioned by Peisistratus to edit the works of Homer, who was responsible for the incorporation of Persian influences into these epics. According to Herodotus, there are stories that, in the recension of the Homeric poems, Onomacritus was in the practice of altering the text with his own interpolations.[178] It was apparently for this reason that Hipparchus, the son of Peisistratus, had him banished from Athens. Onomacritus was later reconciled with the followers of Peisistratus, the Peisistratids, whom he eventually joined in exile in Persia, after they too had been expelled from Athens. While in Persia, according to Herodotus, it was Onomacritus who was largely responsible for inciting the Persians to invade Greece.

According to Pliny, "the most surprising thing…is that there is absolutely no reference to magic in the *Iliad*, although so much of the *Odyssey* is taken up with magic that it forms a major theme, unless people put another interpretation on the story of Proteus, the songs of the Sirens, Circe and the summoning of the dead from Hades."[179] However, according to the research of Florence and Kenneth Wood, in their book called *Homer's Secret Iliad*, the *Iliad*, Homer's account of the Trojan War, is a stellar guidebook, a poetic encryption of ancient astronomy and geography. Although some of their claims as to the antiquity of Greek astronomy are unacceptable, they nevertheless have indicated the importance of astrological ideas in Homer.

The authors discovered a key to a problem that has bothered scholars about Book II of the *Iliad*, which contains a recitation of the 29 Greek and 16 Trojan regiments present at the siege of Troy. It would appear the regiments represented constellations, which were chosen for their similarity to places on earth. Mycenae stood for Leo, Sparta was Scorpius, and the commander of each regiment stood for the brightest star in its constellation, so Achilles became Sirius in Canis Major and Odysseus was Arcturus, alpha Bootes, and so on. When men were killed in the story, it was always at the hands of warriors whose stars were brighter than theirs. Homer, specific in his descriptions, appears to have been attempting to represent minor stars within the constellation of their mythical counterparts. The wounds suffered by the sons of Priam, one in the hand, one in the belt, one on the collarbone, identified the location of those stars in Orion, the constellation of Priam's family. Clusters of stars were associated with helmets, shields, chariots, horses or household servants. The gods represented the moon and five planets. The moon becomes Hera, Venus is Aphrodite, Jupiter is Athena, Mars is Ares, Saturn is Poseidon, Mercury is Apollo at dawn and Hermes at dusk. The Milky Way is depicted in terms of crops or sand, and there are codes for eclipses, such as Zeus and Hera in "conjunction," and meteor showers. Homer's "wine-dark sea" refers to the night sky, not the ocean.

Since the time of Homer, Greek literature was filled with the names of constellations, which for the most part, were translations or adaptations of the Babylonian names. However, of the relationship between Babylonia and ancient Greece, as Professor Cornford explains, "influences" were stressed instead of actual "borrowings" and that, "more than one attempt was made in the nineteenth century to show that the Greeks "borrowed" the wisdom of the East; but, when it was seen that the fascinating theory led its advocates beyond all bounds of historic possibility, the Orientalists were crushed in a sort of anti-Semite reaction, and they are only now beginning to lift their heads again."[180]As Franz Cumont remarks:

> …the reality of Hellenic borrowings from Semitic sources remains none the less indisputable. At a distant date Hellas received from the far East a duodecimal or sexagesimal system of measurement, both of time and of objects. The habit of reckoning in terms of twelve hours which we still use today, is due to the fact that the Ionians borrowed from the Orientals this method of dividing the day. Besides the acquaintance with early instruments, such as the Sun-dial, they owed to the observatories of Mesopotamia the fundamental data of their celestial topography: the ecliptic, the signs of the zodiac, the majority of the planets.[181]

Astrological thought in Greece was so prevalent, from the fifth century BC onward, that the general trend was to associate many of the Greek myths with the constellations. For every Babylonian god a Greek god who bore some resemblance to him in character was substituted as ruler of the same planet. The Greeks had once worshipped many gods, and it was not until the fourth century BC that they settled on twelve as the most important, as featured in the Frieze of the Parthenon, perhaps to accord with the number of signs in the Zodiac. Although this cannot be proven, in the fourth century BC, the catalogue of astronomical information by Eudoxus of Cnidus, a pupil of Plato, though scientific in spirit, had adopted the vocabulary of myth, drawing on Babylonian data. Eudoxus, enumerating the twelve gods, assigned each one to a sign of the Zodiac.[182] These were: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, Hephaestus, and Hestia, the same twelve represented in the frieze of the Parthenon, except that Hestia was replaced with Dionysus. A century later, Aratus's poems on the stellar formations, encouraged the same tendency. Each of the constellations were given mythological significance, and the signs of the zodiac were connected with heroes of fable.

Orion was the son of Poseidon who died when he was bitten on the heel by a scorpion. His hunting companion, Artemis, pleaded with Zeus to place his image among the stars. The scorpion was given a constellation in the opposite side of the sky. Perseus, after slaying the gorgon Medusa, rescued his lover Andromeda, daughter of the beautiful Ethiopian queen of Phoenicia. The first sign of the Zodiac, a Greek word meaning "circle of life", is Aries, the flying ram with the golden fleece. It is ruled by Mars, the god of war. Taurus, was the form of the bull Zeus assumed to seduce Europa, or the bull killed by Hercules. While a number of labors were attributed to Hercules in prior centuries and in the *Iliad*, the number of twelve, to accord with the Zodiac, was not resolved until the fifth century BC. The constellation of Hercules, who steps on the head of the serpent, Draco, was known as Bel, who killed the Dragon Tiamat, and also Gilgamesh, whose myths gradually changed into the twelve labors of Hercules.

Taurus is ruled by Venus, or Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Gemini, has two leading stars that are named in honor of twin boys most famous for accompanying Jason in the Argo during his quest for the Golden Fleece. Cancer, was a gigantic sea crab that attacked Hercules, and Leo is the Nemean Lion he killed. Virgo, the virgin, was known as Astraea, the daughter of Zeus and Themis, before she became a constellation. Sagittarius, the archer is a half-man, half-horse, called a Centaur. A Centaur named Pholus helped Hercules hunt the Erymanthian boar. Capricorn, is associated with Pan. He and some other gods were feasting along the Nile, when Typhon attacked them. The gods turned themselves into animals and fled, but Pan panicked and leapt feet first into the river, and that half of his body became a fish, while the other half became a goat. The myth of Aquarius is related to Ganymede, who was so beautiful that Zeus abducted him into heaven, where he gained immortality and served as his cup-bearer.

Osthanes

In 500 BC, the Greek city-states of Ionia, on the western coast of Anatolia, rose up in rebellion against Persia, assisted by the Greek cities of Athens and Eretria. Darius put down the rebellion, then organized an expedition to punish the city-states in mainland Greece that had lent their support to the rebelling Ionians. As a result, a series of wars were fought between Greek states and Persia, over a period of almost half a century, between 492 and 449 BC, known as the Greco-Persian Wars, or the Persian Wars. In 492 Darius advanced against Greece but his forces were defeated at Marathon in 490 BC. In 485 BC, Darius was succeeded by his son, Xerxes I, who immediately set out to reconquer Egypt and Babylon, and renewed the war against Greece. In a combined Persian and Carthaginian attack, Xerxes attempted a full invasion of Greece. Though the Persians burned Athens, their forces were defeated at Salamis near Athens in 480 BC.

Ultimately, according to Strabo, "the Persians, of all the barbarians, became the most famous among the Greeks, because none of the other barbarians who ruled Asia ruled Greeks." He continues:

> The Persians were the first people to rule of over Greeks… The Persians, as soon as they broke up the power of the Medes, immediately mastered the Lydians and also got as their subjects the Greeks in Asia; and later they even crossed over into Greece; and, though often defeated in many battles, still they continued to hold Asia as far as the places on the sea until they were subdued by the Macedonians.[183]

After the Greek victory over the Persians at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC, the Ionian cities regained their independence and helped to form the Delian League with Athens. Most of the Ionian cities thereby gained a brief freedom, but their fate continued to be subject to treaties with the Persians, and changed as Persian fortunes waxed and waned. Led by the Athenians, the newly formed Delian League went on the offensive to free the Ionian city-states from the Persians. The league had mixed success, and in

449 BC the *Peace of Callias* finally ended the hostilities between Athens, its allies and the Persian Empire. However, in 412 BC, Darius II compelled Sparta to recognize Persian suzerainty over the Greek cities of Asia Minor, who did not formally achieve full independence until Alexander the Great's conquests in 334 BC.

David Lewis, discussing the sources of Greek knowledge of Persia in the fifth century BC, wrote of the "strange presupposition that there was a political and linguistic iron curtain between Greeks and Persians."[184] However, the immediate effect of the Persian Wars on Greek literature and art was obvious. The wars inspired the *Persians* of Aeschylus, and the dithyramb of Pindar praising Athenians for laying the foundations of liberty, and the Athenian dedications at Delphi, or the paintings in the Painted Collonade at Athens. Nevertheless, relations with Persia were not always antagonistic. Herodotus, the "father of history," in the fifth century AD, had traveled not only to Babylon, but throughout the Mediterranean world, around the Black Sea, and in Egypt as far south as the Sudan. In *Anabasis,* Xenophon, a student of Socrates, wrote of his experience with the Greek mercenaries employed by Cyrus the Younger. Greek specialists, craftsmen of all kinds, as well as mercenaries, had long found their way to the Near Eastern courts, while Herodotus tells of a Greek physician named Democedes attending to Darius.[185]

Osthanes, a supposed disciple of Zoroaster, known as the "prince of the Magi", was said to have accompanied Xerxes on his campaign against Greece as his chief magus. Osthanes, mentioned Pliny, was the first person to write a book on magic "and nurtured the seeds, as it were, of this monstrous art, spreading the disease to all corners of the world on his way. However, some very thorough researchers place another Zoroaster, who came from Proconnesus, somewhat before Osthanes' time. One thing is certain. Osthanes was chiefly responsible for stirring up among the Greeks not merely an appetite but a mad obsession for this art."[186] It is said that after the emperor's defeat at Salamis, Osthanes stayed behind to become the teacher of Democritus, an Ionian philosopher, born in 460 BC. The reputed author of seventy-two works, Democritus apparently also visited Babylon to study the science of the *Chaldeans*, of which he is to have written on the subject. He summed up his results of his investigations in a *Chaldean Treatise*, another tractate was entitled *On the Sacred Writings of Those in Babylon*, and as a result of his visit to Persia, he wrote *Mageia*. In an extract, Democritus, following the Babylonian pattern, distinguishes the trinity of Sun, Moon and Venus from the other planets.[187]

Greeks may have also absorbed Magian tenets through their extensive contacts with the Egyptians. Herodotus recounted that, "during the reign of Cambyses in Egypt, a great many Greeks visited that country for one reason or another: some, as was to be expected, for trade, some to serve in the army, others, no doubt, out of mere curiousity, to see what they could see."[188] As Diodorus explained:

> But now that we have examined these matters we must enumerate what Greeks, who have won fame for their wisdom and learning, visited Egypt in ancient times in order to become acquainted with its customs and learning. For the priests of Egypt recount from the records of their sacred books that they were visited in early times by Orpheus, Musaeus, Melampus, and Daedalus, also by the poet Homer and Lycurgus of Sparta, later by Solon of Athens and the philosopher Plato, and that there came also Pythagoras of Samos and the mathematician Eudoxus, as well as Democritus of Abdera and Oenopides of Chios. As evidence for the visits of all these men they point in some cases to their statues and in others to places or buildings which bear their names, and they offer proofs from the branch of learning which each one of these men pursued, arguing that all the things for which they were admired among the Greeks were borrowed from Egypt.[189]

The Persian period of Egypt was an opportunity for contact between Greeks and Jews. The books *II Kings* and *Jeremiah* report that virtually the entire population left in Judah, after the raid of Nebuchadnezzar, fled to Egypt. A Jewish military colony had been established since 589 BC at Elephantine to the south, which displayed definite heretical leanings, worshipping a trinity, composed of *Yahu* (Yahweh), alongside a goddess *Anathbethel* (Athena), and another god whose pronunciation is unknown.[190] The earliest coins of Judea imitated Greek coins for the purpose of trade with the Greeks, and Greek money is mentioned in one of the papyri dated 402 BC, from Elephantine, and the recent discovery of another papyrus shows that in the fourth century BC, a story like the judgment of Solomon was known in Greece.[191] Democritus was acquainted with a collection of wisdom sayings of Ahiqar, the oldest extant version of which was found among the ruins of Elephantine in Egypt. According to the *Book of Tobit*, Ahiqar was an exiled Jew.

The Mysteries of Eleusis

The emergence of the mystery cults in the sixth century BC, the most famous of which were the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter, represented a fundamental aspect of the transformation of Greek religion. The Eleusinian mysteries, like the Thesmophoria, an autumn agricultural festival that was exclusively for women, celebrated the fertility of grain, in the manner of early fertility rites practiced throughout the ancient Middle East. Nevertheless, some have sought to attribute their propagation in Greece to a hypothetical "shamanistic tradition" issuing from the "north". Joseph Campbell, the noted scholar of comparative religion, believed:

> The Aryans entering Greece, Anatolia, Persia, and the Gangetic plain c. 1500-1250 BC, brought with them... the comparatively primitive mythologies of their patriarchal pantheons, which in creative consort with the earlier mythologies of the Universal Goddess generated in India the Vedantic, Puranic, Tantric, and Buddhist doctrines, and in Greece those of Homer and Hesiod, Greek tragedy and philosophy, the Mysteries, and Greek science.[192]

However, rituals similar to those of Eleusis were characteristic of many centers of ancient eastern Mediterranean civilizations, including islands as far north as Samothrace, as far east as Cyprus, and as far south as Crete. In all of these regions were cults of one or another Great Goddess of fertility and the harvest, whose worship involved secret rites of purification and initiation. As far back as the seventh century BC, on the west coast of Asia Minor, Greek city-states worshipped the Phrygian goddess Cybele, known as the *Magna Mater*, which was taken over from the Persian worship of Anahita in Cappadocia, now east-central Turkey.

According to Diodorus of Sicily, "Isis was transferred by the Greeks to Argos, while in their mythology they said that she was Io, who was transformed into a cow, but some think the same deity to be Isis, some Demeter, some Thesmophorus, but others Selene, and others Hera."[193] And, Herodotus attributed the introduction of the Mysteries of Eleusis to the Danaans:

> I propose to hold my tongue about the mysterious rites of Demeter, which the Greeks call *Thesmophoria*, though… I may say, for instance, that it was the daughters of Danaus who brought this ceremony from Egypt and instructed the Pelasgian women in it, and that after the Dorian conquest of the Peloponnese it was lost; only the Arcadians, who were not driven from their homes by the invaders, continued the celebration of it.[194]

The founding literature of the Greek mysteries were the poems of Orpheus and Musaeus, written, or at least redacted, by the notorious forger, Onomacritus. Orpheus was a legendary figure, the son of a Muse and the king of Thrace. He joined the expedition of the Argonauts, saving them from the music of the Sirens by playing his own, which was so powerful that even animals, trees and rocks began to dance. When, upon his return, his wife Eurydice was killed by a snakebite, Orpheus went down into to Hades, the Underworld, to bring her back. With his singing and lyre playing he charmed Charon, the ferryman of the River Styx, and the triple-headed dog Cerberus, who guarded the palace of Pluto. His music and grief so moved Pluto and Persephone, the king and the queen of Hades, that they allowed him to take back Eurydice.

Among the Greeks, Orpheus was regarded as a foreigner, having come from Thrace, the region of the southeastern Balkans, most of which had become subject to Persia about 516-510 BC. Though, Pliny remarked: "I would have said that Orpheus was the first to import magic to his native land from abroad and that superstition evolved from medicine, if the whole of Thrace had not been free of magic."[195] According to Strabo, Orpheus was a "magician who at first was a wandering musician and soothsayer and peddler of the rites of initiation."[196] Plato stated:

> Beggar priests and seers come to the doors of the rich and convince them that in their hands, given by the gods, there lies the power to heal with sacrifices and incantations, if a misdeed has been committed by themselves or their ancestors, with pleasurable festivals… and they offer a bundle of books of Musaeus and Orpheus… according to which they perform their sacrifices; they persuade not only individuals but whole cities that there is release and purification from sin through sacrifices and playful pastimes, and indeed for both the living and the dead; they call these *teletai*, which deliver us from evil in the afterlife; anyone who declines to sacrifice, however, is told that terrible things are waiting for him.[197]

A possible source of the myth of the Eleusinian mysteries may have been reproduced in Homer's *Hymn to Demeter*. Here Hades is said to have come forth from the Underworld in his chariot to seize Persephone, the daughter of Demeter and Zeus. Demeter leaves Olympus in search of her daughter, roaming the earth disguising herself as an old woman. By the Maiden Well in Eleusis, she met the daughters of King Keleus, who offered her the position of nurse to their newly born brother Demophoon. At the palace Demeter nursed Demophoon who grew like an immortal being. She fed him with ambrosia and, secretly at night, probably as an allusion to child sacrifice, hid him in the midst of the fire without burning him. One night, the child's mother Metaneira, caught Demeter holding the child in the fire, and yelled in horror, thus preventing him from gaining immortality. Demeter returned to her original form, and in her continuing grief, caused a famine, that would have destroyed mankind, until Zeus sent Hermes, the messenger of the gods, down to Hades to request Persephone. Hades acquiesced, but through a ploy, deceived Persephone into marrying him. Consequently, Persephone would have to dwell with Hades for a third of the year, becoming goddess of the Underworld, coming forth in spring, when she made the earth bloom again and taught her mysteries to the Eleusinians.

Walter Burkert has pointed to the evident Middle Eastern fertility motifs present in the *Hymn to Demeter*, and according to Penglase, in *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia*:

> The hymn is outstanding for the striking number and the nature of the parallels with Mesopotamian myths. Indeed, numerous motifs and underlying ideas are not only closely similar but are complex features central to the Mesopotamian myths as they are to the Greek hymn. Just as significantly, they are also found in a specific group of Mesopotamian myths, that is, among the myths of the goddess-and-consort strand representing the cult of Inanna and her consort Dumuzi, and of Damu, who is identified with him. There are many parallels, especially in the central structural ideas of the journeys carried out by the gods and in the accompanying idea of the power involved in the journey, but there are also striking parallels of motif with similar underlying ideas; so many, in fact, that the conclusion of Mesopotamian influence, is, even at first sight, hard to avoid, and on closer inspection, compelling.[198]

The word mystery, *mysterion* in Greek, derives from the Greek verb *mystein*, "to close," referring to the closed secrecy of the rituals, because an initiate was required to keep silent about that which was revealed to him in the private ceremony. The priests in the mysteries were called *hierophantes*, hierophants, "one who shows sacred things." The highest stage of initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries is that of *epopteia*, "beholding," and an initiate into the great mysteries was called an *epoptes*, "beholder." Although there were festivals of Demeter practiced throughout Greece, the true Eleusinian Mysteries were celebrated at Eleusis only. This was changed when Eleusis was annexed to the Athenian territory about 600 BC. The first hall of initiations for the mysteries of Demeter and Kore, was built in the time of the tyrant Peisistratus. Every Athenian was admitted to the Eleusinian mysteries, and soon the mysteries were open to every Greek.

Because mysteries refer to secret rites and ceremonies, of a meaning and significance known only to the initiated, what occurred at rites practiced at Eleusis generally remains unknown. It is commonly thought that a betrayal of the pledge of silence was the main concern in the case of the Athenian leader Alcibiades during the late fifth century BC. In Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades*, it is said that Alcibiades and his friends were accused of having profaned the Eleusinian mysteries in a drunken parody of the ritual. Several of them mimicked the roles of the officials in the rites, while the rest pretended to be initiates, and were later called to face charges of impiety for both profaning the mysteries and mutilating of the phallic images of Hermes.[199]

The mysteries began with the march of the initiates, *mystai*, in solemn procession from Athens to Eleusis. The rites that they then performed in the *Telesterion*, or Hall of Initiation, were and remain a secret. It is clear, however, that neophytes were initiated in stages, and that the annual process began with purification rites called the Lesser Mysteries. The Greater Mysteries at Eleusis was celebrated annually. It included a ritual bath in the sea, three days of fasting, and completion of the still-mysterious central rite. These acts completed the initiation, and the initiate was promised benefits in the world to come. A fragment of Pindar, quoted by Clement of Alexandria, elucidates the ultimate significance of the myth of the descent into the Underworld dramatically enacted by the initiate: "Blessed is one who goes under the earth after seeing these things. That person knows the end of life, and knows its Zeus-given beginning."[200]

Dionysus

More is known of the related Mysteries of Dionysus. The dying god took many forms in the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean. In the cult brought to Greece, his name was Dionysus or Bacchus. Though Dionysus is considered by modern scholars to have had a "northern" origin, he was known to the Greeks as the son of Semele and Cadmus the Phoenician. Like his Middle Eastern counterparts, Dionysus was a god of fertility, commonly known as the god of the vine, or of wine, representing the life-blood of nature, the phallus being prominent in his rituals. Like Baal, Dionysus was said to have descended to the Underworld, to rescue his mother, where he fought and defeated death, and his suffering and return to life were enacted in sacred rites.

Herodotus maintained the Near Eastern origin of the rites of Dionysus, attributing its importation to Melampus. Known in Greek mythology as a seer, Melampus, as a child, had apparently received the understanding of the language of birds when two young snakes, whose lives he had saved, licked his ears when he was asleep. It was said that he cured the daughters of Proetus, grandson of Danaus. They imagined themselves cows, having been bewitched, either because they insulted the goddess Hera, or because they would not accept the new rites of Dionysus, until the sorcerer Melampus cured them, on condition that he be given a third of the kingdom, and his brother, Bias, another third. Herodotus maintained:

> Now I have an idea that Melampus... introduced the name of Dionysus into Greece, together with the sacrifice in his honor and the phallic procession. He did not, however, fully comprehend the doctrine, or communicate it in its entirety; its more perfect development was the work of later teachers. Nevertheless it was Melampus who introduced the phallic procession, and from Melampus that the Greeks learnt the rites that they now perform. Melampus, in my view, was an able man who acquired the art of divination and brought into Greece, with little change, a number of things which he had learned in Egypt, and amongst them the worship of Dionysus... Probably Melampus got his knowledge about Dionysus through Cadmus of Tyre and the people who came with him from Phoenicia to the country now called Boeotia.[201]

The legendary founder of the rites of Dionysus was known to have been Orpheus, though very little is known of the Orphic movement that issued under his name. Part of the Orphic ritual is thought to have involved the mimed or actual dismemberment of an individual, representing the god Dionysus, who was then said to have been reborn. Much of our knowledge of Orphism is derived from the Orphic theogonies. Though the theogonies survive merely in fragments preserved by later philosophers, nearly every leading scholar of the subject, including Lobeck, Diels, Gomperz, Kern, Gruppe, Eisler, and Guthrie, agrees that they date from before the Persian wars.[202]

Much of the mythological background of these accounts is the same as is found in Hesiod and Homer, though there are many and striking differences. One account begins with Kronos, or Time, equated with Saturn, described as "a serpent having heads growing upon him of a bull and a lion, and in the middle the face of a god; and he has also wings upon his shoulders, and is called ageless Time, and Herakles the same." In *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, W.K.C. Guthrie remarked that, "the depicting of ageless Time himself in this form shows correspondences with Oriental, and in particular with Persian religion, which are too detailed and exact to be passed over."[203] As Guthrie further noted, we might be disposed to suspect later alteration of the myth if there were no evidence at all for the presence of Time in Greek cosmogony before the Hellenistic age, though, "against this is its prominent position in the cosmogony of Pherecydes as well as in that attributed to Orpheus."[204]

The Orphics worship Phanes, a beautiful figure with wings on his shoulders, four eyes and the heads of various animals, is born from an egg. Similarly, according to Plutarch, the twenty-four gods created by Ahura Mazda were placed in an egg, but those created by Ahriman pierced their way through it and made their way inside, and hence evil is now combined with the good.[205] In the *Theogony* reported by Athenagoras, a Christian apologist, the two halves of the egg form heaven and earth. To Phanes, Night bore Gaia, or Earth, and Ouranus, or Heaven, who in turn were the parents of the Titans. There then follows the common Greek stories of the Titans, the supremacy of Kronos, his castration by Ouranos, his marriage with Rhea, his swallowing of his children, until Rhea saved Zeus who brought the other gods to life.

Zeus swallows Phanes, taking all that exits within himself, a myth that gave rise to the dualism typical of the Orphics, whereby the soul of man is seen as created by the true god, while matter is created by the evil god. Though Orphic dualism was not the simple dualism of Zoroastrianism, being an opposition between a Good and Evil god, it may have been elaborated from Zurvanism. In a Zurvanite myth reported by Theodore bar Konai and Eznik, Zurvan says to Ahriman, "I have made Ormazd to rule above thee,"

meaning, as Zaehner has shown, that Ahriman rules the material world, while Ormazd is appointed over the world of spirit.[206] Likewise, according to the *Orphic Theogony*, Phanes made the world in its primeval state, but Zeus swallowed Phanes and then produced the world known to humanity. Thus, Phanes was interpreted as the creator of the spiritual realm, while Zeus gave rise to the cosmos of matter.

According to Pausanias, "the Titans were first introduced into Poetry by Homer, who said that they were gods occupying a place under what is called Tartarus. Onomakritos took over the name of the Titans from Homer and founded rites in honour of Dionysus, making the Titans to be for Dionysus the author of his sufferings."[207] According to the Orphic version of the myth, shortly after his birth, the infant Dionysus mounted the throne of his father Zeus, and impersonated the god by waving the lightning in his hand. However, and probably as an allusion to child sacrifice, the myth recounts that the child Dionysus did not occupy the throne for long, for the Titans attacked him with knives while he was looking at himself in the mirror. For a time, Dionysus had avoided their assaults by assuming the likeness successively of Zeus and Kronos, of a young man, of a lion, a horse, and a serpent.[208] Finally, in the form of a bull, he was cut to pieces by the Titans, who ate his flesh, all but the heart. Some say that the heart was given by Zeus to Semele, others that Zeus swallowed it, giving rise to the second birth of Dionysus.[209]

The female worshippers of Bacchus, called Maenads, were supposed to re-enact the tearing and eating of Dionysus by the Titans, by whipping themselves into a frenzy, and tearing a live bull to pieces with their bare hands and teeth, for the animal in some sense was an incarnation of the god.[210] Several descriptions of the rites of the Dionysians are available from ancient authors. Clement of Alexandria reports:

> The raving Dionysus is worshipped by Bacchants with orgies, in which they celebrate their sacred frenzy by a feast of raw flesh. Wreathed with snakes, they perform the distribution of portions of their victims, shouting the name Eva (Eua), that Eva through whom error entered into the world; and a consecrated snake is the emblem of the Bacchic orgies.[211]

These wild drunken orgies, the tearing of an animal and the devouring of its flesh, accompanied by loud music and the crashing of cymbals, was intended to send the celebrants into a state of *ecstasy*, in Greek, literally meaning "outside the body." In this state the cultists hoped to transcend their earthly bonds and allow the soul temporary liberation from the body. This was thought to be the way the soul could achieve a condition of *enthousiasmos*, meaning "inside the god." While they were under the god's possession, the Bacchants were believed to gain occult powers, the ability to charm snakes and suckle animals, as well as supernatural strength that enabled them to tear living victims to pieces before indulging in a ritual feast.

Although it has again been suggested that the Dionysiac rites originated from the hypothetical "northern shamanistic tradition," they were adopted from similar rites practiced throughout the ancient Middle East, in the worship of the dying gods, Tammuz, Baal and Bel of Babylon, all also symbolized by the bull. Similarly, according to *Exodus* 32:5-6, Aaron built an altar before the Golden Calf, and proclaimed: "tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink and pagan revelry." The cult would have been introduced to the Greeks by the Magi, who, having assimilated Mithras to the Babylonian Bel, would have incorporated such rites into their cult, which also became associated with the slaughter of a bull.

Though we know nothing of the details of these rites, Nigosian, in *The Zoroastrian Faith*, has pointed out that according to a Zoroastrian text, titled the *Yasna*, Yima was the instructor of the bull-sacrifice which conferred immortality on those who consumed the animal's flesh. Condemned by Zoroaster, these were nocturnal and orgiastic rites, accompanied with shouts of joy, and combined with the *haoma*, an intoxicating drink prepared from the sacred plant of Zoroastrianism.[212] In the Indian *Vedas*, in a myth which may be related, Soma, who is the same as the *Haoma*, and represents the rain which springs from the Moon, is both the semen of the sacred bull who fertilizes the earth, and the milk of the all-nourishing heavenly cow. The gods, wishing to partake of this potion for its gift of immortality, devise a plan to murder the Soma-plant. Mithra participates in its slaying, and as a result, the beasts turn against him.[213]

The Dionysiac rites appear to derive from necromancy, the art of summoning the spirits of the Underworld, or black magic, of *deava* worshipping Magi. On the authority of Bardesanes, a Syrian Christian of the late first and early second century AD, the *Magussaeans*, wherever they were found, observed "the laws of their forefathers, and the initiatory rites of their mysteries."[214] Franz Cumont

maintained that the beliefs of these *Magussaeans* were Zurvanite in origin, though Zaehner commented that in many cases it was more than Zurvanism, it was sorcery and *deava*-worship. Zaehner continues:

> The practice of worshipping the demons is also referred to by Clement of Alexandria: "the Magians", he says, "worship angels and demons."[215] This as we have seen, is the practice not of the Zoroastrians or Zurvanites but of the "devil-worshippers", the third Iranian sect mentioned in the *Denkart*. With these facts in mind it will, perhaps be safe to conclude that Xerxes, in suppressing the *deava* cult, caused a large-scale emigration of dissident Magians. These, after absorbing much of Babylonian speculation, transported their beliefs to Asia Minor; and from them arose the Graeco-Roman religion of Mithra.[216]

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher of the sixth century BC, equated the rites of the Bacchants with those of the Magi, and commented: "if it were for Dionysus that they hold processions and sing hymns to the shameful parts [phalli], it would be a most shameless act; but Hades and Dionysus are the same, in whose honor they go mad and celebrate the Bacchic rites,"[217] and of the "Nightwalkers, Magi, Bacchoi, Lenai, and the initiated," all these people he threatens with what happens after death: "for the secret rites practiced among humans are celebrated in an unholy manner."[218] A papyrus from Derveni, near Thessalonika, belonging to the fourth century BC, we read about "incantations" of the *Magoi* that are able to "placate daimones who could bring disorder… Therefore, the *magoi* perform this sacrifice as if they would pay an amend," and initiates of Dionysus, "first sacrifice to the Eumenides, like the *magoi*." In *Magic and the Ancient World*, Fritz Graf, Professor of Classics at Princeton University, remarks:

> Not only does the unknown author connect the rites of the magi with those of the mystery cults (a topic which becomes fundamental with the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri), but also he introduces the *magoi* as invokers of infernal powers, *daimones* whom he understands as the souls of the dead, the disorder that they bring manifests itself in illness and madness, which are healed by rituals of exorcism.[219]

Orthodox Zoroastrianism condemns the cult rendered to evil spirits, Ahriman and his *daevas*. According to Lenormant however, "while in the true Zoroastrianism of the Persians, Ahura-Mazda alone was worshipped and Ahriman loaded with curses, in Magianism the two principles of good and evil, Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman, received alike the homage of the altars."[220] Although Zoroastrianism sternly forbids the practice of sorcery, the unorthodox Magus summoned the demons of the Underworld, to either request protection from their evil, or to direct it against his enemies. It is known from Plutarch, that Zoroaster "taught that votive and thank-offerings should be made to Ahura Mazda, but gloomy offerings to Ahriman, and those intended to avert evil." Plutarch described a sacrifice offered by the Magi of a wolf made to the spirit of evil. "In a mortar," he says, "they pound a certain herb called Haoma at the same time invoking Hades (Ahriman), and the powers of darkness, then stirring this herb in the blood of a slaughtered wolf, they take it away and drop it on a spot never reached by the rays of the Sun."[221]

The *Magussaeans* not only made offerings to the evil demons, but celebrated nocturnal sacrifices in order to protect themselves from Ahriman.[222] As Cumont explains, "the apotropaic art rendered to the powers of evil for protection against them, explains the development that took place among the Magi of that art which owes them its name, magic, and the very condemnations formulated in the sacred books with regard to such practices, demonstrate how numerous were those who persisted in it."[223] The Magi devised every sort of barbarity in order to please the evil spirits, such as, concocting foul potions, mixing poisons from plants or corpses, and even human or child sacrifice, as the Canaanites and Israelites had been in the habit of doing for centuries to the god Baal and Moloch. Similarly, in some instances, in the Dionysiac rites, a human being instead of an animal was torn to pieces. This was the practice in Chios and Tenedos. At Potniae in Boetia, the tradition has it that it had formerly been the custom to sacrifice children to Dionysus, for whom a goat was later replaced.[224] A vase-painting in the British Museum represents a Thracian tearing a child with his teeth, while Dionysus stands by.[225]

In some stories, Dionysus is rendered the son of the goddess Persephone, goddess of the Underworld, and received the title *Chthonios*, "of the Underworld."[226] One of the names given as his father was Hades. According to the poet Nonnus, Zeus approached Persephone in the form of a serpent, and she bore him Zagreus, that is, Dionysus, a horned infant. A common expression of the Dionysiacs was "the bull is father of the serpent, and the serpent father of the bull."[227] They hailed the god by his titles of *Brominos* (Thunderer), *Taurokeros* (Bull-Horned), or *Tauroprosopos* (Bull-Faced), in the belief that he incarnated the sacrificial beast.

It was never quite certain whether Dionysus was a bull or a goat. One of his names was "Kid". To save him from the wrath of Hera, his father Zeus changed the youthful Dionysus into a kid, and when the gods fled to Egypt to escape the fury of the serpent Typhon, Dionysus was turned into a pan. The inhabitants of Arcadia worshipped Pan who was sometimes portrayed as a goat.[228] Pan's unexpected appearance inspired mortals with sudden terror, hence the word *panic*. He was generally represented as a lustful and mischievous figure, part goat, part man, having horns and a tail, and was sometimes with a beard and the feet of a goat, and often, he was represented by merely a phallic pillar rather than an actual statue of the god.

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Chapter 7: Apollo

The Pre-Socratics

The primary reason why scholars sought to identify ancient Greece as a European civilization was for its contribution to philosophy. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Greek philosophy did not represent the birth of rational thought, as is commonly perceived, but was derived from the religious speculations of neighboring civilizations. Essentially, the nature and source of Greek philosophy was misrepresented by European scholars, due to a determination to present Greece as the sole origin of that type of pursuit which is thought to epitomize European achievement: scientific speculation. The common evolutionary scenario that has been presented supposes that, prior to the advent of philosophy, early humanity, faced with the chaos of the universe, invented the idea of gods to account for the various forces that beleaguered its existence. Western society, however, through scientific observation, determined that these forces are not subject to supernatural phenomena, but to physical laws, thereby rescuing us from the darkness of superstition. Therefore, science is perceived as inimical to religion, and if history is the evolution of intellectual thought, then the Greek's must have been the first to abandon traditional religious beliefs in order to ascertain the true nature of reality.

Essentially, not only has Greek philosophy been deemed a strictly European phenomenon, but also of having incepted a process that culminated in all our modern values. The opinion of J. M. Robert, in the *Penguin History of the World*, typifies the modern bias, as well as the common the need to over-emphasize the role of the Greeks:

> [of] the achievement which made Greece teacher of Europe (and through her the world),…there is a salient theme which emerges in it: a growing confidence in rational, conscious enquiry. If civilization is advance towards the control of mentality and environment by reason, then the Greeks did more for it than any of their predecessors. They invented the philosophical question as part and parcel of one of the great intuitions of all time, that a coherent and logical explanation of things could be found, that the world did not ultimately rest upon the meaningless and arbitrary fiat of gods or demons.[229]

Effectively, the presentation of Greek philosophers as the first "free thinkers" was the result of historians, from the Enlightenment onward, interpreting the past in terms of their own particular experience. As Robert Ackerman aptly describes in the foreword to Francis Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy*:

> How did the Greeks invent philosophical thought itself? A century ago the answer had itself been influenced by the struggle between evolutionism and organized religion in the wake of *The Origin of Species*. After Darwin, educated people agonized: could one continue to accept literally the account of creation given in the Genesis? More generally, the controversy raged between those who still regarded religion as both necessary and sufficient and those who no longer accepted the need for supernatural sanctions. Historians of philosophy assumed that something similar had taken place in sixth-century Greece: that is, certain extraordinary individuals (whom we call the pre-Socratics) had somehow overcome the stifling mythological structures of religious thinking and miraculously managed to break through to the clear air of philosophy.[230]

Greek philosophy merely appears to be the birth of "rational" speculation because it is the first instance in ancient literature of the use of argument. As is perceived, the Greek philosophers, as opposed to resorting to myth to explain certain physical realities, attempted to reinforce their ideas through the use of reasoning. This mode of thought is considered to be exemplified in the main protagonist of Plato's

dialogues, Socrates, who invented the "dialectical method." Through the process of argumentation, Socrates would prod his interlocutors to dissect their own arguments, aiding them to discover the inherent lack of logic in their ideas. However, Socrates' manner of reasoning was not always itself very logical. Socrates was often concerned with demonstrating the validity of various religious notions, a tendency evident in Plato's doctrine of Forms, the theory that all objects are reflections of an immaterial archetype, his belief that planets were living beings, or his adherence to the doctrine of reincarnation.

F. M. Cornford, in *From Religion to Philosophy*, has set out to dispel the myth that Greek philosophy marked the birth of speculative thought, demonstrating that there was no radical break between the "age of religion" and the "age of philosophy." Essentially, it represented contrived rationalizations formulated in an attempt to garner legitimacy for preconceived religious ideas. As Cornford points out: "the work of philosophy thus appears as the elucidation and clarifying of religious, or even pre-religious, material. It does not create its new conceptual tools; it rather discovers them by ever subtler analysis and closer definition of the elements confused in its original datum."[231]We should understand Greek philosophy, not as the first use of reason to critique religious ideas, but as the first use of argument in support of theological beliefs. In the case of discussions about three levels of being, or the souls that inhabit planetary entities, we are not presented with conclusions achieved through a logical process of deduction. Greek thought, therefore, was not philosophy but theosophy.

However, the theology that became the matter of Greek philosophy was not the worship of the pantheon inherited from Archaic times, but an entirely other creed, intended to topple the old belief system: the newly adopted teachings of the Magi. The issue of Babylonian or Zoroastrian influence on Greek thought has been a hotly contested subject which has attracted the attention of some of the twentieth century's most eminent scholars, such as Reitzenstein, W. Jaeger, Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont. Nevertheless, Duchesne-Guillemin concedes that, "undoubtedly there are striking similarities of doctrine between Iran and Greece."[232]Similarly, in *Early Greek Philosophy*, though not willing to suggest that Greek thought developed from that of the Babylonians and Egyptians, John Burnet must admit that, "it would, however, be another thing to say that Greek philosophy originated quite independently of Oriental influences."[233]

Ever since the school of Aristotle compiled the first histories of philosophy, there has been agreement in dating the beginning of scientific or philosophical speculation with the Milesian school of the sixth century BC, centered in Miletus, in Ionia, which was brought into existence by the contact of Greek culture with that of Babylonia and Egypt. Thus, Thales, regarded as the first Milesian philosopher, would have acquired his cosmogony and knowledge of astronomy. Thales, was said by some writers to have been a Phoenician, belonging to noble house descended from Cadmus and Agenor.[234] Thales is said to have traveled to Egypt, from where he acquired the science of geometry. He is famous for postulating that everything is made of water, and modern research has drawn attention to antecedents of this theory among the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, and the Babylonian epic of creation, the *Enuma Elish*.[235]

Beginning in the sixth century BC, Ionia came under Persian domination, and for the most part, would not achieve independence until the time of Alexander in the fourth. Therefore, as Greek philosophy emerged in a region of the world that was then part of the Persian Empire, it should not be regarded as a Greek phenomenon at all. Though Greek speaking, most of the first philosophers, referred to collectively as Presocratics, being the succession of philosophers beginning with Thales until the time of Socrates, were from Ionia, where contact between Greeks and their Persian overlords would have been inevitable. Miletus was the only Ionian city to support the Persians against Lydia, for which reason it was favoured by Cyrus. After the Ionian revolt, Darius was said to have deported Milesians to Susa, and settled them in Mesopotamia.[236]Moreover, a sizable Persian community had established itself in Asia Minor. It is known that Magi had already begun to emigrate to the West during the reign of Xerxes. In the fifth century BC, they had already established themselves in Lydia, with the foundation of a temple of Anahita attributed to Cyrus. They rapidly spread from Phrygia to Galatia, and by the time of Strabo they were firmly established in Cappadocia and Pontus.[237] In the fourth century AD, St. Basil mentioned that the *Magussaeans* were found "in considerable numbers, scattered all over the country, settlers having long ago been introduced into these parts from Babylon."[238]

The fact that the Greeks knew of Zoroaster and of the Magi is enough assure us of some degree of contact. The first among the Greeks to actually mention Zoroaster by name was Xanthus of Lydia, in the fifth century BC, and mentioned the Magi, though without apparently connecting them to Zoroaster. Xanthus would have placed the date of Zoroaster to six thousand years before the defeat of Xerxes, because the *Magussaeans* would have attributed such a number of years to the *Great Year*, the end of which were marked by great calamities.[239] Empedocles left an unfinished poem on the Persian wars, in which it was suspected that he spoke of Zoroaster, and Herodotus spoke of the Magi as a tribe of the Medes, though

without mentioning Zoroaster. In the fifth century BC, Ctesias who traveled to the Persian court where he remained as physician for seventeen years under the rulers Darius II and Artaxerxes, makes Zoroaster a king of Bactria surrounded by Magi. Theopompus, in the fourth century BC, spoke of the relation of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman in the Zurvanite context. Finally, in the fourth century BC, Dinon, the historian of Persia, connected Zoroaster etymologically with the stars.[240]

The Greeks, though, knew nothing of the real Zoroaster. In *The Hellenized Magi*, a collaborative effort of Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont, a valuable work that has yet to be published in English, the authors have pointed out that the Greeks' knowledge of the Persian prophet derived, not from orthodox Magi, but from the heretical teachings of the *Magussaeans*, that had established themselves in Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey, during the earlier period of the Persian empire.[241] Originally, they were known collectively in eastern Mediterranean lands as *magousaioi*, a Greco-Semitic plural for Magi, a term that came to be used for Persian colonists in general, and had eventually been applied to magicians and soothsayers, chiefly from Babylonia, with a reputation for varied forms of wisdom. According to Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont:

> After the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, the Zoroastrian cult was introduced to this city and a large number of Magi established themselves there as in the rest of Mesopotamia. In the official ceremonies, these priests had priority over the indigenous clergy of the Chaldeans. Between Magi and "Chaldeans," who lived in peaceful proximity with each other for many centuries, relations must have been established. Babylonia was, when the Persians subjected it, the great scientific center of the world. It was inevitable that Zoroastrianism was strongly affected by the ascendancy of its prestigious science. It was from the school of the Chaldeans that the Magi, in the train of Xerxes, learned to interpret eclipses in conformity to the principles of its astrological geography. The theology of the western Magi, or "Magussaeans", whose colonies, coming from Babylonia, spread across Asia Minor, was thoroughly penetrated with astrological theories. The supreme principle became for them Time [Zurvan] which regulates the revolutions of the heavens; the history of the world until its final destruction was divided into millenniums, each subject to a planet; Ahura Mazda was identified with Bel, and the other Avestan gods were also assimilated to Babylonian divinities.[242]

Essentially, the *Magussaeans* were *daeva*-worshipping Magi, who had assimilated the ancient cult of the dying god by practicing orgiastic and magical rites dedicated to Mithras. In their cult they preserved the dualism of Zoroastrianism, though in the heretical form of Zurvanism, combined with *Chaldean* astrology. They venerated fire as the symbol of the divine, and adopted the trinity worshipped by the Babylonians, composed of a father, mother and their offspring, a son-god, represented by the Sun, Moon, and Venus, which they identified with the Persian deities of Ahura Mazda, Anahita and Mithras. They conserved the *Chaldean* doctrine of pantheism, regarding the universe as a single living being, governed by a fate determined by the stars. Astrology was connected to mathematics, and the use of numerology was widespread in their literature. The Zodiac of the *Chaldeans* was divided according to the four elements traditionally worshipped by the Persians. They saw the soul as subjected to numerous reincarnations, sometimes into beasts, causing them to abstain from the meat of animals.

Therefore, among the Pre-Socratics, we find a concern with the typical Magian doctrines of astralism, dualism, and pantheism. In *Early Greek philosophy and the Orient*, M. L. West has suggested that the introduction of Persian and Babylonian beliefs into Greece was attributable to Magi fleeing west from Cyrus' annexation of Media. In *Alien Wisdom*, Arnoldo Momigliano affirms:

> Those who have maintained that Pherecydes of Syros, Anaximander, Heraclitus and even Empedocles derived some of their doctrines from Persia have not always been aware that the political situation was favourable to such contacts. But this cannot be said of Professor M. L. West, the latest supporter of the Iranian origins of Greek philosophy. He certainly knows that if there was a time in which the Magi could export their theories to a Greek world ready to listen, it was the second half of the sixth century BC. It is undeniably tempting to explain certain features of early Greek philosophy by Iranian influences. The sudden elevation of Time to a primeval god in Pherecydes, the identification of Fire with Justice in Heraclitus, Anaximander's astronomy placing the stars nearer to the Earth than the moon, these and other ideas immediately call to mind theories which we have been taught to consider Zoroastrian, or at any rate Persian, or at least Oriental.[243]

Greek philosophy represented the appropriation of a mode of speculative thought known as Theoretical Magic. Magic does not only comprise a set of prescriptions that detail the procedures of magic, known as Practical Magic, but can be viewed as an entire way of life. Magic will include rules of conduct, such as the avoidance of certain taboos, the worship of prescribed divinities known to aid in the execution of magic, or even just basic codes of morality. Similarly, the practice of magic often entails a philosophical aspect, sometimes referred to as theosophy, as an attempt to analyze and determine the purported laws that govern the effectiveness of magic. Consequently, theoretical magic may greatly resemble the pursuit of philosophy, being an exploration of the scientific as well as moral constitution of the universe.

Clitarchus, as quoted by Diogenes, provided a description of the practices of the Magi and *Chaldeans*, as an example of the modes that "philosophy" took among nations other than the Greeks:

> He also says that the *Chaldeans* apply themselves to astronomy and forecasting the future; while the Magi spend their time in the worship of the gods, in sacrifices and in prayers, implying that none but themselves have the ear of the gods. They propound their views concerning the being and origin of the gods, whom they hold to be fire, earth, and water; they condemn the use of images, and especially the error of attributing to the divinities differences of sex. They hold discourses of justice, and deem it impious to practice cremation; but they see no impiety in marriage with a mother or daughter, as Sotion relates in his twenty-third book. Further, declaring that the gods appear to them in visible form. Moreover, they say that the air is full of shapes which stream forth like vapour and enter the eyes of keen sighted seers. They prohibit personal ornament and the wearing of gold. Their dress is white, they make their bed on the ground, and their food is vegetables, cheese, and coarse bread; their staff is a reed and their custom is, so we are told, to stick it into the cheese and take up with it the part they eat.[244]

Though the magical practices of the *Chaldeans* and the Magi are considered "irrational", and therefore, incompatible with the very premise of philosophy, in ancient times there was often no perceived separation between magic and science. As Marcel Mauss has noted:

> Magic is linked to science in the same way as it is linked to technology. It is not only a practical art, it is also a storehouse of ideas. It attaches great importance to knowledge, one of its mainsprings. In fact as far as magic is concerned, knowledge is power… It quickly set us a kind of index of plants, metals, phenomena, beings and life in general, and became an early store of information for the astronomical, physical and natural sciences. It is a fact that certain branches of magic, such as astrology and alchemy, were called applied physics in Greece. That is why magicians received the name of *physikoi* and that the word *physikos* was a synonym for magic.[245]

As Bidez and Cumont have indicated, in reference to the Magi, "the purpose of this sacerdotal caste, the quality which it pursued above all else, was to be wise. Not only did it possess the science of divine matters and flattered itself of being the only one with the power to command the gods, but it reasoned also on the origin and the laws of the universe, on the properties of nature and the constitution of man."[246] Ultimately, as describes M. L. West:

> In some ways one might say that it was the very extravagance of oriental fancy that freed the Greeks from the limitations of what they could see with their own eyes: led them to think of ten-thousand-year cycles instead of human generations, of an infinity beyond the visible sky and below the foundations of the earth, of a life not bounded by womb and tomb but renewed in different bodies aeon after aeon. It was now that they learned to think that good men and bad have different destinations after death; that the fortunate souls ascend to the luminaries of heaven; that God is intelligence; that the cosmos is one living creature; that the material world can be analyzed in terms of a few basic constituents such as fire, water, earth, metal; that there is a world of Being beyond perception, beyond time. These were conceptions of enduring importance for ancient philosophy. This was the gift of the Magi.[247]

Those who argue against the case for Persian influence have suggested that if the Greek philosophers had in fact drawn their ideas from the Magi their teachings would have shared a greater degree of similarity. Momigliano complains that, "there is one simple consideration which makes me hesitate in this game of searching for the Zoroastrian origins of Greek thought. If we do not know much about the Pre-Socratics we know at least that their ancient readers found each of them very different from

the others. It they had all been inspired by the Magi, there would be less variety of problems and solutions."[248] The same point was disputed in antiquity. Diogenes Laertius, began his history of Greek philosophy, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, the most important existing secondary source of knowledge in the field, with a discussion of the controversy over the origin of Greek philosophy, by relating that:

> There are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginnings among the barbarians. They urge that the Persians have had their Magi, the Babylonians or Assyrians their *Chaldeans*, and the Indians their Gymnosophists; and among the Celts and Gauls there are the people called Druids or Holy Ones, for which they cite as authorities the *Magicus* of Aristotle and Sotion in the twenty-third book of his *Succession of Philosophers*. Also they say that Mochus [Moses] was a Phoenician, Zamolxis a Thracian, and Atlas a Libyan.[249]

Diogenes though, is not of the opinion that philosophy began among the "barbarians," maintaining instead, that "these authors forget that the achievements which they attributed to the barbarians belong to the Greeks, with whom not merely philosophy but the human race itself began."[250] More credible than his outlandish claim is the explanation offered by Diodorus of Sicily, who, writing in the first century BC, explained that the reason for the divergence in ideas between the *Chaldeans* and the Greeks, is due to the particular manner in which the Greeks borrowed their learning from them. Diodorus maintained that, among the *Chaldeans*, there is greater cause for them to remain faithful to the original doctrines, because the study of astrology, divination and magic, what he terms "scientific" subjects, are taught to them from childhood, and being the pupils of their parents, they are more prone to trust their teachers. As well, the *Chaldeans*, who are relieved of all other service to the state, are not distracted in seeking a means of livelihood, and are therefore afforded the leisure time to concentrate fully on their studies.

On the contrary, Diodorus maintained, the Greeks learned such practices quite late in life, and their attention was diverted by a need to earn a living. He remarked:

> The result of this is that the barbarians, by sticking to the same things always, keep a firm hold on every detail, while the Greeks, on the other hand, aiming at the profit to be made out of the business, keep founding new schools and wrangling with each other over the most important matters of speculation, bring it about that their pupils hold conflicting views, and that their minds, vacillating throughout their lives and unable to believe anything at all with firm conviction, simply wander in confusion. It is at any rate true that, if a man were to examine carefully the most famous schools of the philosophers, he would find them differing from one another to the uttermost degree and maintaining opposite opinions regarding the most fundamental tenets.[251]

Thus, the earliest of the Pre-Socratics contended as to which of the four elements was the underlying substance of the universe. Anaximander of Miletus, who was sixty-four years old in 547 or 546 BC, and pupil of Thales, speculated that the sky contained separate spheres through which the planets traveled, a concept that would dominate astronomical thought until the seventeenth century. Thales had believed that the underlying substance of the universe was water, but Anaximander thought it to be something other, and that it was boundless, from which the four elements ensue. Like Anaximander, Anaximenes, who flourished in 545 BC, the third Milesian among those regarded as the first of the Greek philosophers, believed that the underlying matter is boundless, but consisting of air, which he regarded as a god. As it becomes denser, air becomes fire, water and earth.

Magian thought is again evident in Anaxagoras, who was born in Ionia around 500 BC, was the teacher of both the statesman Pericles and the playwright Euripedes, and the greatest influence on the philosopher Socrates. He had been summoned to trial for teaching astronomy and for being pro-Persian. He explained: "and Mind set in order all things, whatever kinds of things were to be, whatever were and all that are now and whatever will be, and also this rotation in which are now rotating the stars and the Sun and the moon, and the air and aither that are being separated off."[252] To Heraclitus, born in the Ionian city of Ephesus about 540 BC, in accordance with the teachings of the Magi, God was a fire endowed with intelligence. As with most, if not all, of the early philosophers, Heraclitus espoused a doctrine of pantheism, the belief that the entire universe is a single eternal living being. According to Heraclitus: "the cosmos, the same for all, none of the gods nor of humans has made, but it was always and is and shall be…"[253]

Nearly all Presocratic philosophers adhered to a dualistic philosophy of the universe, seeing the world as a struggle between opposites.[254] The Pythagoreans "…posited two principles,"[255] and to Anaximander, Justice regulates the interplay of physical opposites. To Empedocles all things consist of

fire, and he envisaged a dualistic universe, and of great cosmic cycles in which the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, are mixed together by Love and pulled apart by Strife:

> They [i.e., the four elements] dominate in turn as the cycle revolves, and they decrease into one another and grow in their turn, as destined. For there are just three things, and running through one another they come to be both humans and the tribes of beasts at one time coming together into a single cosmos by Love and at another each being borne apart by the hatred of Strife, until they grow together into one, the whole, and become subordinate.[256]

Empedocles discusses an account of a descent and return from the underworld paralleled by Lucian's mention of the practices of a Zoroastrian Magus at Babylon, who he, "…heard are able, through certain spells and rituals, to open the gates of Hades and take down safely whomever they want and then bring them back up again."[257] Empedocles was born about 515 BC, in Elea in southern Italy, a famous center of Greek philosophy, which owned its existence to the Persian takeover of Ionia in 546 BC. Several ancient writers, including Pliny, Philostratus and Apulaeus had made Empedocles a disciple of the Magi, and the first reference we have of him in surviving Greek literature, dating back to his own lifetime, is from the fifth century BC Xanthus of Lydia, which presented him in the context of a discussion of the Persian Magi.[258]

To Empedocles, there was no separation between science and magic. Rather, it was the pursuit of science that unfolded the powers of the universe to the sorcerer. Therefore, he wrote:

> And all the remedies that exist as defense against sufferings and old age:
> These you will learn, because for you alone will I make all these things come true.
> And you'll stop the force of the tireless winds that chase over the earth
> And destroy the fields with their gusts and blasts;
> But then again, if you so wish, you'll stir up winds as requital.
> Out of black rainstorm you'll create a timely drought
> For men, and out of a summer drought you'll create
> Three-nurturing floods that will stream through the ether.
> And you will fetch back from Hades the life-force of a man who has died.[259]

Though clearly derived from the magic of the Chaldeans and the Magi, modern scholars, committed to presenting Greece as the birthplace of rational thought, have downplayed the religious or "irrational" aspects of Greek philosophy, selecting instead to highlight only that which suits their purposes. E. R. Dodds, referring to the dilemma facing modern scholars in the case of Empedocles, remarked that, "scholars have been astonished that a man capable of the acute observation and constructive thought which appear in Empedocles' poem *On Nature* should also have written the *Purifications* and represented himself as a divine magician."[260]

Pythagoras

The great exponent of the mystical tradition in ancient Greek philosophy was Pythagoras, born in Samos about 570 BC. Although many have never heard of Pythagoras, except those familiar with the mathematical theorem given his name, he achieved a degree of fame in antiquity which rivaled that of Plato's. Conventionally, Pythagoras' place in the history of philosophy has been ranked as was outlined by Diogenes Laertius, who grouped the philosophers into two main categories, the Ionian and Italian, headed, respectively, by Anaximander and Pythagoras, representing the two major divisions within Greek philosophy, the scientific and the mystical.

Pythagoras, remarked Bertrand Russell, "is one of the most interesting and puzzling men in history. Not only are the traditions concerning him an almost inextricable mixture of truth and falsehood, but even in their barest and least disputable form they present us with a very curious psychology."[261] Pythagoras attributed to himself a semi-divine character, and appears to have said: "There are men and gods, and beings like Pythagoras." He was often thought to be the son of the god Apollo, and in some cases, to be able to communicate with animals, and to travel from place to place instantaneously. According to Iamblichus, the fourth century Neoplatonist:

> Many more admirable and divine particulars are likewise unanimously and uniformly related to the man, such as infallible predictions of earthquakes, rapid expulsions of pestilences, and

hurricanes, instantaneous cessations of hail, and tranquilizations of the waves of rivers and seas, in order that his disciples might the more easily pass over them.[262]

Though Pythagoras was born on the island of Samos, his father was a Phoenician from Tyre, brought to Samos for trade due to a famine in his country.[263] It was apparently following a suggestion by Thales that Pythagoras had traveled to Egypt, at which point, according to Apuleius in his *Apology*, he was captured by Cambyses during his invasion of the country, and taken back to Babylon along with other prisoners. In Babylon, maintains Porphyry, Pythagoras was taught by Zaratas, a disciple of Zoroaster, and initiated into the highest esoteric mysteries of the Zoroastrians.[264] Aristoxenus, friend and pupil of Aristotle, who came originally from Pythagorean circles, had also maintained that Pythagoras had been a student of Zaratas.[265] According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras traveled to Phoenicia, where "he conversed with the prophets who were descendants of *Moschus* (Moses) the physiologist, and with many others, as well as with the local hierophants.[266] Of his ideas, maintained Hermippus, a Greek writer who lived about 200 BC, "Pythagoras practiced and taught these in imitation of the beliefs of the Jews and the Thracians, which he had appropriated to himself."[267] Josephus also believed in Pythagoras' affinity for Jewish ideas: "Now it is plain that he did not only know our doctrines, but was in very great measure a follower and admirer of them… For it is very truly affirmed of this Pythagoras, that he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy."[268]

Around 530 BC, Pythagoras emigrated to Croton, a leading Greek colony in southern Italy, where he established the famous Pythagorean school of philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences, and preaching a monastic life. This brotherhood was divided into two classes of initiates, the first admitted only into the exoteric doctrines of the master, with whom they were not allowed to speak until after a period of five years' probation; the second consisting of the real initiates, to whom all the mysteries of the esoteric doctrines of Pythagoras were unfolded. This course of instruction, by means of images and symbols, began with geometrical science, and led up finally to speculations concerning the reincarnation of the soul and the nature of God.

The term *Philosopher* was a word first used by Pythagoras to mean a "lover of wisdom", or a "lover (or worshipper) of *Sophia*". Pythagoras espoused a gnostic philosophy of the attainment of wisdom, maintaining that it could not be achieved by ordinary means, but rather as direct union with the god, a tendency much like Orphics. Essentially, Pythagoras is regarded as a reformer Orphism, as Orphism was a reform of the religion of Dionysus. In fact, although the reputed author of Orphic literature was Onomakritos, according to Ion of Chios, a reliable source from the fifth century BC, Pythagoras had composed poems under the name of Orpheus, and Epigenes, who was a specialist on the subject, attributed four Orphic poems to Pythagoreans.[269]

According to a myth attributed to Onomacritus by Pausanias, Zeus incinerated the Titans after they had consumed Dionysus, and created humans from the ashes.[270] Therefore, according to the dualism of the Orphics, humans are composed of two natures, a corrupt Titan physical body, and a divine and immortal Dionysian soul. The *soma*, or body, is termed a *sema*, or tomb, because the soul is imprisoned in the Titanic body. The Orphics aimed at becoming "pure," partly by ceremonies of purification, partly by avoiding certain kinds of contamination. The most orthodox among them abstained from animal food, except on ritual occasions when they ate it sacramentally. The Orphics were an ascetic sect, wine to them was only a symbol. The intoxication that they sought was that of enthusiasm, of union with the god. They believed themselves in this way, to acquire mystic knowledge not available by ordinary means.[271]

According to F. M. Cornford, "whether or not we accept the hypothesis of direct influence from Persia on the Ionian Greeks in the sixth century, any student of Orphic and Pythagorean thought cannot fail to see that the similarities between it and Persian religion are so close as to warrant our regarding them as expressions of the same view of life, and using the one system to interpret the other."[272] From the stars above, the soul of man was believed to have fallen into the prison of his earthly tomb. This fall is ascribed to some original sin, which entailed an expulsion from purity and perfection, and which has to be expiated by life on earth and purgation through the Underworld.[273] The soul is destined to a cycle of reincarnations from which it can obtain release through ritual purging, accompanied by ascetic abstinence. Caught in the wheel of birth and re-birth, the soul passes from man, beast and plant. But the cycle, instead of going on forever, is limited within the *Great Year*, a period of ten thousand years, based on astronomical theories of Babylonian origin, of the length of time it takes for all the heavenly bodies, in their various revolutions, to come back to the same relative positions.

Pythagoras' Orphic doctrine of corrupt matter and its relation to an astrological conception of the universe, was related in an anonymous biography preserved in the writings of Photius, a Byzantine writer

of the ninth century, which, although little is known about its author, may preserve some parts of Aristotle's lost treatise *On the Pythagoreans*:

> Pythagoras taught that in heaven there are twelve orders, the first and outermost being the fixed sphere where, according to Aristotle, dwelt the highest God, and the intelligible deities, and where Plato located his ideas. Next are the seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Sun and Moon. Then comes the sphere of Fire, that of Air, Water, and last, Earth. In the fixed sphere dwells the First Cause, and whatever is nearest thereto is the best organized, and most excellent; while that which is furthest therefrom is the worst. Constant order is preserved as low as the Moon, while all things sublunary are disorderly.
>
> Evil, therefore, must necessarily exist in the neighborhood of the Earth, which has been arranged as the lowest, as a basis for the world, and as a receptacle for the lowest things. All superlunary things are governed in firm order, and Providentially by the decree of God, which they follow; while beneath the moon operate four causes: God, Fate, our election, and Fortune.[274]

Scholars have not been able to account for the provenance of the belief of reincarnation among the Greeks. Herodotus maintained that the belief was adopted from the Egyptians,[275] but no such doctrine is found among them. Some have thought to suggest a transmission from India, but it is improbable, as the belief in reincarnation emerged there quite late. Though reincarnation is not found in orthodox Zoroastrianism, it would have been an important tenet of the *Magussaeans*, for as Porphyry reported, the Magi divided themselves into three classes, "of which the uppermost and the most wise do not eat nor kill any living creature and persevere in the old abstinence from flesh," the second do not consume wild game, nor domestic animals, and even the third only of certain species, because all three classes believe in metempsychosis.[276]

Pythagoras is reputed to have said, "all is number", in the belief that numbers were the essence and principles of all things, to which he attributed a real and distinct existence. For him, they were the elements out of which the universe was constructed. The number one, or the Monad, was regarded by Pythagoras as the source of all numbers. The number two, or the Dyad, was imperfect, and the cause of increase and division. Three was called the number of the whole because it had a beginning, middle and end. Four, representing the square, is the symbol of perfection, and ten, or the sum of the first four numbers, known as the Tetraktys, comprehends all musical and mathematical proportions, and symbolizes the system of the world.

A geometric theorem named after Pythagoras states that, the square of the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle, is equal to the sum of the squares of the opposite sides. Otto Neugebauer discovered however, that the *Pythagorean Theorem* had been known and used in Babylonian mathematics a thousand years before Pythagoras. According to Porphyry, "as to his knowledge, it is said that he learned the mathematical sciences from the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Phoenicians; for of old the Egyptians excelled in geometry, the Phoenicians in numbers and proportions, and the Chaldeans in astronomical theorems, divine rites, and worship of the Gods; other secrets concerning the course of life he received and learned from the Magi."[277]

Pythagoras propounded a doctrine known as the *Music of the Spheres*, whereby the distances and speeds of the planets' orbits were thought to create a musical harmony that was inaudible to humans. The doctrine, which presupposed that the distances between the planetary spheres have the ratios of simple whole numbers, was originally Babylonian a theory.[278] Iamblichus explained that it was in Babylon that Pythagoras learned mathematics, music, and all other sciences.[279] According to Philo of Alexandria:

> The *Chaldeans* appear beyond all other men to have devoted themselves to the study of astronomy and of genealogies; adapting things on earth to things sublime, and also adapting things of heaven to things on earth, and like people who, availing themselves of the principles of music, exhibit a most perfect symphony as existing in the universe by the common union and sympathy of the parts for another, which through separated as to place, are not disunited in regard of kindred.[280]

The Pythagoreans, according to Iamblichus, "were to adore the rising Sun."[281] Pythagoras worshipped the Sun-god Apollo, considered the brother of Dionysus, or with whom he was often set in relation to.[282] In his *Inquiries into the Nature of the Divine*, Aristotle stated that Dionysus and Apollo are the same god.[283] An Orphic story explains that after the outrage of the Titans against Dionysus, it was Apollo who, at the command of Zeus, collected the remains of the mutilated child and took them to his own shrine. It is also said that Dionysus sent Maenads to tear Orpheus to pieces for having abandoned him in

favor of the Sun god alone, which he prays to from the mountain top at sunrise, and whom he calls Apollo.[284] Essentially, the worship of the Sun, which was described by Tacitus as a Syrian custom, was equated by the Babylonians with Bel, and by the Persians with Mithras. Among the Greeks, Zeus was the father of both Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, who, like Mithras and Anahita, were identified respectively as the Sun and the Moon. Both Mithras and Apollo were identified with the Sun-god Helios, son of Hyperion in Greek myth, the Titan of light, and father of the Sun, the moon, and the dawn.

Plato

Plato, born in 428-7 BC, is considered one of the three great philosophers of Ancient Greece, along with Socrates and Aristotle. About 387 BC, Plato founded the Academy as an institute for the pursuit of philosophical and scientific knowledge, over which he presided for the rest of his life. The Academy's interests were not limited to philosophy alone, but extended to the sciences, and there is evidence that Plato encouraged research in such disciplines as mathematics and rhetoric. Though today Plato's fame has overshadowed that of Pythagoras, beginning in the fourth century BC, Plato's inclination toward Pythagoreanism led to a tendency, evident already in the work of his pupils, to interpret his concepts as originally Pythagorean.

As Bertrand Russell outlines, "from Pythagoras, Orphic elements entered into the philosophy of Plato, and from Plato into most later philosophy that was in any degree religious."[285] Plato may have become acquainted with the teachings of Pythagoras through Archytas, who was visited by Plato in 388 BC, being among the few to remain in Italy after a revolt was led by the Italian people against the Pythagoreans in 500 BC. According to an anonymous biography preserved by Photius, "Plato is said to have learned his speculative and physical doctrines from the Italian Pythagoreans, his ethics from Socrates, and his logic from Zeno, Parmenides and the Eleatics. But all these teachings descended from Pythagoras."[286]

According to Momigliano, "it was Plato who made Persian wisdom thoroughly fashionable, though the exact place of Plato in the story is ambiguous and paradoxical."[287] In antiquity, the reputation of Plato's purported connection with the Magi was widespread. Plato's only actual mention of Zoroaster though, is found in the *Alcibiades*, which may or may not have been his work, in which Socrates states that the Babylonians, who educate their children in "the Magian lore of Zoroaster, son of Ahura Mazda," are superior to those in Athens [288] Yet, according to Diogenes Laertius, Plato's teacher Socrates met a magus who made a number of predictions, including that of Socrates' death. Plato himself is said to have spent several years in Egypt, after which he had intended to visit the Magi, but was prevented due to the wars with Persia.[289] Nevertheless, in a manuscript found in the ruins of Herculaneum, destroyed along with Pompeii in the eruption of Vesuvius, Plato is said to have met with a *Chaldean* shortly before his death. Finally, the Epicurean Colotes mocked at Plato's purported borrowings from Zoroaster, which indicates that this connection was a well established opinion around 280-250 BC.[290]

A fragment of Aristotle's *Peri philosophias* associated Plato's teaching with the dualism of the Magi.[291] Although Plato's simple dualism, of a world of "Forms" or "Ideas", which represent the archetypes of objects in the inferior material world, may not betray a Zoroastrian origin, in the *Laws* he suggests the necessity of two souls to govern the universe: "that which does good, and that which has the opposite capacity", an idea which Prof. Werner Jaeger regards as ultimately Zoroastrian.[292] Plato's philosophy further incorporates an Orphic dualism, evident in a number of his dialogues, including the *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and *Cratylus*. He defines a divine part of the human soul that is directly infused by the divinity, and a mortal part. The mortal part is assigned to man by inferior divinities, charged to do so by the supreme divinity. The mortal or spoiled part of man is attributed to, in Plato's *Laws*, to the "titanic nature" within him, an element of violence and impiety inherited from the primordial rebellious Titans.

The man considered responsible for introducing Magian tenets to Plato was one of his friends, an Ionian mathematician and astronomer, Eudoxus of Cnidus, who seems to have acted as head of the Academy during Plato's absence. Eudoxus is said to have traveled to Babylon and Egypt, studying at Heliopolis, where he learned the priestly wisom and astronomy. According to Pliny, Eudoxus "wished magic to be recognized as the most noble and useful of the schools of philosophy."[293] In the opinion of Jaeger:

> Our material unfortunately does not permit us to evaluate to its full extent the tremendous influences exercised upon the Platonists by this man. They are connected in part with the Academy's admiration for Chaldean and "Syrian" astronomy, from whose empirical acquaintance with the heavens it had obtained its reckoning of the times of revolution and its knowledge of the seven planets… In part, again, these tendencies are connected with the appeal of the religious

> dualism of the Parsees, which seemed to lend support to the dualistic metaphysics of Plato's old age. The bad world-soul that opposes the good one in the *Laws* is a tribute to Zarathustra, to whom Plato was attracted because of the mathematical phase that his idea-theory finally assumed, and because of the intensified dualism involved therein. From that time onward the Academy was keenly interested in Zarathustra and the teaching of the Magi.[294]

In the *Laws*, Plato proposed that the citizens be divided into twelve tribes, each to be named for one of the twelve gods, and that the focus of the state religion be a joint cult of Apollo and the Sun-god Helios.[295] Not only are the stars described as "the gods in heaven," the Sun and moon as "great gods," but Plato insists that prayer and sacrifice should be rendered to them by all. E. R. Dodds, who is skeptical of the extent of Magian influence on Plato's thought, is willing to concede that:

> …the proposals of the *Laws* do seem to give the heavenly bodies a religious importance which they lacked in ordinary Greek cult, though there may have been partial precedents in Pythagorean thought and usage. And in the *Epinomis*, which I am inclined to regard either as Plato's own work or as put together by his *Nachlass* (unpublished works), we meet with something that is certainly Oriental, and is frankly presented as such, the proposal for public worship of the planets.[296]

The *Epinomis*, either a work of Plato, or his pupil Philip of Opus, is a discussion of the preeminence of star worship. As for the myths of the popular gods, Zeus and Hera and the rest, man must take their account as reliable, but the best and greatest of the gods, are the visible gods, the stars and the seven planets, which are due proper reverence and worship. That science which makes men most wise is astronomy, for it proffers man with knowledge of numbers. Without the knowledge of number, man cannot attain to a knowledge of virtue. Therefore, the study of the stars and planets is at the heart of philosophy. Those who study astronomy are the wisest and most happy, and it is they who are to be the guardians of the ideal state. These doctrines have their origin among the *Chaldeans*, who, as Philo of Alexandria explains, "especially cultivated astronomy and ascribed everything to the movements of the stars, assumed that cosmic phenomena are regulated by forces contained in numbers and mathematical proportions."[297]

Though Plato may not have written the *Epinomis*, we should expect that he at least would not have denied the origin of his new-found religion, which the author acknowledges as belonging originally to the Egyptians and the Syrians, "from when the knowledge has reached to all countries, including our own, after having been tested by thousands of years and time without end." Though, the work apologizes:

> And let us note that whatever Greeks acquire from foreigners is finally turned by them into something nobler; and moreover the same thing must be borne in mind regarding our present statements – that although it is hard to discover everything of this kind beyond dispute, there is hope, both strong and noble, that a really nobler and juster respect than is in the combined repute and worship came from foreigners will be paid to all these gods by the Greeks, who have the benefit of their various education, their prophecies from Delphi, and the whole system of worship under their laws.[298]

The great exposition of Magian thought in the Greek language is the *Timaeus*, where Plato treated the common Magian themes of Time, triads, pantheism, astrology, and the four elements. Plato posits the existence of three distinct realities, as in the ancient pagan trinity, which he identifies with a father, a mother, and their offspring. These are: the model or archetype of creation; the space or receptacle in which creation was placed; and creation itself. Each is a living being. From different types of triangles, God formed the four elements. These are poured into the receptacle, from which God creates two bands, in the form of the letter *Chi* (X), becoming the circle of the fixed stars and that of the planets. The universe is suffused with a spirit, the agent of cosmic sympathy, called the World-Soul. The universe, the stars and planets, are all living gods, and the reflection of the more perfect model. The revolutions of the astral bodies are regulated according to the Perfect Year, known as the Platonic Great Year, and derived from the Babylonian Great Year, when the Sun, the Moon, the planets and the fixed stars will have returned to their point of departure. The souls of men originate among the stars. Those that live well after death return to their native star, but those that live otherwise are reincarnated as women, or for those who persist in wrongdoing, return into the bodies of animals.

The purpose of life, according to the *Timaeus*, is to study the heavens. Ultimately, according to Plato, man must learn the laws of the revolutions of the spheres, that he may, guided by the revolutions that

are found within himself, tame the irrational feelings that are due to his soul's contamination with matter, or the four elements:

> There is of course only one way to look after anything and that is to give it its proper food and motions. And the motions are akin to the divine in us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. We should each therefore attend to these motions and by learning about the harmonious circuits of the universe repair the damage done at birth to the circuits in our head, and so restore understanding and what is understood to their original likeness to each other. When that is done we shall have achieved the goal set us by the gods, the life that is best for this present time and for all time to come.[299]

While the Mysteries of Mithras, as practiced during the Roman period, may have borrowed from the philosophy of Plato in the development of their rites and symbols, considering Plato's reputed connection to the Magi, it is interesting to explore the existing parallels. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

> The myth was interpreted by the Roman Mithraists in terms of Platonic philosophy. The sacrifice took place in a cave, an image of the world, as in the simile of the cave in Plato's *Republic.* Mithra himself was equated with the creator (demiurge) of the *Timaeus*: he was called "demiurge and father of all things," like the Platonic demiurge. The four elements, the mixing bowl, the creation of Time, and the attack of the wicked animals upon the newborn creature are well-known features of the *Timaeus*. The Mithraic doctrine of the soul is intimately linked with the myth of creation and with Platonic philosophy. As in the *Timaeus,* the soul of man came down from heaven. It crossed the seven spheres of the planets, taking on their vices (*e.g.,* those of Mars and of Venus) and was finally caught within the body. The task of man is to liberate his divine part (the soul) from the shackles of the body and to reascend through the seven spheres to the eternal, unchanging realm of the fixed stars. This ascension to the sky was prefigured by Mithra himself, when he left the earth in the chariot of the sun god.[300]

The Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, on the authority of Eubulous, a historian of Mithraic ritual of the first century AD, none of whose works survive, explained the significance of conducting rituals in caves:

> For according to Eubulous, Zoroaster first of all among the neighboring mountains of Persia, consecrated a natural cave, florid and watered with fountains, in honor of Mithras, the maker and father of all, because [for him] the grotto was an image of the cosmos that Mithras created, and the things arranged symmetrically within were symbols of the cosmic elements and regions. Then, after Zoroaster, the habit of performing the mysteries in caves and grottos, either natural or artificial, prevailed also with others.[301]

In the *Parable of the Cave* of the *Republic*, Plato makes use of the image of a cave, in which shadows of objects are cast by a fire onto a wall. Men enchained in the cave cannot turn their heads to see the fire or the objects, and know only their projected images. The allegory is designed to explain the prison of illusion within which humans are generally trapped. If fortunate to be released from his shackles, that is, initiated, the philosopher may recognize that what he had thought was real were mere shadows of props projected by a false light. He may then begin the ascent upward to the entrance of the cave, to gaze at the true light, or true knowledge, symbolized by the Sun, as the Mithraists, who seek union with Mithras, the Sun.

Recalling the ascent of Mithras to heaven in a chariot, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato offers an analogy of the soul, comparing it to a chariot drawn by two horses, a myth which held particular importance for later philosophers and mystics, interpreted along with *Timaeus*, as an account of the celestial ascent of the soul and its subsequent fall. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato describes the soul's ascent to the border of heaven, where Zeus, holding the reins of a winged chariot, leads the way in heaven, ordering all and taking care of all. Presumably referring to the twelve constellations, Zeus is followed by "the array of gods and demigods, marshaled in eleven bands; Hestia alone abides at home in the house of heaven; of the rest they who are reckoned among the princely twelve march in their appointed order." Plato then puts forth the image of the soul, imparted with wings under the influence of divine love, which expresses and experiences this love according to the astrological nature of the god, or constellation, it followed in heaven. Thus, for example,

the attendants of Ares, the god of war and the planet Mars, "if they fancy that they have been at all wronged, are ready to kill and put an end to themselves and their beloved."

Most common to the tales or motifs borrowed from the Magi were those dealing with visits to the Underworld. Similarly, Plato concluded his *Republic* with a vision of the afterlife recounted by Er, the son of Armenius, who died in a war but returned to life to act as a messenger from the other world. He described a heaven and hell where souls are either rewarded or punished, and a cosmic vision of the universe, controlled by the *Spindle of Necessity* and her daughters, the three Fates, where the Sirens' song echoed the harmony of the seven spheres. Colotes, a philosopher of the third century BC, accused Plato of plagiarism, maintaining that he substituted Er's name for that of Zoroaster. The myth's similarity with Chaldean ideas is confirmed in that in it Plato presents a list of colours corresponding to each of the planets which conforms precisely with the correspondence offered in Babylonian texts.[302] Clement of Alexandria and Proclus quote from a work entitled *On Nature*, attributed to Zoroaster in which he is equated with Er.[303] Quoting the opening of the work, Clement mentions:

> Zoroaster, then, writes: "These things I wrote, I Zoroaster, the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth: having died in battle, and been in Hades, I learned them of the gods." This Zoroaster, Plato says, having been placed on the funeral pyre, rose again to life in twelve days. He alludes perchance to the resurrection, or perchance to the fact that the path for souls to ascension lies through the twelve signs of the zodiac; and he himself says, that the descending pathway to birth is the same. In the same way we are to understand the twelve labours of Hercules, after which the soul obtains release from this entire world.[304]

Finally, in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, Plato set out the myth of Atlantis. Plato records the conversations Socrates had with Timaeus, Hermocrates and Critias. Responding to a request from Socrates for a historical example of an ideal state, Critias describes an account of Atlantis, inherited from his grandfather, written by the Athenian poet and law-giver Solon who live between 690 and 558 BC. This story was narrated to him while visiting Egypt, by a priest who interpreted for him the hieroglyphic script on a pillar in the *Temple of Neith*. He was told:

> There once existed beyond the strait you call the Pillars of Hercules an island, larger than Asia and Libya together, from where it was still possible at that time to sail to another island and from there to the continent beyond them which enclosed the sea named after it… on this island of Atlantis there existed a great and estimable kingdom, which had acquired dominion of the entire island, as well as of the other island part of the continent itself.[305]

The priest told Solon that Athena had founded a great Athenian empire 9000 years earlier which was attacked by the Atlanteans who, not satisfied with ruling their own islands, tried to conquer the whole Mediterranean. They established their rule over Egypt and Tuscany but were defeated by the Athenians. Then a great earthquake and flood devastated Athens, drowning the Athenian army, and causing Atlantis to sink below the Atlantic Ocean.

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Chapter 8: Enoch

The Hellenistic Age

The only time in which Greece rose to the status nearing that of an empire, was the short lived period of approximately a decade, lasting from the beginning of the conquests of Alexander the Great to his death. Alexander, King of Macedonia, first established control over the Greek mainland before setting out against Persia. In 334 BC, he stormed into Asia Minor with an army of 35,000 men, marched along the Mediterranean coast, then turned north and captured the wife and mother of the Persian emperor Darius III. He marched south to Phoenicia, destroying the city of Tyre in Phoenicia, he then moved into Egypt and built the city of Alexandria in its stead. Alexander turned once again against the Persians, and following a decisive battle, Darius III fled and was later killed by one of his generals, leaving Alexander as king of Asia.

Having captured Babylon, which he had planned to make his imperial capital, Alexander acquired full control of the enormous Persian Empire. Alexander then pressed on, turned northward to Afghanistan, Bactria, Sogdiana, and the Hindu Kush mountains, and finally reached the plains of India in 326 BC. In 323 BC, on the eve of an expedition to conquer Arabia, Alexander fell ill and died at the age of thirty-three. After his death, his generals broke up the empire, establishing realms of their own. Antigonus governed Macedonia and Greece. Phoenicia, fell to Ptolemy Sotor who established himself as satrap in Egypt and eventually adopted the title of king in 304 BC, inaugurating the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt for three hundred years. Seleucus became satrap of Babylonia, founding the Seleucid empire, that at its greatest extent stretched from Thrace in Europe to the border of India.

Though Greek rule had effectively collapsed, Alexander's conquests resulted in the general spread of Greek, or Hellenic culture, an era referred to as the Hellenistic Age. The epoch essentially marked the end of ancient times. No longer would civilization be pursued in isolated pockets. The adoption of Greek as a common language throughout the conquered territories was a unifying element, fostering a cosmopolitanism that contributed in a new epoch of cultural exchange. This confluence of numerous cultures led to a heightened degree of scientific and intellectual interest through the sharing of ideas, and the beginning of an age imbued with a dynamism that continues to characterize the way we interact and communicate today.

Greek colonists, merchants, soldiers, and government officials, settled in most of the Middle Eastern cities, and founded many Greek cities like Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt. Renewed contact with the civilizations of the East led to a fascination for the "wisdom" of the Orient. Already, among the direct pupils of Plato, Philip of Opus and Hermodorus wrote about astrological theology and mysticism. Heraclides of Pontus wrote a work by the title of *Zoroaster*, intended to express his disagreement with Plato on points of natural philosophy, and Eudemus of Rhodes was familiar with the importance of Time in the doctrines of the Magi.

Magian thought was also evidenced in Plato's most famous pupil, the teacher of Alexander, Aristotle. In the year 367 BC, at the age of seventeen, Aristotle had become a member of the Academy while Eudoxus of Cnidus was its head. After Plato's death, the leadership of the Academy passed to his nephew Speusippus, then to Xenocrates, and though Aristotle remained a formal member for the rest of his life, he left Athens and the Academy after the appointment of Speusippus. He spent the next twelve years in various cities in Asia Minor and Macedonia, returning to Athens in 335 BC, where he began teaching not in the Academy but in the Lyceum, where he was joined by Theophrastus and others, known as the Peripatetics.

Though Aristotle probably did not write the work *On the Magi* attributed to him, he was convinced that the planets and the fixed stars influenced life on earth. While he abandoned Plato's mathematical mysticism and rejected his doctrine of Forms, he believed that the highest realities were eternal, immaterial, changeless self-sufficient intellects, which caused the ordered movement of the universe. He believed it

was the desire to give expression to their transcendent perfection that the heavenly spheres rotated, to which, at its highest, man's intellect was connected. In his work *On Philosophy*, he dealt with the harmony of the world conceived as a great temple, the Great Year, the periodical return of the same ideas in human thought, and seemed to regard the foundation of Plato's Academy as representing a rebirth of the spirit of Zoroaster, for he mentions six thousand years as intervening between Zoroaster and Plato.[306]

Greek interest in Oriental teachings during the Alexandrian period resulted in the production of a curious set of pseudoepigraphical works, written in Greek, and attributed to Zoroaster, his disciple Osthanes, and to his patron Hystaspes. However, as Bidez and Cumont have sought to demonstrate, in *The Hellenized Magi*, these documents held nothing of orthodox Zoroastrian content, but reflected the magical and astrological notions of the *Magussaeans*. Momigliano described that, these "new-fangled speculations gained prestige from the Academic and Peripatetic admiration for the wisdom of Zoroaster and, no doubt, mixed Platonic ideas with those alleged to be Oriental."[307] Though no such works survive, ancient authors make mention of a number of them. Celsus maintained that "Zoroaster and Pythagoras formulated their doctrines in books" which were conserved until his time, while the scholiast of the *Alcibiades* affirms that Zoroaster left philosophical writings. The Clementine *Recognitions* assert that books of magic under the title of Zoroaster circulated in large number. Proclus, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century AD, knew of four books on *Nature* by Zoroaster dedicated to King Cyrus. Hermippus, who lived about 200 BC, wrote a book on the Magi and believed in the Oriental origins of Greek thought. According to Pliny, he "commented upon two million verses left by Zoroaster, besides completing indexes to his several works."[308] Pliny also knew of a work ascribed to Osthanes, and Philo of Byblos refers to a work attributed to him titled *Octateuch*. Christian writers Justin and Lactantius quoted a prophecy under the name of Hystaspes, the protector and first convert of Zoroaster, sometimes identified as the father of Darius.

Greeks also found their way to Babylon to study from the *Chaldeans* themselves. After submitting to Greek rule under the Seleucids, the Persian empire eventually reemerged under the Parthians, a semi-nomadic people who, in the second century BC, arose from an area southeast of the Caspian Sea. Ruled by the Arsacids, who claimed descent from the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II, the Parthians declared their independence from the Seleucid Empire, and pursued their great ambition to recover the western provinces of the Persian Empire. Through the conquests of Mithradates I and Artabanus II in the second century BC, the Parthians established control over Iran and expanded westward into Mesopotamia. Although the Parthians were constantly threatened by Rome, and though one of their capitals, Ctsephon, was later occupied by them, the Parthians were successful in at least limiting the Roman expansion eastward.

Babylon, under the Seleucids and the Parthians, was a Hellenized city. Greeks, such as Epigenes of Byzantium, Apollonius of Myndus, Artemidorus of Parium, declared themselves the disciples of the *Chaldeans*, and boasted of being instructed in their schools. Strabo, speaking of the schools of astronomers called *Chaldean*, which existed in various towns of Mesopotamia, added: "Mathematicians frequently mention several of them, as Kidenas, Nabourianos, and Soudines."[309] Kidinnu or Kidenas, of the fourth century BC, known to the Greeks as Cidenas, was head of the astronomical school in Sippar, and may have discovered the phenomenon of the precession of the equinoxes. Soudines, about the year 238 BC, was a commentator on Aratus, and Pliny cites him as the author of a work on the properties of stones. He practiced forms of divination such as hepatoscopy, and continued to be an authority often quoted by the later *Mathematici*, a Latin word that became a synonym for Magi. The term *Chaldean* was also applied as a title of honour to Greeks who had studied in the Babylonian academies, though it finally referred to all charlatans who professed to foretell the future according to the stars.

However, the man scholars believe to have been most likely responsible for bringing astrology to Greece was Berossus, who established himself at the school of astrology on the island of Cos about 280 BC. His lost *Babyloniaca*, dedicated to the Seleucid ruler Antiochus I, survives only in fragments, quotes by later Greek writers, who were later cited by Eusebius and Josephus. In his first book he describes the land of Babylonia, to which the half-man/half-fish Oannes and other divinities came out of the sea to teach men the rudiments of civilization. The second and third books contained the chronology and history of Babylonia and Assyria, beginning with the "ten kings before the Flood," then the story of the Flood itself, and finally the story of the Assyrians, the last Babylonian kingdom, and the Persians. Using the Babylonian units time, he maintained that between the first descent of kings and the Flood was a period of 120 *Sar* or 432,000 years, from Creation to the final conflagration will be 600 *Sar*, or one *Sar* times one *Ner* or 2,160,000 years, and from Alexander to the final conflagration, 12,000 year.[310]

The Hellenistic Age was also the beginning of the first identifiable contacts between Greeks and Jews. Palestine had come under the Alexandrian empire and from 322 to 200 BC, and was ruled by the Ptolemies and then the Seleucids. Both Syria and Palestine were areas of intense Greek settlement and

rapid Hellenization of their existing inhabitants. The coast was soon completely Hellenized. Greek was widely adopted by the educated and by the leaders of society as the language of government, philosophy, literature, and sophisticated communication. Clearchus of Soli, a disciple of Aristotle, maintained that his master had this to say about a Jew:

> This man then was by birth a Jew, and came from Celesyria; these Jews are derived from the Indian philosophers; they are named by the Indians *Calami*, and by the Syrians *Judaei*, and took their name from the country they inhabit, which is called Judea; but for the name of their city it is a very awkward one, for they call it Jerusalem. Now this man, when he was hospitably treated by a great many, came down from the upper country to the places near the sea, and became a Grecian, not only in his language, but in his soul also; insomuch that when we ourselves happened to be in Asia about the same places whither he came, he conversed with us and with all other philosophical persons, and made a trial of our skill in philosophy; and as he had lived with many learned men, he communicated to us more information than he received from us.[311]

The Hellenistic period saw the compilation of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and the composition of numerous legends among the Jews, attempting to attribute the origin of the sciences and wisdom of antiquity to themselves. Leading writers in this vein were Aristobulus, Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Cleodemus, but their works are known to us only from the stray quotations by early Church Fathers Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria. Aristobulus, quoted by Bishop Eusebius, maintained that Plato had come into contact with Jewish thought:

> It is evident that Plato imitated our legislation and that he had investigated thoroughly each of the elements in it. For it had been translated by others before Demetrius Phalereus, before the conquests of Alexander and the Persians. The parts concerning the exodus of the Hebrews, our fellow countrymen, out of Egypt, the fame of all things that happened to them, the conquest of the land, and the detailed account of the entire legislation (were translated). So it is very clear that the philosopher mentioned above took many things (from it). For he was very learned, as was Pythagoras, who transferred many of our doctrines and integrated them into his own beliefs.[312]

Artapanus, third century BC Jewish philosopher, declared of Moses that, "as a grown man he was called Musaeus by the Greeks. This Musaeus was the teacher of Orpheus."[313] Aristobulus, a third century BC Jewish philosopher, claimed that Orpheus was a follower of Moses, and quoted the following from an Orphic poem: "I will sing for those for whom it is lawful, but you uninitiate, close your doors, charged under the laws of the Righteous one, for the Divine has legislated for all alike. But you, son of the light-bearing moon, *Musaeus* (Moses), listen, for I proclaim the Truth…"[314] Elsewhere, Jews claimed that Abraham had taught astrology to the king of Egypt, and that his and Keturah's sons had aided Heracles against the giant Antaeus. To the Egyptians, says Josephus, Abraham "communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for, before Abram came into Egypt, they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the *Chaldeans* into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also."[315] It was asserted that Zoroaster was Jewish, and that Abraham had taught him astrology. Otherwise, Zoroaster was identified with other Biblical figures, sometimes with Seth, also considered the founder of astrology, and with Ezekiel.

Stoicism

While Greek philosophies and Greek sciences became universal throughout the Middle East, many teachers were not themselves Greek, and much of the philosophy and science was not Greek in origin or inspiration. Greek philosophy at this time was divided into fairly definite schools, of which the most important were the Cynics, Sceptics, Epicureans and the Stoics. Of these, the most influential was that of the Stoics, which takes its name from the place where its founder, Zeno, would lecture, the *Stoa Poikile*, or Painted Colonnade. Zeno of Citium, principal Phoenician city in Cyprus, and the son of a Phoenician merchant, was born in 336 BC.

As with so many ancient philosophers, very little has survived of Zeno's own writing, though Diogenes Laertius provides a very long summary of his ideas and those of the other Stoics. The Stoics adopted a pantheistic philosophy, believing that all reality is animated by a rational principle that was at the same time both the law of the universe and of the human soul, calling it either *Logos*, Zeus, or even God. The popular gods are different forms of this force, described allegorically in myths. Like the Magi, they

equated it with fire. Essentially, the Stoics appropriated their pantheistic and fatalistic view of the universe from the *Chaldeans*, of whom Philo of Alexandria mentioned:

> These men, then, imagined that this world which we behold was the only world in the existing universe, and was either God himself, or else that it contained within itself God, that is, the soul of the universe. Then, having erected fate and necessity into gods, they filled human life with excessive impiety, teaching men that with the exception of those things which are apparent there is no other cause whatever of anything, but that it is the periodical revolutions of the sun, and moon, and other stars, which distribute good and evil to all existing beings.[316]

Pelemon, then head of the Platonic Academy, is to have said to Zeno: "you slip in, Zeno, by the garden door – I'm quite aware of it – you filch my doctrines and give them a Phoenician make-up."[317] According to Bertrand Russell, the Stoics were less Greek than any other school of philosophy, and was probably the result of "*Chaldean*" influences.[318] The philosophers that succeeded Zeno were all of Oriental origin. Cleanthes, born in 331 BC, came from Assus of the Troad in Asia Minor, and Chrysippus, born in 280 BC, came from Soli, a city in Cyprus. The leading representatives of the Stoic school, Diogenes of Babylon, Posidonius of Apamea, Antipater of Tyre, were all Syrians.[319] A. H. Armstrong commented that, "The Stoics accepted with enthusiasm the horrible Eastern superstition of astrology, along with all forms of divination, as perfectly corresponding to their view of the cosmos."[320] Roberts, in the *Penguin History of the World*, exemplifying the bias of modern scholars, "with the Hellenistic age another influence is felt, that of the pervasive irrationality, of the pressure of fortune and fate. Men sought reassurance in new creeds and faiths. The popularity of astrology was one symptom."[321]

The Stoics, who encouraged all forms of divination, were promoters of astrology. All events were thought to be causally related to one another, and therefore anything that happens must in theory be a sign of some future effect. All coming events are theoretically predictable, and astrology and divination were appealed to as evidence for the validity of the causal continuum. Unless signs of what will happen are available in natural phenomena, the Stoic aim to live in accordance with natural law would be considered to have no bearing. The Stoics argued that the gods could not be interested in human welfare unless they gave signs of future events, which can be interpreted by humans. If the forecasts of diviners and astrologers turn out to be false, the fault lies with the forecasters and not with the dreams, meteorological phenomena, flights of birds, entrails, and other evidence from which the future can be foretold.[322]

The Stoics believed that the divine "fire," or God, generated the universe, and at the end of the Great Year, took it back into itself through a great conflagration. Eventually the Fire would die down to Air, and finally to a Watery condition in which the seed for the next cycle of would be. This cycle repeats itself eternally. The idea of recurring conflagrations was attributed by Nigidius Figulus, prominent Roman philosopher and astrologer of the first century BC, to the Magi,[323] and the notion that the world would be destroyed by fire is found in the *Bundahishn*.[324] It may have been from the *Magussaeans* that Heraclitus learned the same doctrine. Also, in the *Republic*, Plato made use of the Babylonian *Sar*, where it appears as the numerical equivalent of the period between global catastrophes outlined in the *Timaeus*, when the stars and seven planets are aligned with each other exactly as they were at the Creation. This, believes Nicholas Campion, "is the clearest evidence of his connections with Babylonian historical cosmology."[325]

As Anthony Long has indicated, the Stoics were probably influenced by the doctrine of Berossus, who, interpreting the "prophecies of Bel", attributed these disasters to the movement of the planets, and claimed to be able to determine the date of the Conflagration and the Great Flood.[326] He maintained that the earth will burn whenever all the planets converge in Cancer, and are arranged in such a manner as to be aligned in a straight line, and that there will be a further Great Flood, when the planets converge in the same manner in Capricorn, since the change to summer occurs under the sign of Cancer, and the change to winter under Capricorn.[327]

Dio Chrysostom recorded a hymn sung by the Magi of Asia Minor on account of its resemblance to the Stoic theory of conflagrations. In the hymn, which Dio claimed was "sung by Zoroaster and the children of the Magi who learned it from him,"[328]Zeus is portrayed as the perfect and original driver of the most perfect chariot, drawn by four horses representing the four elements. The hymn ends at the moment that the Divine Fire, having absorbed all the substance of the universe, prepared for a new creation. In the *Timaeus*, Plato explained the conflagration of the world by fire in connection with the myth of the chariot of Phaethon. According to the Greek version of the myth, Helios reluctantly grants permission to his son Phaethon to drive the chariot of the Sun across the sky. Being unable to guide the Sun's chariot, Phaethon scorches a part of the earth. According to Plato, when Solon inquired of it among the Egyptians, they explained to him that the myth actually refers to the fact that "there is at long intervals a variation in the

course of the heavenly bodies and a consequent widespread destruction by fire of things on the earth."[329] On a relief in a Mithaic temple at Dieburg, Mithras too was identified with Phaethon.

The Essenes

Modern scholars seem to find great difficulty acknowledging the substantial contribution of the Jews to much of Hellenistic culture. However, as Cumont remarked, a great number of Jewish colonies were scattered everywhere on the Mediterranean, and "the Jews, who were acquainted with the arcana of the Irano-Chaldean doctrines and proceedings, made some of the recipes known wherever the dispersion brought them."[330] Important to the diffusion of Babylonian tenets to the rest of the world was the Jewish community of Alexandria. Founded when Alexander assigned them a quarter of the city of their own, it became the most important Jewish community of the Diaspora. The Roman geographer Strabo, who said that the Jews were a power throughout the inhabited world, indicated that there were a million of them in Egypt alone. They formed a majority of the population in two out of five quarters of the city, occupied a quarter of their own, and enjoyed the highest status of any non-Greeks and possessed considerable autonomy.

A mystical Jewish sect existed at Alexandria, known as the Therapeutae, who were related to the more famous group, the Essenes. The Essenes were one of three main philosophical Jewish sects, the other two being the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Essenes were a section of the Jewish Priesthood that broke away because they considered the priesthood corrupt and compromising. The dissidents were called *bene zadok*. In modern terminology, they are called Zadokites or, as the Greeks called them, Essenes. Their name derives from the Aramaic *assaya*, which means doctor or healer. Eventually, the Essenes voiced their opposition by marching out of Jerusalem, in order to establish their own "pure" community in the nearby Wilderness of Qumran. They were clustered into monastic communities, which generally excluded women. Property was held in common. All details of daily life were regulated by officials, and they were divided into four grades and according to their level of preparation.

The Essenes were regarded by their contemporaries as the heirs of *Chaldean* and Egyptian astronomy, and the medicine of the ancient Persians, and Philo of Alexandria compared them with the Persian Magi and the Indian Yogi.[331] Though their doctrines were clearly derived from foreign elements, the Essenes were not considered heretical. Josephus praises them while admitting that their doctrines were adopted from the Pythagoreans and the Stoics. The Essenes believed in reincarnation and practiced vegetarianism, and in common with most Hellenistic mystical schools, adhered to an Orphic dualism, whereby the soul is thought to be imprisoned in the body, and ascends to heaven at death.[332] Josephus maintained:

> For their doctrine is this: "that bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continues for ever; and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward.[333]

Ultimately, Philo maintained that the related sect of the Therapeutae, above all, desire to "see", or to have a vision of, the true Being. In their night rituals, "like the bacchic and corybantic ecstatics," notes Philo, "they continue in their possession until they see the object of their desire." Philo describes their ceremonies:

> Thus they continue till dawn, drunk with this drunkenness in which there is no shame, then not with heavy heads or drowsy eyes but more alert and wakeful than when they see the Sun rising they stretch their hands up to heaven and pray for bright days and knowledge of the truth and the power of keen-sighted thinking. And after the prayers they depart each to his private sanctuary once more to ply the trade and till the field of their wonted philosophy.[334]

Today, more is known since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which scholars are generally agreed belonged originally the Essene community. The Scrolls, hidden during the Jewish Revolt against the Romans between AD 66 and 70, and never retrieved, were discovered by pure chance in 1947. When a Bedouin shepherd boy, Mohammed ed-Di'b, was searching for a lost goat in the cliff-hill caves of Qumran, near Jericho, he found a number of earthenware jars. Professional archeologists were called in, and excavations were undertaken, not only at Qumran but at nearby Murabba'at and Mird in the Wilderness of Judea. Many more jars contained some 500 Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts, among them Old Testament

writings and numerous documents of community record, some of their traditions dating back to about 250 BC.

Among the more important manuscript texts, the *Copper Scroll* lists an inventory and gives the locations for the treasures of Jerusalem and Kedron Valley cemetery. The *War Scroll* contains a full account of military tactics and strategy. The *Manual of Discipline* details law and legal practice along with customary ritual, and describes the importance of a designated *Council of Twelve* to preserve the faith of the land. The *Habakkuk Pesher* gives a commentary on the contemporary personalities and important developments of the era. Also in the collection is a complete draft of *Isaiah* which, at more than nine meters in length, is the longest scroll.

Parallels between Zoroastrian texts and those of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* were first demonstrated by Karl Kuhn. He was followed by other scholars who have accepted the theses of a Zoroastrian or Zurvanite background of Essene dualism.[335] Jeffrey Burton Russell summarizes the state of scholarship on the subject:

> Nonetheless a consensus exists among historians that Iranian influence can be seen in the Apocalyptic and Qumran literature if not in the Old Testament, and certain similarities are indeed remarkable. In the Apocalyptic and Qumran documents on the one hand and in Zoroastrianism on the other, the Devil is the head of a host of evil spirits who, like the good spirits, are arranged in orders and ranks. Both the Hebrew and the Persian Devil are associated with the serpent. The chief functions of the Hebrew Devil, to seduce, accuse, and destroy, are also those of Ahriman. The cosmos is divided into two forces light and darkness, which are locked in deadly combat. The children of light war against the children of darkness. Toward the end of the world, the Prince of Darkness seems for a while to increase his power, and there is a dark and miserable age, but that age is followed by the triumph of the Prince of Light and the perpetual imprisonment (if not destruction) of the Prince of Darkness.[336]

The Essenes were taught in the "instruction concerning the Two Spirits."[337] A fundamental belief of theirs was that the universe contained the two cardinal spirits of Light, representing truth and righteousness, and Darkness, depicting perversion and evil. The balance of one against the other in the cosmos was settled by the movement of the stars, and people were apportioned with degrees of each spirit, as defined by the planetary circumstance of their birth. The cosmic battle between Light and Darkness was thus perpetuated within humankind, and between one person and another: some contained proportionately more light, others more dark.

According to Scholem, a leading scholar of Kabbalah, it was apocalyptic literature, examples of which were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, that contained the earliest evidence among the Jews of the development of the Kabbalah. He stated:

> Chronologically speaking, it is in apocalyptic literature that we find the first appearance of ideas of a specifically mystical character, reserved for the elect. Scholars do not agree on whether the origins of this literature are to be found among the Pharisees and their disciples or among the Essenes, and it is quite possible that apocalyptic tendencies appeared in both. It is known from Josephus that the Essenes possessed literature which was both magical and angelological in content. His silence concerning their apocalyptic ideas can be understood as his desire to conceal this aspect of contemporary Judaism from his readers. The discovery of the literary remains of Qumran sect show that such ideas found a haven among them.[338]

The first apocalyptic writings were produced in Palestine in the third and second centuries BC. These were usually pseudonymous, that is, written by authors who attributed their work to ancient personages. *Apokalypsis*, in Greek meaning "unveiling", "uncovering", apocalypses claimed to unveil secrets previously unknown, often about the destiny of this world and the things to come. They differed from biblical prophecy where prophets are usually spoken to directly. With an apocalysptist, it most usually occurred through an intermediary, an angel. Commonly, an apocalyptist would receive a revelation in visual form as a dream or ecstatic vision, and sometimes he felt himself transported to some distant region of the earth or to heaven. Of the apocalypses found among the Essenes were the *Book of Jubilees*, attributed to Moses, and the *Book of Enoch*. The *Book of Jubilees* elaborates on the story of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, presented as a secret revelation originally imparted by the angels to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Essenes possessed the original *Book of Enoch*, both in Hebrew and Aramaic, a work obviously inspired by Babylonian cosmology and legend.[339] The *Book of Enoch* was a pseudepigraphical work, named after Enoch, who, according to the Bible, was the seventh Patriarch after Adam and lived

prior to the Flood. Enoch did not die, but instead, at age 365, "walked with God," meaning that he was taken to heaven directly. However, there were two Enochs, one was a descendant of Seth, and the other a descendant of Cain. After beginning with an account of the Fallen Angels, the Book of Enoch offers a description of the miraculous journey of Enoch in the company of the angel Uriel, from whom he learns the secrets of creation, the Sun, the Moon, and the signs of the Zodiac. The book teaches the existence of the Son of Man, the Elect One, the Messiah, who "from the beginning existed in secret,"[340] and whose "name was invoked in the presence of the Lord of spirits, before the sun and the signs were created."[341]

According to Josephus, the Essenes possessed magical literature, and as Scholem remarked, the discovery of the literary remains of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm that such ideas were common among them. Josephus says, "they are wonderfully devoted to the work of ancient writers, choosing mostly books that can help the soul and body: from them in their anxiety to cure disease they learn all about medicinal roots and the properties of stones."[342] The Essenes were recognized for their ability to foretell the future, and there are several "horoscopes" present among the Dead Sea library. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars had no clear evidence that astrological tracts were written by Jews at the time of Jesus, and thought such trends emerged only in the Middle Ages. The two great disciplines of astrology, one that studies the opportune moment to undertake an action, and genethlialogy, which predicts the destiny of individuals on the basis of their horoscopes, are both represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first, is found in the document known as *Brontologion*, predicting portents if thunder is heard on certain days, with the moon passing through given signs of the Zodiac. The second concerns, astrological physiognomy, whereby a persons character could be determined by facial features, based on the belief that the temper, physical features and fate of an individual depend on the configuration of the heavens at the time of the person's birth.[343]

In common with all schools of Hellenistic mysticism, the Essenes and Therapeutae worshipped God in the form of the Sun, which they greeted at dawn, a practice referred to by Tacitus as a known Syrian custom.[344] Ezekiel described the same practice as an abomination: "twenty-five men with their backs to the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the Sun."[345] Of the Essenes, Josephus said, being deliberately vague, that "they show devotion to *the Deity* in a way all their own. Before the Sun rises they do not utter a word on secular affairs, but offer to it some traditional prayers as if beseeching it to appear."[346] The rising or setting of the Sun is also the time to greet the appearance of the planet Venus, which belongs to the constellation of Taurus, explained by Kabbalistic literature as the astrological sign of the Master of Darkness.[347] It may be for this reason that Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, advised his followers not to pray at sunrise, as did the Jews and Christians, because "the Sun rises between the horns of Satan,"[348] or of Taurus, for in antiquity, Venus was also known as Lucifer.

Merkabah Mysticism

With the Roman invasions of Palestine in the first and second centuries AD, the Essene community was eventually devastated, along with much of the Jewish community of Palestine. Under Roman occupation, though rebellion was sporadic, disturbances were frequent. The Roman procurator Florus, had allowed the Greek population of the city of *Caesarea Maritima* to massacre the Jews, and Greeks repeated the assault in other towns of Palestine. In turn, the Jews responded by slaughtering Gentiles in Samaria, Galilee, and elsewhere. Soon, Florus had lost control of the situation. However, in 67 AD, the future emperor Vespasian and his son Titus, arrived with a force of about 60,000 soldiers, and by the end of the year, Galilee was captured. Judea was reduced in three campaigns which ended with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Jerusalem was destroyed and became the permanent garrison town of a Roman legion. The Temple itself was sacked and the sacred contents of its inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, were carried back to Rome. As depicted on Titus' triumphal arch, these treasures included the immense gold seven-branched candelabrum, so sacred to Judaism, and possibly even the Ark of the Covenant. In 132 AD, when the emperor Hadrian decided to build a Roman colony, *Aelia Capitolina*, on the site of Jerusalem, the announcement, as well as his ban on circumcision, provoked a serious revolt. Led by Bar Kokhba, meaning Son of the Star, and whom some of his followers regarded as the Messiah, the Jewish uprising was ruthlessly repressed by Julius Severus, and according to certain accounts, almost a thousand villages were destroyed, and more than half a million people were killed. The province of Judea was renamed *Syria Palaestina*, and no Jew was anymore allowed to set foot in Jerusalem or the surrounding district.

For centuries, Jerusalem and the Temple had represented the focal point of Judaism. With Jerusalem off limits and the Temple destroyed, the Jews adapted to their dispersion by evolving an approach to their faith that could function independently of a temporal center. This new phase of Judaism,

focusing on the synagogue and the rabbis, is known as Rabbinical Judaism, the principal founder of which was Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph, who lived from 40 to 135 AD. The subject of numerous popular legends, Akiva established an academy where the leading sages of the following generation were his disciples. He introduced a new method of interpreting Jewish Oral Law, known as *Halakha*, purported to preserve and represent an oral tradition stemming from the revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai, or evolved on the basis of it.

It eventually became apparent that oral traditions concerning Jewish law, passed from generation to generation, required organization. The work of gathering opinions and interpretations, conducted by scholars known as *tanaim*, was begun by Rabbi Akiva in the first and second century AD. Therefore, Akiva laid the foundation of what was to become the *Mishna*, and he has even been called "the father of the *Mishna*." Intensive study of the *Mishna* by subsequent scholars called *amoraim*, in Palestine and Babylonia, resulted in two collections of interpretations and annotations of it called the *Gemara*. When the work was completed several centuries later, the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*, taken together, were called the *Talmud*, produced in two versions by two groups of Jewish scholars, one in Palestine and the other in Babylonia.

The *Talmud*, like the later Kabbalah, which also claimed to represent the preservation of the Oral Law, was composed of certain elements of Babylonian mystical teachings. As Gershom Scholem was forced to concede, "this kind of development can also be seen in those circles whose historical influence was crucial and decisive to the future of Judaism, e.g., among the Pharisees, the *tannaim* and *amoraim*, that is to say, at the very heart of established rabbinic Judaism."[349] In *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, Norman Cohn remarked that:

> Some Zoroastrian notions were widely accepted amongst Jews. Thus the Pharisees, though they belonged to mainstream Judaism, felt no difficulty in "interpreting" the scriptures in the light of new doctrines which they believed to be truly Jewish, but which were really of Zoroastrian origin. And some of the early rabbis in turn adopted those doctrines.[350]

Two stories in the tractate *Shabbat* of the *Babylonian Talmud* illustrate the varied attitudes in Rabbinic circles toward astrology. In the first, Rabbi Judah the Prince claims that it is the day of the week which determines one's personality, Rabbi Hanina Bar Hama says that it is the constellation, not of the day but of the hour, that determines influence. In the second, Rabbi Hanina Bar Hama, from Palestine, and Rabbi Johanan Bar Nappaha, from Mesopotamia, debate whether astrology affected the Jews. In tractate *Shabbat* (156a), God explains to Abraham that he was not due to have any more children, because his ruling planet was Jupiter which rises in the west, but that He would move the planet to the east, that he might have a child. In the *Pesikta Rabbah* and in the *Midrash Tanhuma*, we find homiletical reasons for the creation of the signs of the Zodiac. In chapter 4 of the *Pesikta*, we learn that after God created the universe of light, in the month whose sign is Aries, the Master of Darkness, asked "And after light, what will you create?" God answered "Darkness," the sign of the month of Taurus.

Astrological subjects were also treated in the *Book of Enoch*, the *Treatise of Shem*, and the *Letter of Rehoboam*. In addition, a great many magical documents are known from the Cairo Geniza, including amulets, incantations, and short handbooks covering a vast range of spells for every imaginable purpose. In addition, a number of longer magical handbooks have been passed down, including *Sepher HaRazim*, "The Book of Mysteries", *Harba deMosheh*, the "Sword of Moses", and *Havdala deR. Akiva*, "The Havdalah of Rabbi Akiva." A Hebrew document called *Baraita deMazzalot*, "The Baraita of the Constellations", is a comprehensive astrological treatise along the lines of Hellenistic astrology but with a Jewish theological slant. A number of texts purport to be able to evaluate personal character and destiny on the basis of palm reading and observation of facial appearance and other bodily traits. Some of these also draw on astrology.

Connected with these are the early mystical texts of Merkabah mysticism, which Scholem has determined to represent the beginnings of Kabbalah. The purpose of Merkabah mysticism, or Chariot Mysticism, is union with the highest god, interpreted as the vision of the *One Who sits on the Throne*, "a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above," as it was described in the first chapter of the *Book of Ezekiel*, traditionally entitled *ma'aseh merkabah*. While Merkabah texts were not edited until later centuries, there is no doubt that large sections originated in Talmudic times, and that the central ideas, as well as many details, go back as far as the first and second centuries AD. *Merkabah* was already a favorite subject of discussion and interpretation among the Pharisees, and appears in the literature of the Essenes. Merkabah literature is found in the hymn-fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the angels praise "the image of the Throne of the Chariot," and is reflected in the last chapter of the *Book of Enoch*, the beginning of a trend in describing the world of the *Throne* and the visionary ascent to it.

Merkabah involved an ecstatic contemplation of the Merkabah, as an ascent to the heavens, namely "descent to the Merkabah", through entering *pardes*, or Paradise. In texts of the third century onward, known as *Hekhaloth*, we find detailed descriptions of the world of the chariot, of the ecstatic ascent to that world, and of the techniques used to accomplish this ascent. The texts describe the seven *Hekhaloth*, or Heavenly Halls, guarded by gate-keepers, which are hostile to the ascending soul. The mystic's quest, and the passage through the first six palaces were described in great detail, with all the technical and magical means to assist the soul and save it from impending dangers. Deceptive visions confront the ascending spirit and angels of destruction try to hinder its success. At the gates of all the palaces, it must show the doorkeepers "the seals," which are the secret *Names of God*, or pictures imbued with a magical power.

The ascent culminates in a vision of the throne and the mystical figure of the Godhead on the Chariot, as the "likeness as the appearance of a man." There, the mystic receives a revelation of the "measurement of the body," in Hebrew the *Shiur Komah*, in other words, an anthropomorphic description of the divinity, appearing as the Primordial Man. These teachings appear in several passages of Merkabah texts, enumerating the measurements of the parts of the head, as well as some of the limbs, and their "secret names" in their various letter combinations. Clear reference to the doctrine is found in the *Slavonic Book of Enoch*: "I have seen the measure of the height of the Lord, without dimension and without shape, which has not end."[351]

The Primordial Man, also known as the Adam Kadmon, is the first man God created. He is not the earthly Adam, but the original archetype of the later created physical Adam. Therefore, he is the macrocosm, whose characteristics are reflected in man, the microcosm. He was made in the image of God, and it is not this original Adam that fell, but the later human Adam. The doctrine of the Primordial Man, was known to the Zoroastrians as Gayomart, or as Anthropos to the *Chaldeans*, who, according to the Christian Father Hippolytus, "say that this Adam is the man whom alone earth brought forth. And that he lay inanimate, unmoved, (and) still as a statue; being an image of him who is above, who is celebrated as the man Adam, having been begotten by many powers, concerning whom individually is an enlarged discussion."[352]

Shi'ur Komah was based on the descriptions of the beloved in the *Song of Solomon*. The *Song of Songs*, whose author is unknown, belongs to the post-exilic period, though the poems that it preserves date from about the tenth century BC. The book is a collection of love poems spoken alternately by a man and a woman, and a number of which describe the beauty and excellence of the beloved. To Rabbi Akiva, as for later Jews, the Song was regarded as an allegory, interpreted as a dialogue of love between the Shekinah, the nation of the Israelites, with whom God has made His sacred covenant, and God.

The beloved, or the *Shekinah*, in the *Song* is described as bride, daughter and sister. Originally, she is Venus, the goddess of love and war of Antiquity:

> Who is this arising like the dawn
> fair as the Moon,
> resplendent as the Sun,
> terrible as an army with banners?[353]

In Jewish synagogues, the *Shekinah* is welcomed as the "Bride of God" at sunset on Friday evening prayers to celebrate the beginning of the Sabbath. She is Divine Wisdom, or the Sophia, made to speak in the first person in the Old Testament, using the phrase "I am" and defines her activities as God's agent. In *Proverbs* 8, she says: "The Lord created me the beginning of his works, before all else that he made, long ago. Alone, I was fashioned in times long past, at the beginning, long before earth itself."[354] Identifying Wisdom with God's verbal commands to create light in *Genesis* 1:3, in *Ecclesiasticus*, she says: "I am the word which was spoken by the Most High;… Before time began he created me, and I shall remain fore ever…"[355] In the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* (7:25) she appears as "a breath of power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty… For she is an effulgence from everlasting light and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, And an image of His goodness."[356]

In addition to expositions based on the Merkabah, other esoteric traditions began to crystalize around the first chapter of *Genesis*, which was called *Maaseh Bereshit*. This form of speculation was given unique form in a book entitled the *Sefer Yetzirah*, or *Book of Creation*, written by an unknown author, probably in Palestine between 200 and 600 AD, which, in *Above the Zodiac: Astrology in Jewish Thought*, Rabbi Matiyahu Glazerson refers to the as "the source for the spiritual meaning of the astrological constellations."[357] The work mingled Jewish, Pythagorean and Hellenistic ideas. Gershom Scholem further explains:

> The author undoubtedly wished to bring his own views, clearly influenced by Greek sources, into harmony with the talmudic disciplines relating to the doctrine of the Creation and of the Merkabah, and it is in the course of this enterprise that we encounter for the first time speculative reinterpretations of conceptions from the Merkabah.[358]

The *Sepher Yetzirah* is a monologue on the part of Abraham, in which, through the contemplation of all that is around him, he ultimately arrives at the conclusion of the oneness of God. The work explains that God engraved His name and formed and created the universe in thirty-two paths of wisdom. Ten of these are *Divine Emanations*, the *Sephiroths*, related to the "Spheres" of Neoplatonism. Corresponding to different qualities of God, such as wisdom, knowledge, truth and righteousness, termed *middot*, the Sephiroth are linked with the mysterious "creatures" that support the Throne in the chariot of Ezekiel's vision.[359] The remaining twenty-two paths are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The twenty-two Hebrew letters are subsequently divided into three letters called the three Mothers, the seven double letters, and the twelve simple letters. According to *Sepher Yetzirah*:

> Three are the fathers and their offspring, seven are the planets and their hosts, and twelve are the diagonal boundaries [signs of the Zodiac]. And the proof of this, true witnesses, are the Universe, the Year, and the Soul. He decreed Twelve, Seven and Three and He appointed them in the *Teli* [the Dragon], the Cycle, and the Heart. The three are fire, water, and breath: fire above, water below, and breath, the decree that decides between them. A sign of this is that fire upholds water. *Mem* hums, *Shin* hisses, and *Alef* is the decree that decides between them. The *Teli* in the Universe is like a king on his throne, the cycle in the Year is like a king in the province, the Heart in the Soul is like a king in battle.[360]

The dragon *Teli* is the sacred serpent, who, according to the *Zohar*, corresponding to the evil serpent, watches over humanity and restrains the power of the impure serpent.[361] Teli is the Leviathan of the Bible, the constellation Draco, which governs the world and personifies the axis, or phallic pillar, symbolized by the tree of knowledge in the *Yetzirah*, around which it coils. Joseph Gikatila, a Kabbalist of the Middle Ages, alluding to the words in *Job* 23, explained: "know and believe that the serpent…was indispensable to the order of the world...His head reached high above the earth and his tail reached down even into Sheol and Abadon, for in all worlds there was a place for him. And that is the mystery of Teli known in the *Sepher Yetzira*. It is he who moves the spheres and turns them from the east to the West and from the North to the South. That is the mystery of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That is why God forbade Adam to touch the tree of knowledge, so long as the good and the evil are linked together…"[362]

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Chapter 9: Mithras

Hellenistic Syncretism

In 264 BC the Romans removed the Carthaginians from Sicily, prompting retaliation from Hannibal, who marched his troops across the Alps. Roman armies eventually destroyed Carthage, forming the new province of Roman North Africa. Further Campaigns brought Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor under their control. In 63BC, the year Caesar was elected, the Romans marched into Palestine and seized Jerusalem. After visiting Egypt, where he had an affair with Cleopatra, Caesar campaigned in Asia Minor and North Africa. On his return to Rome in 44 BC, he was murdered, with Octavian and Anthony defeating the conspirators. Anthony, though, deserted his wife Octavia to join Cleopatra, and Octavian declared war on Egypt and was victorious, following which Anthony and Cleopatra committed suicide.

Following the effective collapse of Greek rule, Athens' claim to prominence passed on to other cities, mainly Rome and Alexandria. Though Rome dominated politically, it was Alexandria in Egypt, with its great public buildings, a distinguished university, and a library of more than 700,000 scrolls, that was the greatest city of the Hellenistic Age. The famous Library of Alexandria was part of the *Mouseion*, or Museum, founded in the third century BC by Ptolemy I, as a community of learned men organized as a religious cult and headed by a priest of the Muses. The Greek geographer and historian, Strabo, mentioned that it was a large complex of buildings and gardens with richly decorated lecture and banquet halls linked by porticos, or colonnaded walks. The magnificent library not only contained the works of the Greeks and Egyptians, but included Jewish, Babylonian, Zoroastrian, and many other writings, as well as manuscripts from as far away as India. Buddhist monks were part of a special envoy sent by the emperor Asoka to Alexandria, and Hermippus was active in Alexandria about 200 BC, and it is assumed that the two million lines of Zoroaster, on which he commented, were held there.

Due to the numerous cultures that congregated in the city, whether Egyptian, Greek, Persian, Indian or Jewish, new esoteric creeds were formulated based on older traditions. These various schools held in common a type of mysticism, which some scholars term *Gnosticism*, or mysticism, referring to the pursuit of direct union with God, tinged with elements of Oriental magic and astrology. This trend, referred to by scholars as *syncretism*, represented the hybridization of numerous cultural elements, the most famous examples of which were Hermeticism, loosely based on Egyptian mythology; Neoplatonism a derivation of Platonic philosophy; and Gnosticism, a heresy of Christianity. As Garth Fowden describes:

> Greco-Roman orientalism and the occidentalism of the Eastern elites both reflected a sense of intellectual incompleteness, and a consequent readiness to adjust cultural boundaries. Greeks were attracted by the numinousness of oriental religions and the antiquity of oriental cultures, Orientals by the clear-headedness of Greek philosophy. What resulted was an unevenly and idiosyncratically homogenized culture, in which it was not uncommon for the same texts to circulate indifferently under the names of both Greek and oriental sages.[363]

However, to refer to this trends as "syncretism", that is, to say that each school merely borrowed from the other, without definite pattern, is to fail to recognize that, except for minor differences, all shared the same essential underlying ideology. The great historians of antiquity, however, recognized their origin as *Chaldean* or Magian. Pliny summed up his perception of the nature and origin of these practices, when he wrote:

> Magic is one of the few things which it is important to discuss at some length, were it only because, being the most delusive of all the arts, it has everywhere and at all times been most powerfully credited. Nor need it surprise us that it has obtained so vast an influence, for it has united in itself the three arts which have wielded the most powerful sway over the spirit of man.

> Springing in the first instance from Medicine, a fact which no one can doubt, and under cover of a solicitude for our health, it has glided into the mind, and taken the form of another medicine, more holy and more profound. In the second place, bearing the most seductive and flattering promises, it has enlisted the motive of Religion, the subject on which, even at this day, mankind is most in the dark. To crown all it has recourse to the art of Astrology; and every man is eager to know the future and convinced that this knowledge is most certainly to be obtained from the heavens. Thus, holding the minds of men enchained in this triple bond, it has extended its sway over many nations, and the King of Kings obey it in the East.
>
> In the East, doubtless, it was invented, in Persia and by Zoroaster. All the authorities agree in this… I have noticed that in ancient times, and indeed almost always, one finds men seeking in this science the climax of literary glory, at least Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato crossed the seas, exiles, in truth, rather than travelers, to instruct themselves in this. Returning to their native land, they vaunted the claims of magic and maintained its secret doctrine.[364]

Unfortunately, their obstinate commitment to one pattern of thought or another has prevented scholars from recognizing the true underlying influences of the Alexandrian schools. In the words of the great German scholar, Richard Reitzenstein, "it is hardly to be avoided that according to inclination and the direction his studies have taken, one writer claims too much as Egyptian, another too much as Babylonian, a third all as Persian, and that the individual worker contracts a kind of colour-blindness, which makes him insensitive to important distinctions."[365] Typically, scholars have preferred not to acknowledge the implications of the abundant evidence of Magian influence, which is often found to be incompatible with their preconceptions: in one case, the preeminence of Greek thought, and its supposed rationality, in another, the sanctity of Western Christianity, or otherwise still, the antiquity of the Ancient Wisdom.

Ultimately, while many scholars may be to some extent knowledgeable of the tenets of orthodox Zoroastrianism, they are either entirely unfamiliar with, or have failed to recognize, the importance of exploring the teachings of the Magi. In *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, M.L. West explained:

> It is understandable that it should be the most scholarly scholars, so to speak, who show the least interest in non-Greek material. They are used to operating with texts whose language and background they have learned to understand at the cost of much effort. In a foreign field they feel incompetent, and especially where fools have rushed in, they fear to tread. It is easiest to put up the barriers, and to persuade themselves that what they know and can manage is all they need to know and manage. Besides, scepticism is always respectable in a scholar; it is thought better to disbelieve something that may turn out to be true than to believe something that may turn out to be false.[366]

Upon closer examination of the fundamental beliefs of the major Hellenistic schools, it becomes apparent that, though they appear outwardly eclectic, their underlying theology was essentially the same. Found in all schools of Hellenistic mysticism and philosophy is a divine hierarchy headed by a trinity, composed of father, daughter, and a son-god who is thought to descend and return annually from the Underworld. A Stoic elaboration of Magian astrology posits a pantheistic cosmogony, whereby the universe, created from the four elements, was a single unified being, within which every part is interconnected. The first man, the archetypal or primordial man, is the cosmos, or the Macrocosm, created as an image of the human man, the Microcosm, in whom he is in every way reflected. An Orphic dualism explained man's earthly body as a tomb created by the false god, into which the divine spark of the soul was placed by the true god. The soul is subject to a series of reincarnations depending on its actions in this life.

Interpreted according to the philosophy of the *Timaeus*, the soul was thought to have originated among the stars, but to have been subjected to a Fall into corrupt matter, during which it acquired the qualities of the seven planets. To escape the confines of Fate, a mystic was submitted to a ritual of rebirth, followed by a symbolic ascent through the spheres, or planetary gods, to remove the taints of the planets. However, the planets are guarded by fierce opponents, and the mystic must learn the appropriate names of these guardians, or Names of Power, in order to pass from sphere to sphere, and to re-ascend towards ultimate union with the true god.

Hellenistic Mysticism

The greatest of the sciences studied at Alexandria was astronomy, then synonymous with astrology. While begun in Babylon, in coming centuries, it was at Alexandria that the pseudo-science of astrology was furthered. The pervasiveness of study of astrology at Alexandria was such that it came to be regarded mistakenly as having originated there, leading to fantastic claims as to the antiquity of the Ancient Wisdom of the Egyptians. As early as Aristotle, there is a reference to Egyptian astronomy as equal to that of Babylon, or rather, according to Diodorus of Sicily, it was from the Egyptians that the Babylonians had acquired this knowledge.[367]

An important astrological text, written in Greek in the second century BC, was addressed to a King Nechepso by the priest Petosiris, which is surely pseudepigraphical.[368] The names were probably chosen because Petosiris represented the prestige of the Egyptian priesthood, and Nechespo, that of the Egyptian monarchy. Petosiris is usually identified as the priest whose tomb, dated no later than 341 BC, was the object of a cult, and Nechespo was the name of a king listed among the rulers of the twenty-sixth dynasty, ruling between 663 to 522 BC. From this source, among others, the contents of *Enuma Anu Enlil* were included in the second book of the *Work on Astrology*, commonly called the *Tetrabiblos*, or "Four Books", of Ptolemy.

However, the knowledge attributed to Egypt's ancient past belongs more properly to the Magian cult introduced since the Persian occupation. Momigliano remarked, "I could not indicate a dividing line between what was thought to be Egyptian and what was thought to be Chaldean, even in the muddled form in which Chaldean and Zoroastrian became synonymous."[369]As Cumont indicated:

> The first Greco-Egyptian astrologers did not invent the discipline they claimed to teach the Hellenic world. They used Egyptian sources going up to the Persian period which were themselves at least partially derived from ancient Chaldean documents. Traces of this primitive substratum still survive in our much later texts, erratic blocks transported on to more recent soil. When we find mentions there of "the king of kings" or "satraps" we are no longer in Egypt but in the ancient Orient… We limit ourselves to noting that in all appearances, the priests who were the authors of Egyptian astrology stayed relatively faithful to the ancient Oriental tradition.[370]

Alexandrian astrologers mathematized the concept of a correspondence between the Macrocosm, or universe, and the Microcosm, or man, interpreted in terms the earth as the center of the planetary system. Following the Babylonians, they conceived of the apparent orbital circle of the Sun, the ecliptic, as being divided into twelve equal parts, or Zodiac signs, each consisting of thirty degrees. They further regarded each of the twelve signs as the house of a planet, whose influences were related to the traits of its ruling god of Greek mythology. Furthermore, each Zodiac sign had a special relation with a part of the human body. The twelve signs are further divided into four groups of three, each of which is governed by the four elements. Numerous pairs of opposites, male and female, day and night, hot and cold, plus others, based on the speculations of the followers of Pythagoras, were connected with consecutive pairs of signs. Finally, a wide variety of substances in the material world and attributes of human character were associated with the different signs, providing the basis for the astrologers' predictions.

Alexandrian mysticism was essentially theurgic. An initiate sought divine union by either ascending to the realm of the transcendent god, or in calling the god down, that he might appear to him in an epiphany. Ultimately, the mystic is confronted with a vision of the true god, who reveals to him the secrets by which he may manipulate the world, in other words, magic. Of particular importance in understanding these practices, are the famous magical papyri, in which we see the use of the terms *magic*, *magical*, and the practitioners calling themselves, *magicians*. The papyri were first discovered in Egypt, and brought to Europe by Johann d'Anastasy, the Swedish vice-consul in Cairo from 1828 to 1859. This collection contained recipes and formulas for all types of magic, including love magic, exorcism and curses. Although their date is relatively late, dating from the third and fourth centuries AD, they reflect much earlier ideas.

Arthur Darby Nock thought that, though they may have picked up Persian features, the magical papyri were Greco-Egyptian in character. Edwin Goodenough though saw the magical papyri as connected to heretical Judaism, combined with a number of other influences typical of and late Hellenistic syncretism, pointing out that one God alone is worshipped, while the other gods are reduced to the level of angels or demons. Franz Cumont noted:

> A great number of Jewish colonies were scattered everywhere on the Mediterranean, and these were long animated with such an ardent spirit of proselytism that they were bound to impose some

> of their conceptions on the pagans that surrounded them. The magical texts which are almost the only original literary documents of paganism we possess, clearly reveal this mixture of Israelitic theology with that of other peoples. In them we frequently find names like Iao (Yahweh), Sabaoth, or the names of angels side by side with those of Egyptian or Greek divinities.[371]

In the magical papyri, the gods of the Underworld are employed as the most important means of fulfilling various magical operations, towards the acquisition of love, wealth, health, fame, knowledge of the future, and control over others. Hecate, identical with Persephone, Selene, Artemis, and the ancient Babylonian goddess Ereshkigal, is one of the gods most often invoked in the papyri. Through the influence of Osiris and Isis, gods like Hermes, Aphrodite, and even the Jewish god Iao, or Jehovah, become gods of the Underworld. The Greek god most often invoked is the sun-god Apollo Helios. Mithras is mentioned a few times, in each case with Helios or with Zeus-Helios-Sarapis. Other astral deities such as Selene, the Moon, the constellation of the Bear, are featured, as well as abstract deities who personify Nature, Time, Destiny, and the All, or Aeon. Though, the god most often invoked is Iao.[372] Also invoked are the Jewish patriarchs, as well as such figures as Psammetichos, Democritus and Osthanes.

Lucian, the Roman satirist of the second century AD, offers an account that helps to shed some light on the nature of the eclecticism of the magical papyri. He recounts the story of Menippus who accomplishes a descent to the Underworld through the aid of a Magi from Babylon, who, after following a strict vegetarian diet for several days, and offering an animal sacrifice, "shouted as loudly as he could, invoking the spirits, one and all, at the top of his lungs; also the Tormentors, the Furies, Hecate, queen of the night, and eerie Persephoneia. With these names he intermingled a number of foreign-sounding, meaningless words of many syllables."[373]

Pythagorean numerology and music theory were important components of Hellenistic magic. Each letter of the Greek alphabet was taken to represent a number, through which the sorcerer tabulated the numerical sum of certain words, such as the name of gods, to determine their properties or hidden significance. To the Hellenistic magicians, humanity and the gods, earth and heaven, microcosm, and macrocosm, were linked by musical harmony and reflected the same harmonious proportions. The powers of the cosmos could therefore be invoked by placing oneself in tune with them. Ultimately, to the Hellenistic magician, the properties of the planets are reflected in man. Therefore, by harnessing the purported powers of the planets, the magus can bring about effects in the human realm. To each planetary dominion angels and demons were assigned and grouped with their respective metals, jewels, plants, numbers, words, scents or sounds. An action involving the specific object, like a metal or a plant, provoked a sympathetic reaction among the spiritual beings related to it. By assembling the right objects and performing the appropriate ritual, a sorcerer would be able to compel a spirit to realize his wishes.

Ammianus Marcellinus, Roman historian of the fourth century AD, described the circulation of occult ideas at Alexandria: "Here, first, far earlier than in any other country, men arrived at the various cradles (if I may say so) of different religions. Here they still carefully preserve the elements of sacred rites as handed down in their secret volumes." He adds, "…yet even now there is much learning in the same city; for teachers of various sects flourish, and many kinds of secret knowledge are explained by geometrical science. Nor is music dead among them, nor harmony. Any by a few, observations of the motion of the world and of the stars are still cultivated; while of learned arithmiticians the number is considerable; and besides them there are many skilled in divination."[374] Finally, though the great library survived a fire set in Alexandria in 47 BC by the Roman emperor Caesar, whose army supported Cleopatra in a civil war against her brother, it was destroyed in 272 AD in a civil war under the Roman emperor Aurelian.

The Ancient Mysteries

Practitioners of magic and astrology were often members of secret societies known as Mystery cults, that gained wide popularity throughout the Roman empire. Following the fertility practices of ancient times, initiation ceremonies common to the mysteries were dying god rituals, mimicking the death and resurrection of the god of fertility. In some ceremonies, candidates were buried or shut up in a sarcophagus. They were even symbolically deprived of their entrails and mummified, an animal's belly with entrails was prepared for the ceremony. Alternatively, the candidates were symbolically drowned or decapitated. In imitation of the Orphic myth of Dionysus Zagreus, a rite was held in which the heart of a victim, supposedly of a human child, was roasted and distributed among the participants to be eaten. It was believed that a rite of baptism, a part of the initiation ceremony, whether by sprinkling holy water or full immersion, would wash away all the candidate's sins. In the Dionysus and Isis mysteries, the ritual of death and rebirth was followed by a *sacred marriage*, a ritual copulation between priest and priestess.

Though our knowledge of the mysteries is limited by the fact that their rites were secret, some light is shed on the magical aspects of mystery rites in the Greek magical papyri. Hymn words from a Mithraic temple in Rome are known, and certain poems related to the Isis mysteries exist. Only fragments are preserved of the *Chaldean Oracles*, a theosophical text attributed to Zoroaster, and composed by Julianus the *Chaldean*, in the second century AD. Among other works were the treatises known collectively as the *Hermetica*, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. Narratives of the miracles performed by the gods were preserved in many temple libraries, and examples of these have been found on papyrus and stone. Important is a text in which the Egyptian goddess Isis reveals herself. The last part of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius is an Isis text, and narrates in detail the initiation into the Egyptian mysteries. Plutarch wrote *On Isis and Osiris*, which gave an interpretation of the Mysteries of Isis. The astrological theology of the mysteries may be detected from Christian polemics, and the Neoplatonists, in such works as the *Dream of Scipio*, its commentary by Macrobius, and Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*.

Though the mysteries celebrated the deities of various foreign nations, and differed somewhat in their rituals and theology, all shared certain fundamental similarities, which, according to Goodenough, "reflect a *lingua franca* that had been taken into most of the religions of the day, for the same symbols were used in association with Dionysus, Mithras, Osiris, the Etruscan gods, Sabazius, Attis, and a host of others…" Essentially, philosophers of the Roman period tended to regard these names as merely representing different aspects of the same Sun-god. Thus, according to the *Dionysiaca* of the poet Nonnus of Panopolis, who lived at the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth century AD: "Herakles star-adorned, king of fire, ruler of the universe, thou sun, who with thy far-flung rays art the guardian of mortal life, with flashing beam revolving the wide circuit of thy course… Belus thou art named on the Euphrates, Ammon in Lybia, Apis of the Nile are thou by birth, Arabian Kronos, Assyrian Zeus… but whether thou art Sarapis, or the cloudlesss Zeus of Egypt, or Kronos, or Phaethon, or many-titled Mithra, Sun of Babylon, or in Greece Apollo of Delphi… – lend a propitious ear to my prayer."[375]

Ultimately, though purportedly based on ancient fertility rites, the myths of the mysteries were sacred allegories related to an astrological cosmology, that placed the Sun at its center, and derived originally from Tammuz, or Bel of the Babylonians. As described by Macrobius, a Latin philosopher from around 400 AD, not only were Zeus, Hercules, Hermes and Apollo Sun-gods:

> One cannot doubt that Adonis was likewise the Sun when one regards the religion of the Assyrians, among whom the worship of Venus Architis and Adonis especially throve at one time, a worship now continued by the Phoenicians. For the "physicists" worshipped the upper hemisphere of the earth, the part on which we live, giving it the name of Venus, and they called the lower hemisphere of the earth Proserpina. Accordingly among the Assyrians or Phoenicians the goddess is represented as sorrowing because the Sun, as it proceeds in its annual journey through the order of the twelve signs, goes down also with the part of the lower hemisphere, since of the twelve signs of the zodiac six are thought to be higher and six lower. Now when it is in the lower, and accordingly makes the days shorter, the goddess is thought to grieve because the Sun is as it were here lost in the grip of temporary death, and is being held by Proserpina, whom we called the deity of the lower circle of the earth and the antipodes. They are pleased in turn to believe that Adonis has returned to Venus when, after the six signs of the lower order have been conquered, the Sun begins to illuminate the hemisphere of our circle with increasing light and length of days... But when the Sun emerges from the lower parts of the earth and passes over the line of the vernal equinox while the days lengthen, then is Venus gay, and the fields become beautifully green with rising grain, the meadows with grass, the trees with leaves. Wherefore our ancestors dedicated the month of April to Venus.[376]

Dionysiac or Bacchic societies flourished throughout the Roman empire, in Greece, on the Greek islands, in Asia Minor, along the Danube River, and especially in Italy and at Rome. Hundreds of inscriptions attest to Bacchic Mysteries. In 186 BC a scandal over the *Bacchanalia*, the Latin name for the Hellenistic Dionysiac Mysteries, celebrated among the lower middle classes, and involving sex orgies and violence conducted under the cover of mystery secrecy, so upset the Romans that a decree of the Senate prohibited them throughout Italy, except in certain special cases. The Roman historian, Livy, who lived at the turn of the first millennium, described the Dionysian rites, as they had come to light in the controversy:

> When wine had inflamed their feelings, and night and the mingling of the sexes and of different ages had extinguished all power of moral judgment, all sorts of corruption began to be practiced, since each person had ready to hand the chance of gratifying the particular desire to which he was

naturally inclined. The corruption was not confined to one kind of evil, the promiscuous violation of free men and women; the cult was also a source of supply of false witnesses, forged documents and wills, and perjured evidence, dealing also in poisons and in wholesale murders among devotees, and sometimes ensuring that not even the bodies were found for burial. Many such outrages were committed by craft, and even more by violence; and the violence was concealed because no cries for help could be heard against the shriekings, the banging of drums and the clashing of cymbals in the scene of debauchery and bloodshed.[377]

Strabo noted that Pindar, like Euripides, regarded the rites of Dionysus as substantially the same as those performed by the Phrygians in central Anatolia, in honor of Cybele. Known as the *Magna Mater*, the Great Mother, Cybele, identified with Venus and worshipped as the goddess of fertility, but also as the mistress of the wild beasts, was taken over from the Persian Anahita. Ultimately, she was Ishtar, who like Cybele, was often accompanied by a lion. The consort of Cybele was Attis, known as Tammuz, or Adonis. Attis, named after the Phrygian name for goat,[378]became one with Dionysus-Sabazius, or assumed some of his characteristics.[379]

By 200 BC, the cult of Magna Matter and Attis were introduced into the Roman pantheon and were considered as Roman gods. Their cult seems to have been encouraged especially under Emperor Claudius about 50 AD. On the *Day of Blood*, some celebrants flogged themselves until they bled and sprinkled their blood upon the image and the altars in the sanctuary, while others are said to have imitated Attis by castrating themselves. The cult of the Magna Mater also involved a ritual called the *taurobolium*, where a bull was sacrificed above a pit into which a devotee descended, and was drenched in its blood, as a form of baptism.

In the Hellenistic period, the worship of Isis, the Egyptian goddess of love, and her consort Osiris, was established among the Greeks, and became widespread in Italy during the first and second centuries AD. The god Osiris-Serapis was either derived from the Chaldean *Sar-Apsi*, or a combination of Osiris and the Egyptian bull-god Apis. While some believe the mysteries of Isis to belong to ancient Egyptian motifs, already Herodotus identified Osiris with the Greek god Dionysus, and even before him, Osiris was identified with Dionysus, and Isis with Demeter. Plutarch maintained that the Egyptian priest Manetho had combined the old creed of the Egyptians with the Greek mysteries.[380] According to Diodorus: "Osiris, too, some think to be Apis, and some Dionysus, some Pluto, some Ammon, some Zeus, and others Pan." [381]

Plutarch compared the ritual of Dionysus with the tearing to pieces and rebirth of Osiris. After Osiris was killed by his evil twin brother Set, or the serpent *Typhon* in Greek, he locked the body in a chest and threw it into the Nile. Isis searched for the body and eventually found the coffin tangled inside a tree. The king of Byblos had cut down the tree and it had turned into a pillar which become an object of worship. Mirroring the *Hymn to Demeter*, Isis, by deception, became a nurse to the child of the queen Astarte. Every night she burnt the child to free it from its mortal body, until the queen, spying on her, cried out, depriving the child of its immortality. Through friendship to queen Astarte, Isis convinced the king to release Osiris' body. She returned Osiris' body to Egypt, but when Set discovered where it was hidden, in a rage, he dismembered the body and scattered it into fourteen pieces all over Egypt. Isis searched for the various parts, and everywhere she found one she raised a shrine on a hill and marked it by a tree, to symbolize that Osiris had risen from the dead. Osiris' penis though, was never found, so Isis made a gold replica and buried it at Mendes, where there was a temple dedicated to a goat god.[382]

The most popular of the mysteries of the Roman Empire were those of Mithras. Little evidence survives of these mysteries, and so scholars rely mainly on pictorial representations. Therefore, decipherment of its theology is dependent essentially on guesswork. The central image of the cult featured the statue of the taurotoctony, a depiction of Mithras slaying the Bull. Mithras was portrayed on the back of a bull pulling its head back with his fingers in its nostrils, and thrusting a dagger in its shoulder with his other hand. On either side of the tauroctony are two twin figures: Cautes holding a torch up, and Cautopates holding one downwards. Around the central tauroctony are panels representing various aspects of the myth of Mithras. Shepherds are shown at the scene of his birth. Mithras is often paired with the goddess Anahita. Other figures include Saturn and Jupiter, and symbols of the constellations of the Zodiac are very prominent. Following the slaughter of the bull, Mithras banquets on the flesh of the Bull with the Sun-god Helios, with whom he ascends to the sky riding his chariot drawn by four horses.

Franz Cumont, who single-handedly founded the study of the subject, considered the Mithraic mysteries to have evolved directly from the *Magussaeans* of Asia Minor. While Egyptian, Phrygian and Syrian gods had long been popular among the Greeks, they had habitually rejected the chief god of their traditional enemies. Mithras was not adopted by the nations of the West until the Hellenistic Age, when the Roman conquests of Asia Minor "provoked a perpetual interchange of men, products, and ideas between

the mountainous districts hitherto closed to the world, and the European provinces."[383] According to Plutarch, mysteries dedicated to Mithras were practiced by pirates of Cilicia in the early first century BC, who "offered strange sacrifices of their own at Olympus, where they celebrated secret rites or mysteries, among which were those of Mithras. These Mithraic rites, first celebrated by the pirates, are still celebrated today."[384] Lactantius Placidus, a less reliable source, tells us that the Mithraic cult passed from the Persians to the Phrygians, and from them to the Romans.[385] Nero, Roman emperor from 54 to 68 AD, adopted the radiating crown as the symbol of his sovereignty, to exemplify the rays of the Sun, and according to Pliny, was initiated into the "magic banquets" of Magi brought to Rome by the King of Armenia, though there was no mention of Mithras.[386]

However, the actual iconographical evidence for the Roman cult of Mithras does not make its appearance until the end of the first century AD, and therefore, modern scholars have begun to turn away from Cumont's original hypothesis of a Persian origin of the mysteries, in favour astrological interpretations. For a long time the meaning of the bull-sacrificing scene and its associated figures was unclear, but a long series of studies beginning with one by K. B. Stark in 1869, and culminating in studies by Roger Beck, in 1984 and 1988, and David Ulansey in 1989, has revealed a complex astrological symbolism, where each figure and element in the scene correlates to specific constellations. David Ulansey recently suggested that the killing of the bull referred to Mithras bringing an end to the equinoctial age of Taurus, which ended in 2500 BC. Because the theme would have employed knowledge of the phenomenon of the precession of the equinoxes, which was discovered by Hipparchus only in the second century BC, it proves, Ulansey believes, that the Mysteries of Mithras were a later creation. However, according to Prof. Swerdlow, Hipparchus's discovery did not have "an absolutely shattering significance" as Ulansey maintained, but rather his highly conjectural hypothesis was largely ignored until it was finally demonstrated to be correct by Ptolemy in the mid-second century AD. In any event, three centuries later, Proclus, the only philosopher to take note of the phenomenon, denied it because all wise men agreed that the fixed stars have only a single motion.[387]

However, as Prof. Swerdlow has noted that, "…it is not necessary to abandon an Iranian origin to interpret the tauroctony astronomically."[388] In fact, scholars have failed to recognize the depth of Cumont's hypothesis, not realizing that he did not maintain that Mithraism developed from mainstream Zoroastrianism, with which they are more familiar, but instead from the heterodox *Magussaeans* of Asia Minor, a cult they are insufficiently knowledgable about. Though some of his theories may appear old-fashioned, as Ioan Culianu has described:

> …Cumont remains the greatest scholar who ever attempted a wide, evolutionary, synthesis of the eschatological beliefs of the Ancient World. His influence on modern scholarship has been so overwhelming, that recent rebellions and general rejections of his works should not surprise us. After all, his assumptions remained unquestioned for such a long time, that it seemed necessary to place them under the critical lenses of the younger generations of philologists, archeologists and historians of religion. When this painful operation would be achieved, the grandness of Cumont's work would only enjoy a new and more stable emphasis.[389]

We know that a substantial portion of the Mithraic symbology was derived from Orphism, whose early history is closely interwoven with that of the *Magussaeans*, such that it is difficult to determine which was the origin of the other. Furthermore, as mystery rites were adapted to the gods of every nation of the Middle East, including Osiris of the Egyptians, Baal of the Syrians, Attis of the Phrygians, and Dionysus of the Greeks, it is certain that the Persian Magi would have adapted similar practices to their own Mithras. Essentially, Mithras would have become the center of an unknown cycle of legends, like Verethraghna, the Persian Hercules, as Cumont maintained, and who, through the influence of Orphism, was seen as composite figure, combined with Dionysus and Phanes, all regarded as a single Sun-god. In any case, though by Romans times the mysteries of Mithras would have certainly undergone a great deal of transformation, as Cumont was willing to concede, they would have been composed of a number of originally Magian tenets, as were most of the mystical systems of the Hellenistic Age.

A matter that has not been recognized by scholars is the fact that, as Cumont indicated, the Magi had assimilated Mithras to the Babylonian Sun-god Shamash, who was also identified with Bel. Like his ancient predecessors, Mithras should be identified with Orion. Though scholars have not readily accepted Speidel's theory that Mithras is the constellation Orion, they have not recognized that Orion was also identified by the Babylonians with Gilgamesh, the Babylonian Hercules, who, according to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, sacrificed the Bull of Heaven:

Enkidu chased him and …the Bull of Heaven
He seized him by the thick hairy tip of his tail…
He thrust his sword between the nape of his neck
And the horns of his head.
When they had killed the bull, they tore out his heart,
And placed it before Shamash the Sun
They stepped back and fell down before Shamash in homage.[390]

In support of his theory, Speidel points out that Manilius proclaims for Orion: "under him as their leader the constellations orbit through all of the sky."[391] As well, according to Porphyry, "…Mithras is placed near the celestial equator, comprehending the northern parts on his right, and the southern on his left hand."[392] Orion, the dog, the raven, the cup, the snake and the ears of corn were the constellations along the equator between Taurus and Scorpio.[393] The animals surrounding the scene represent the evil creatures Ahriman swallowing up the life-giving energies issuing from the Bull, as well as the four elements. A raven hovers above, a snake slithers nearby, a scorpion attacks the bull's genitals, and a dog leaps at the bull's wound. In some cases, a lion is added to the scenery, and the serpent slithers towards the cup. The torchbearers, associated with Taurus and Scorpio, are related to the summer and winter.[394]

In *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, outlining beliefs which he associated with the Mysteries of Mithras, Porphyry related that souls ascend or descend through two gates located at signs of the Zodiac that intersect the Milky Way, Cancer and Capricorn, which Berossus had also considered to represent the major polarity of the Great Year. Thus, according to Porphyry the Egyptians regard the year to begin in Cancer, on which borders the star Sirius, called the Dog by the Greeks, and of which Plutarch related that it was the one star Ahura-Mazda set in heaven before all others.[395] The Zoroastrian scriptures explain that *Tishtrya*, the star Sirius, when it was in Cancer, after its struggle with the arch-demon, caused the rain and seed of all things to fall on earth, and the seed of the slain bull to be taken and purified by the Moon, which eventually provides a rebirth for all animals and plants:

> As it passed away, owing to the vegetable principle proceeding from every limb of the Bull, fifty five species of grain and twelve species of medicinal plants grow forth from the earth, and this splendour and strength were the seminal energy of the Bull. Delivered to the moon station, that seed was thoroughly purified by the light of the moon, fully prepared in every way, and produced life in a body. Thence arose two bulls, one male and one female, and afterwards, two hundred and eighty two species of each kind became manifest upon the earth. The dwelling of the birds is in the air, and the fish are in the midst of the water.[396]

Commonly, in Mithraic iconography, the tail of the bull ends in ears of corn, from its blood springs forth the first ears of grain and the grape, and from its genitals issued the holy seed which was received by a mixing bowl. The cup, or mixing bowl, is the constellation Crater, and the sacred bowl of the mysteries, from which the initiate drinks the intoxicating wine, or the blood of the god, in order to imbibe the knowledge of hidden things. Likewise, to the Dionysiacs and Orphics, Dionysus was the grapevine, and the Bacchanals received his divine nature in a cup.[397] The cup is the receptacle first outlined in Plato's *Timaeus*, in which the four elements were mixed to create the universe. Furthermore, according to Macrobius:

> Plato speaks of this in the *Phaedo*, and says that the soul is dragged back into body, hurried on by new intoxication, desiring to taste a fresh draught of the overflow of matter, whereby it is weighted down and brought back [to earth]. The cosmic Crater of Father Liber [Dionysus] is a symbol of this mystery; and this is what the ancients called the River of Lethe, the Orphics saying that Father Liber was Hylic Mind.[398]

Celsus, a Roman writer of the second century AD, compared the system of Mithraism to Plato's belief that souls ascend through the planets. Similarly, as explained by the Pythagoreans, before returning to their celestial home, souls underwent successive reincarnations, a cycle regulated by the two movements, the *Same* and the *Different* of the *Timaeus*, that of the revolution of the fixed stars and that of the planets.[399] Thus, Celsus explained:

> These truths are obscurely represented by the teaching of the Persians and by the mystery of Mithras which is of Persian origin. For in the latter there is a symbol of the two orbits in heaven,

> the one being that of the fixed stars and the other that assigned to the planets, and of the soul's passage through these. The symbol is this. There is a ladder with the seven gates and at its top an eighth gate. The first of the gates is of lead, the second of tin, the third of bronze, the fourth of iron, the fifth of an alloy, the sixth of silver, and the seventh of gold. They associate the first with Kronos (Saturn), taking lead to refer to the slowness of the star; the second with Aphrodite (Venus), comparing her with the brightness and softness of tin; the third Zeus (Jupiter), as the gate that has a bronze base which is firm; the fourth with Hermes (Mercury), for both iron and Hermes are reliable for all works and make money and are hard-working; the fifth with Ares (Mars), the gate which as a result of the mixture is uneven and varied in quality; the sixth with the Moon as the silver gate; and the seventh with the Sun as the golden gate, these metals resembling their color.[400]

The ascent through the seven planets, the hallmark of the Mithraic system, and the origin of that astral philosophy that would come to pervade most schools of Hellenistic mysticism, including Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Gnosticism, is the one element whose date of origin is difficult to determine. According to Josephus, the Essenes believed the soul ascended to heaven after it departed its earthly prison, but there is no suggestion of a hierarchy of spheres. In the opinion of Scholem, such a mode of ascent, through which the soul ascends to its original home, either after death or in a state of ecstasy, is certainly very old. However, there is no evidence of the notion of an ascent through seven heavens prior to end of the first century AD, when it was probably invented, perhaps by Rabbi Akiva, the principle figure of early Merkabah mysticism. On Rabbi Akiva, the *Talmud* noted that among four men who engaged in such mystical subjects, one died, one went mad, one apostatized, and only Rabbi Akiva had a true visionary experience. Of the oldest literary sources of Merkabah are two *Hekhaloth* texts, the *Lesser* attributed to Rabbi Akiva, and the *Greater*, to his colleague, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha.

As Scholem remarked, similar dangers in the ascent of the mystic are described in the *Liturgy of Mithras*, of the magical papyrus of Paris, where the description of the ascent shows many parallels with the account given in the *Greater Hekhaloth*.[401] Essentially, Merkabah mysticism is a method of astral magic, identical to that of the Mysteries of Mithras, that so pervaded Hellenistic mysticism, a similarity that may be the result of Roman soldiers coming into contact with Jewish mystical doctrines during their invasion of Palestine. Having first been sent to the Euphrates in 63 BC to fight the Parthians, from 67 to 70 AD, the Fifteenth Apolonian Legion took part in suppressing the uprising of the Jews in Palestine, when 97,000 Jews, according to Josephus, were taken captive.[402] This legion accompanied Titus to Alexandria, where they were probably reinforced by recruits from Cappadocia in Asia Minor. It seems to have been a curious mix of these several elements, after the Legion had been transported to Germany, that erected the first temple dedicated to Mithras on the banks of the Danube.[403]

Thus, the ascent through the seven palaces, or planets, of Merkabah mysticism may have been introduced to the primitive mystery rites the *Magussaeans*, forming the Roman Mysteries of Mithras, spread far and wide by the Roman soldiers, and through Mithraism, to the other schools of Hellenistic mysticism. Ezekiel's vision held striking similarities to the Mithraic image of the Leontocephalus, as well as to the Orphic Phanes. The Leontocephalus, identified variously as Mithras, Aeon, Kronos, Zurvan, Phanes and Ahriman, is usually depicted as a lion-headed youth. The body was presented in human form, covered in Zodiac signs, with two sets of wings, the feet of a goat, and coiled by a serpent. The serpent is the symbol of the cosmos, for the *Chaldeans* taught, according to a Greek manuscript, that the Zodiac is carried around by a huge serpent who bears six of the signs on its back.[404] The serpent is Tiamat, or Leviathan, or the dragon Teli of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, identified with the constellation Draco, that circles the north pole and spirals through all of the signs of the Zodiac.

Standing on a globe, the Leontocephalus depicts the pillar of the world, or the "Spindle of Necessity" of Plato's *Myth of Er*, representing the celestial pole, which Draco encircles. The idea that Mithras is responsible for the rotation of the universe is further represented in Mithraic iconography, where images show Mithras in the pose of Atlas supporting the sphere of the world on his shoulders. The imagery further reflects Mithras' similarity with Hercules, who in his eleventh labor, trades places for an hour with Atlas, to allow him to fetch the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, once he had killed the dragon, also identified with the constellation Draco, which guarded them.

Supporting the chariot, Ezekiel described four "creatures", each with a human body, two sets of wings and cloven feet like that of a calf. Each creature had four faces, of a man, lion, ox and eagle, understood esoterically to represent the four seasons and elements. The man is Aquarius or air, the lion is Leo or fire, the ox is Taurus or earth, and the eagle is Scorpio or water. The four wings are the four winds. The creatures are set on wheels, each like "a wheel inside a wheel." Similarly, the Leontocephalus was

depicted standing on a globe, on which there are two circles intersecting each other, which Celsus explained, "is a symbol of the two orbits in heaven, the one being that of the fixed stars and the other that assigned to the planets."

Essentially, chariot mysticism marked the penetration of pagan themes into Judaism, borrowed ultimately from Bel, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, who rode a chariot drawn by four fierce horses when he journeyed to confront Tiamat.[405] *II Kings* 23: 11 records that Hilkiah "removed from the entrance of the Lord's Temple the horse statues that the former kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun... The king also burned the chariots dedicated to the Sun." Among the Jews of the Hellenistic era, the Essenes were already known to worship the Sun, and Philo of Alexandria, in several instances, equates God with a charioteer.[406] *Iao*, the form usually given to the name Jehovah in magical papyri, was equated sometimes with Zeus, sometimes with Helios. The connection of Helios and Judaism is further discovered in the ruins of Jewish synagogues of the late Roman period. The central image was composed of a circle of the zodiac, containing segmented rings within squares, with figures representing the seasons in the corners, the signs in the segments, and in the center, Helios riding a chariot drawn by four horses.

Ultimately, reserved for the highest ranking members, and representing the ultimate mystery, the Leontocephalus was equated with Mithras, Zurvan and Ahriman, all as one god. According to Lactantius Placidus, while Mithras was regularly portrayed in Persian garb, wearing the Phrygian cap, he was at times figured with the head of a lion.[407] The Leontocephalus is similar to Phanes, like whom, though commonly portrayed as born from a rock, in one example found in England, Mithras is born from an egg. An inscription from a Mithreaum in Rome was dedicated to Deus Sol Mithras Phanes. There is also literary evidence for the syncretism of Mithras and Phanes.[408] Macrobius recorded that, according to Orpheus: "one Zeus, one Hades, one Sun, one Dionysus."[409] The Leontocephalus has also been identified with Saturn. In Armenian texts Saturn is called Zurvan[410], and according to Ptolemy, the people of Persia and Mesopotamia "worship the star of Aphrodite [Venus], naming it Isis, and the star of Kronos [Saturn] as Mithras Helios."[411] Saturn, known as the nocturnal Sun, and "Pluto", Porphyry explained, "is the Sun going beneath the earth and voyaging round the invisible world…"[412]

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Chapter 10: Logos

Platonism

The influence of Greek thought in the Hellenistic Age derived primarily from a school of philosophy developed at Alexandria and thought to issue from Plato, known as Platonism. In the tradition of Plato, Platonism continued to be less a manner of philosophy, in the modern sense of the word, than a form of discourse on the theology of the mysteries. Platonism begins with Aristotle. Altough, Aristotle's statements about the philosophy of his master seem at first sight to be very different from anything found in the dialogues. While there are a few points of similarity with some of the later works, it is likely rather that the doctrines criticized by Aristotle are probably derived from Plato's oral teachings, or course of lectures, said to have been delivered by him in his later years, on *The Good*, mathematics, geometry and astronomy.

It appears that Plato, in his later years, became increasingly devoted to the teachings of Pythagoras, and that he finally came to view his idea of Forms as numbers. Plato arrived a system of opposed first principles, and a triple division of levels of being, which granted a central position to the role of Soul, both World-Soul and the individual soul. Developing the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, as first principles Plato established the One and the Infinite Dyad. The One, or Monad, is an active principle, imposing "limit" on the formlessness of the opposite principle, the Dyad. The Dyad is a duality, that on which the One acts, but it is also the irrational aspect of the Soul, and the underlying substance of the universe, the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*.

Essentially, the Monad and the Dyad are the philosophical rendering of the pagan trinity. The Monad represents the Father, while the Dyad represents the dual-natured goddess, taken from the ancient trinity. According to Aetius, a doxographer of the first century AD, referring to Plato's successor, explains:

> Xenocrates son of Agathenor of Chalcedon held as Gods the *Monad* and the *Dyad*. The former, as the male principle, has the role of Father, ruling in the heavens. This he terms Zeus and Odd and Intellect, and it is for him the supreme God. The second is as it were the female principle…in the role of the Mother of the Gods ruling over the realm beneath the heavens. This he makes the Soul of the Universe. He regards the Heaven also as a God, and the stars as fiery Olympian gods, and he believes also in other beings, invisible sublunary. He also holds the view that material elements, too, are animated by certain divine powers. Of these, that which occupies the air he terms Hades, as being formless, that which occupies the water Poseidon, and that which occupies the earth Demeter the Seed-Sower. All these identifications he adapted from Plato, and passed on to the Stoics.[413]

By acting on the Dyad, the One generates the Form-Numbers. First the Dyad produces the number Two, by doubling the One, and then produces the other numbers by either adding to Two and to each successive number the One or itself. However, Plato took only those numbers up to ten as constituting Forms. A special importance was placed by Plato, as it was by the Pythagoreans, on the "primal numbers," one, two, three, and four, the *Tetraktys*, and their sum-total, ten or the Decad. These four also have a geometrical aspect: One is the point, Two the line, Three the triangle or a plane, and four the solid, in the shape of a pyramid. The four basic numbers assume their geometric aspect in World-Soul, from which the four dimensions are projected upon Matter, through combinations of basic triangles, to form the Four Elements.

It is uncertain whether these ideas were later developed by Plato's successors to head of the Academy, Plato's nephew Speusippus, who lived from 410 to 39 BC, and Xenocrates, from 396 to 314 BC. Aristotle himself rejected Plato's mathematical metaphysics and his doctrine of transcendent eternal Forms altogether. When he rejected Plato's doctrine of Forms, he was not reacting only against Plato, but also

against Speusippus and Xenocrates. Speusippus, emphasized the mathematical tendencies of Plato and abolished Forms in favour of numbers. Xenocrates believed that Forms were only of those things that exist in nature. Xenocrates was also the first, to consider what was a continuing subject of controversy throughout the history of Platonism, whether the *Timaeus* was to be understood as real or only allegorical. Contrary to the opinion of Aristotle, he took the second view, which became the most commonly accepted.

Neo-Pythagoreanism

The next phase of Platonism, or Middle Platonism, emerged as the result of a new influence, that of Neo-Pythagoreanism, if in fact the two movements were not the same. A curious series of texts had emerged in the third and second centuries BC, claiming to be the works of the original Pythagoreans. It was in this period that the myth of Pythagoras as the student of Oriental wisdom took shape, reflected later in the biographies by Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry and Iamblichus.[414] However, according to John Dillon, noted scholar of Middle Platonism, only certain works attributed to the original Pythagoreans, namely Philolaus and Archytas, are possibly genuine, though as far as the other works are concerned, much about them remains obscure and little is known as to who wrote them and why.

The man largely responsible for the development the Neo-Pythagorean movement, and the fusion of Platonism and Stoicism, was Posidonius. Little is known of Poseidonius' thought, but some of his teachings have been preserved by his pupil Cicero. The titles and subjects of more than twenty of his works, now lost, are known. Roman writers such as Strabo and Seneca provide the major sources of knowledge about his life. Born in 135 BC, Posidonius was a native of Apamea in Syria, and spent many years in travel and scientific research in Spain, Africa, Italy, Gaul, Liguria, and Sicily. Educated on Plato and Aristotle, Posidonius was also interested in natural science, geography, astronomy, and mathematics. He tried to calculate the diameter of the Earth, the influence of the Moon on tides, and the distance and magnitude of the Sun.

Stoicism in the second and early first centuries BC, was dominated by two men of Rhodes, Panaetius and his disciple Posidonius, chiefly responsible for its widespread popularity in Rome. Posidonius taught at his school on the Island of Rhodes, where among his pupils was the first major Roman astrologer, Nigidius Figulus. Later, when Posidonius moved to Rome, he became teacher to many other great Romans, including Cicero, who was himself a member of the College of Augurs, specializing in hepatoscopy, or divination from animal entrails.

Being learned in Magian astrology and demonology, Posidonius was concerned with magic. Though, reflecting the prejudices of modern scholars, William H. McNeil maintains that, "with a figure like Posidonius, the Greek rationalist tradition had nearly played itself out. The change may reflect the upsurge of Oriental habits of mind, shedding a veneer of Hellenism which had been imposed after Alexander's conquest. In the west, a few of the educated Romans took over Hellenistic philosophy and resisted the mysticism of Oriental religions for another two centuries; but in the Hellenized east, philosophy and religion drew together in the late Hellenistic and Roman times." [415] Cumont, explaining the nature and source of Neo-Pythagoreanism, stated:

> Although by its ideal of religious life it professed to connect itself with the old Pythagorean mysticism, its doctrine owes more to the theories developed by Posidonius, especially in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, and it borrowed much, either through the medium of the great Syrian or even directly, from Oriental religions. A marked dualism, which contrasts the soul with the body, and, as a consequence, moral asceticism, a doctrine of the eternity of the universe and of the influence of the stars on the constant changes of the sublunary world, a belief in airy demons who defile and torment mankind, but above all, and this is the central point and the core of its dogmatic system, a symbolism of numbers, to which is attributed an active force and a mystic power, all these essential features indicate a singularly close connection between Neo-Pythagoreanism and "Chaldean" theology.[416]

One of the most important exponents of Middle Platonism was the Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher of the first century AD, Philo of Alexandria, also called Philo Judaeus, the greatest representative of Hellenistic Judaism. Although a devout Jew, Philo attempted to rationalize Judaism with his version of Platonic philosophy. The Bible, to Philo, was compatible with Platonic philosophy, for according to him, perhaps in reference to the legends reported by Iamblichus or Artapanus, Plato was a follower of Pythagoras, and Pythagoras, had been a follower of Moses.

The most important innovation of Middle Platonism, according to John Dillon, was Philo's placing of a transcendent God, equated with the God of the Old Testament, above the Monad and the Dyad. These

notions, though, hold striking similarities with those regarded as the early developments of the Kabbalah, the Monad representing the Primordial Man, the Dyad the *Shekhinah*. In fact, Philo praised the Essenes, and in *The Contemplative Life*, he describes the rites and habits of the Therapeutae, and in support of his ideas, he often used the phrase "it is said," presumably referring to Jewish traditions. For example, "it is said" that Moses was enchanted by the music of the spheres when he was receiving the revelation on Mt. Sinai.[417] Ultimately, in the opinion of Moshe Idel, a leading modern scholar of the Kabbalah, "there seems to be extant evidence for the existence of Hebrew traditions that may mediate between Philo's views, or other ancient Jewish traditions parallel to Philo, and the emergent Kabbalah."[418]

Below the supreme God, the Monad becomes the Stoic *Logos*, the active principle of God's creative thought. To Philo, "… he who drives the Chariot of the Powers is the *Logos*, and He who is borne in the Chariot is He who speaks the *Logos*, giving commandment to the Driver for the right driving of the universe."[419] The *Logos* is the mediator between God and creation, which at one point he identifies as a second God. The *Logos* is the primordial or archetypal man, the image of God. Therefore, the *Logos* is the Macrocosm, a reflection of the earthly man, who is the Microcosm. The *Logos* proceeded from God and Sophia, and is described as the son of God and Sophia, "through whom the universe came into existence." Sophia, or Wisdom, is the Dyad. Like the *Shekhinah*, she is the female life-principle assisting the supreme God in his work of creation and administration, but also somehow fulfilling the role of mother to all creation.[420]

Another important philosopher of Middle Platonism was Plutarch of Chaeroneia. Plutarch was a priest of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, on whose antiquities and ceremonies he became a great authority. Although not from Alexandria himself, Plutarch's teacher, Ammonius Saccas, who had been in charge of the Platonic Academy at Athens, was an Egyptian, and probably responsible for the introduction of the Pythagoreanizing and astrological Alexandrian influences to the Academy.[421] Plutarch talked of the One and the Dyad, without the idea of the supreme principle above them, however, he maintained, God must relate to the world through intermediaries, first of which is the *Logos*. For Plutarch, the *Logos* is the equivalent of the Sun-god of ancient paganism. The *Logos* is the Egyptian god Osiris, while his mother and sister Isis, is the Dyad, forming part of a holy trinity which further includes their son Horus. They are intelligence, matter and cosmos, called the most perfect triangle. The proportions of this triangle express a divine secret, a right-angle triangle, according to the Pythagorean theorem, perfectly divisible: the base, equal to four, is Isis, the female conceiving element: the vertical, equal to three, is Osiris, the male creative principle; the hypotenuse, five, is Horus the offspring.

Plutarch also seems to have been influenced by Zoroastrianism, which he regarded as "the opinion of the majority of the wisest of men". As mediator, the *Logos* is the messenger of the gods, which Plutarch equated with Mithras, the "mediator god" of the Zoroastrians:

> For some believe that there are two gods who are rivals, as it were, in art, the one being the creator of good, the other of evil; others call the better of these a god and his rival a daemon, as, for example, Zoroaster the Magian, who lived, so they record, five thousand years before the siege of Troy. He used to call the one Horomazes [Ahura Mazda] and the other Areimanius [Ahriman], and showed also the former was especially akin, among objects of perception, to light, and the latter, on the contrary, to darkness and ignorance, while in between the two was Mithras; and this is why the Persians call Mithras the Mediator.[422]

About the middle of the first century AD, a distinct Neo-Pythagorean trend appeared with the mystic Apollonius of Tyana. In approximately 217 AD, Philostratus composed the *Life of Apollonius* at the request of Julia Domna, the wife of the emperor Septimus Severus, who possessed documents belonging to Damis of Ninevah, a disciple and companion of Apollonius. During his travels he associated with the Brahmins of India, the Gymnosophists of Egypt, and the Babylonian Magi, who initiated him in the "Chaldean mysteries". Apollonius was a Pythagorean philosopher whose miracles in raising the dead and healing the sick have been compared to those of Christ. Though, he was not as well accepted. According to Philosatratus, "whereas Empedocles and Pythagoras and Democritus, though they conversed with the same Magi, and advanced many paradoxical sentiments, have not fallen under the like imputation. Even Plato, who traveled in Egypt, and blended with his doctrines many opinions collected there from the priests and prophets, incurred not such a suspicion, though envied above all men on account of his superior wisdom." In Rome Apollonius was arrested and tried before the emperor Domition for sorcery, for having predicted a plague at Ephesus. He claimed it was merely his moderate diet that kept his senses clear and enabled him to see the present and the future. Nevertheless, according to his biographer, Apollonius managed to inexplicably vanish from the courtroom.

The Neo-Pythagorean philosopher chiefly responsible for the transition of Platonism to a Neoplatonic synthesis of Hellenistic, Persian, and Jewish systems, was Numenius of Apamea, of the late second century AD. Other than his origins in Apamea, near modern Hims in Syria, nothing is known of Numenius' life. His name may have been a Greek translation of a Semitic original. He showed extensive knowledge of Judaism, and may have been acquainted with Christianity. The surviving fragments from Numenius' treatises, are *On the Differences Between Plato and the Academicians*, *On Plato's Secret Doctrines*, *On the Good*, *On the Indestructibility of the Soul*. For these we are largely indebted to Eusebius, in the *Preparation for the Gospel*, Calcidius, Origen, and several later philosophers.

Numenius intended to seek the origin of Platonic ideas in the teachings of the ancient East, the spirit transmigration of Hinduism, the monotheistic deity and the trinity in Judaism, and the esoteric dualism of Gnostic and Hermetic cults. To explore the nature of God, Numenius insisted, one had to look back beyond the wisdom of Plato, or even of Pythagoras, to "everything that the Brahmins, the Jews, the Magi and the Egyptians have established."[423] According to the Christian father Origen, Numenius offered allegorical interpretations of the writings of Moses and the Prophets.[424] He had remarked, "what is Plato, but Moses speaking in Attic Greek."[425]

It was also said that, "among the philosophers Numenius was one of the most eager for Mysteries. A dream announced to him that the Divinities were offended, because he had published the Eleusinian mysteries by interpretation."[426] Therefore, reflecting the teachings of the mysteries, central to his thought was the dualism of an eternal divinity contrasted with eternal matter, Monad opposed to Dyad. As supreme deity in absolutely changeless perfection, God can have no contact with inferior being. Hence, the need for a second god, the Demiurge, of a dual nature, the "soul of the world," related to both God and matter, and completing the trinitarian hierarchy. In addition, Numenius identified matter with evil, attributing it to the evil World-Soul. Man, therefore, also comprises in himself the dualism of a body opposed to his soul. This soul, to Numenius, descended into this world through the planetary spheres, a view held in common by the late Stoics and Platonists.

Neoplatonism

Numenius' thought is alleged to have influenced the first Neoplatonist, Plotinus. Born in Egypt in 205 AD, Plotinus, like Plutarch, had also been the pupil at Alexandria of the self-taught philosopher called Ammonius Saccas, who may have been the intermediary for Numenius' ideas. Supposedly, Ammonius had been brought up as a Christian but abandoned his religion for the study of Plato, developing his own variation of Platonic philosophy. But, Ammonius wrote nothing. There are few reports of his views, and these are unreliable, so that little is actually known about his thought. In the *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry reported of Plotinus that:

> At twenty-seven he was caught by a passion for philosophy. He was directed to the most highly-reputed professors to be found at Alexandria; but he used to come home from their lectures saddened and discouraged. A friend to whom he opened his heart divined his temperamental craving and suggested Ammonius, whom he had not yet tried. Plotinus went, heard a lecture, and exclaimed to his comrade, "This was the man I was looking for!" From that day he followed Ammonius continuously, and under his guidance made such progress in philosophy that he became eager to investigate that practiced among the Persians and that perfected by the Indians.[427]

While Neoplatonism is considered to represent "philosophy", in the modern sense of the term, that is, the continuation of the Greek tradition of "rationalism", the Neoplatonists, being initiates themselves, regarded their thought as an elaboration of the theology of the Mithraic and other mysteries, and of Hermeticism. Therefore, their thought holds certain similarities to Merkabah mysticism as well. In fact, Moshe Idel, a leading scholar of the Jewish Kabbalah, has indicated that the quest for mystical union in the thought of Plotinus may have been derived from Jewish sources, possibly from Rabbi Akiva:

> R. Akiva's younger contemporary, Numenius of Apamea (in Syria), is regarded as one of the two sources of Plotinus' conception of mystical union; the other is, directly or indirectly, Jewish, as E. R. Dodds has proposed. As is well known, Numenius was acquainted with Jewish conceptions; it stands to reason that not only might Philo's mystical thought have been the source of Numenius' view, but also concepts related to R. Akiva, who was close to Numenius in both space and time. The fact that a certain mystical view of *devekut* [mystical union] occurs in both rabbinic and Philonic texts would seem to point to a common source. This ancient, presumably Jewish, conception might have influenced Numenius and Plotinus.[428]

Plotinus did not publish anything either. His philosophy is known through the *Enneads*, Greek *enneas*, "set of nine," six sets of nine treatises each, a collection of his writings arranged by his disciple Porphyry. Many of Plotinus' philosophical elements came from earlier philosophies: the existence of the One and the attendant theory of Forms were aspects of the later writings of Plato, particularly the *Timaeus*; and Stoicism had identified the World-Soul with transcendent universal reason. What was distinctive in Plotinus' system was the unified, hierarchical structuring of these elements, and the theory of ten divine emanations or spheres, corresponding with the ten Sephiroth of Jewish mysticism, and the Pythagorean Decad.

Plotinus regarded the ultimate reality of the universe as an infinite, unknowable, perfect One. The process of emanation initially produces a divine trinity. The One gives rise to the *Nous*, translated as Intellect or Spirit. *Nous* for Plotinus, is the world of Forms, or Ideas, in the Platonic sense, archetypes and causes of imperfect realities on lower levels. From *Nous* in turn is derived the World-Soul. The World-Soul for Plotinus, as for Plato, acts as a mediator between the worlds of Intellect and Matter. It is conceived as an image of the *Nous,* even as the *Nous* is an image of the One. Both the *Nous* and the World-Soul, despite their differentiation, are thus in substance part with the One. Beneath the sphere of these three transcendent realities, or hypostases, is the sphere of the fixed stars, and beneath it, of the Sun, Moon, and the seven planets, and finally sphere of the earth, motionless and at the center. Thus, there is a hierarchy of stages from the supreme God, or The One, down through the lesser gods, and to material objects.

Though Plotinus did not espouse a type of dualism wherein evil was a principle independent from the Good, his philosophy is clearly Orphic in origin, identifying matter with evil. Ascent to The One consists in turning away from the life of the body, and ultimately waking to another way of seeing, which everyone has but few use. When a man's philosophical conversion is complete and he has become Intellect, he can rise to that mystical union in which The One manifests his continual presence. Though, for Plotinus, mystical union was not achieved by theurgy or magical rites, but only by the practice of virtue, asceticism, chastity and contemplation of god. Nevertheless, Porphyry reports on an imperfect conjuration conducted by Plotinus in the temple of Isis in Rome. The god appeared but disappeared immediately, because a friend of Plotinus, who held two birds as counter-charms, strangled them when the apparition became visible.[429]

Plotinus did not hold that astrology was effective at predicting the future. He maintained, rather, that while the stars can aid in foretelling the future, they are not the actual causes of the effects they predict. The return of the doctrine that the stars and planets are capable of affecting and ordering human life, among the Neoplatonists, was promoted by Porphyry. Born in Tyre in Phoenicia, his original Syrian name, *Malchus*, meaning "king", was hellenized, the new name signifying "imperial purple." Porphyry had studied philosophy in Rome under Plotinus, who kindly rescued him from a suicidal depression. In 301, he produced his most important work, the *Enneads*. Fragments survive of his *Against the Christians,* which was condemned to be burned in 448. He was also a lecturer on Plotinus, a tutor to the Syrian philosopher Iamblichus, wrote a history on the life of Pythagoras, and *On Abstinence,* a plea for vegetarianism. In *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, he describes the symbolism of a grotto mentioned in Homer, in relation to the cave rituals of Mithraism.

In addition to penning a commentary on Ptolemy, Porphyry apparently wrote an *Introduction to Astronomy*, by which is apparently meant "Astrology." For Porphyry, a knowledge of the operations of the heavenly bodies and their sympathies are an important tool in attaining ever higher levels of virtue. He seems to have held the view that the soul receives certain "powers" from each of the seven planets: right judgment from Saturn, proper exercise of the will from Jupiter, impulse from Mars, opinion and imagination from the Sun, and sensuous desire from Venus; from the Moon the soul receives the power of physical production. The task of the individual would then be to work to accentuate those "powers" and thereby achieve a balance that would render the soul more capable of sharing in the divine Mind.

Iamblichus and Proclus seem to have been the originators of the type of Neoplatonism that came to dominate the Platonic schools in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, and which came to regard myth, not only in Homer, but in all religious tradition, including foreign cults, as mystical-historical allegories, whose inner meanings were disclosed through philosophic discipline. Iamblichus, a Syrian philosopher, who lived from 250 to 330 AD, sought to revive paganism by a return to its roots among the Babylonians and Egyptians, the leading proponents of classical thought, like Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and finally, in the mysteries. It was he along with his teacher Porphyry, who wrote biographies of Pythagoras, recounting his sojourn among the Magi of Babylon. He has generally been credited with the transformation of the merely

spiritual Neoplatonism of Plotinus in favour of theurgy, the magical conjuration of the gods, a subject which he treats in his work, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians*.

Through highly metaphysical interpretations of Plato, particularly the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, later Neoplatonists believed it possible to arrive at a complete understanding of divine truth, held to be cryptically revealed by the gods themselves through the so-called "theologians", the inspired authors of the Orphic poems and the *Chaldean Oracles*. The collection of hymns known as the *Orphica*, whose content was usually to call upon a god, particularly the Sun, were a product of the second and third century AD. The *Chaldean Oracles*, a work attributed to Zoroaster, and said to have been revealed to Julian the Theurgist, also known as the *Chaldean*. The *Chaldean Oracles*, of which only fragments are preserved, is a theosophical text in verse composed in the second century AD, that combined Platonic elements with Persian or Babylonian creeds. Though its influence is underplayed by modern scholars, it was regarded by the later Neoplatonists as a sacred text, sometimes, even above Plato himself. Proclus would have withdrawn all books from circulation except the *Timaeus* and the *Chaldean Oracles*, to prevent them from harming the uneducated. Referring to the *Chaldean Oracles*, the emperor Julian mentions the following, in what is generally regarded as one of his few allusions to the doctrine of the Mithraic Mysteries, "And if I should also touch on the secret teachings of the Mysteries in which the Chaldean, divinely frenzied, celebrated the God of the Seven Rays, that god through whom he lifts up the souls of men, I should be saying what is unintelligible, yea wholly unintelligible to the common herd, but familiar to the happy theurgists."[430]

The doctrine of the *Chaldean Oracles* spoke of emanations from the Father, equated with fire, and of triadic entities. The highest entities mentioned in the *Oracles* are an absolutely transcendent First Paternal Intellect. A Second Demiurgic Intellect, proceeds from the Father and knows the cosmos as well as himself. Within the First Intellect, a female Power, Hecate, produces or is the mediating World-Soul. At the bottom end of the All lies Matter, made by the Demiurge. The world is a foul tomb and a form which the higher human soul must escape, shedding the lower soul's vehicle or garment, acquired during its descent through the stars and planets. Ascetic conduct and correct ritual will free the soul from the astrological confines of Fate, and defend it against the demonic powers who fill the realm between gods and mortals.

The theurgy of the *Chaldean Oracles* provided knowledge of the magical formulas to aid the soul on its ascent to union with the god. Some scholars claim that the theory of the passage of the soul through the seven heavens was known to Numenius, who transmitted it to Porphyry. Though, as Culianu as pointed out, in *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance*, evidence is lacking, and while Porphyry certainly knew the doctrine, the principle testimonies come from Macrobius and Proclus.[431] According to Proclus:

> The vehicle of every particular soul descends by the addition of vestures increasingly material; and ascends in company with the soul through divestment of all that is material and recovery of its proper form, after the analogy of the soul which makes use of it: for the soul descends by the acquisition of irrational principles of life; and ascends by putting off all those faculties tending to temporal process with which it was invested in its descent, and becoming clean and bare of all such faculties as serve the uses of the process.[432]

Though not considered magic, the theurgy of the Neoplatonists was essentially those procedures of Hellenistic magic. Its aim was that outlined in the Hermetic treatise, the *Asculepius*, that is, the incarnation of a divine power or spirit, either into a material object, such as a statue, or a human being, to bring the subject under a state of prophetic ecstasy. The practice was justified by the idea, first, that each part of the universe reflects every other part, and secondly, that the whole material world is the reflection of the invisible divine powers. Such that, resulting from the network of forces or sympathies linking image to archetype, manipulation of the appropriate material object that corresponds to a divine power, brings the theurgist into contact with it. The principle also justified the production of long lists of stones, plants, animals, expressing the power of the seven planets, and substantiated the belief that the sympathy linking all parts of the universe allowed the magician to attract the power of the divine spheres.[433]

Neoplatonism's greatest convert was the Roman emperor Julian, called by Christians the Apostate, also an ardent devotee of the Mithraic mysteries, to which he had been introduced by the philosopher Maximus of Ephesus. To Julian Mithras is the Sun and one and the same with Apollo, Phaethon, Hyperion and Prometheus.[434] To his god he dedicated his Hymn to Helios, and introduced the cult to Constantinople, when simultaneously, the first taurobolia were celebrated at Athens. By the end of the fourth century AD, the Platonic Academy at Athens had been reestablished, and had become an institute for Neoplatonic

teaching and research in the tradition of Iamblichus. The Academy's inclination toward paganism did much to attract Christian hostility, and though safeguarding itself for quite some time form this animosity, the Academy eventually succumbed to it and was probably closed by the emperor Justinian in 529 AD.

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Chapter 11: Thoth

Hermes Trismegistus

That which is mistakenly considered to represent the *Ancient Wisdom* of the Egyptians, is a spurious body of literature, a product of Hellenistic Alexandria, known as the *Hermetica*. These texts derived their name from its principal character, the Egyptian god Thoth, known to the Greeks as Hermes, or Hermes Trismegistus, meaning "Hermes Thrice-Great." In the *Odyssey,* however, he appears mainly as the messenger of the gods and the conductor of the dead to Hades. Hermes was often identified with the Roman Mercury. The name Hermes is probably derived from *herma*, meaning a pillar of stones, such as was used in the country to indicate boundaries or as a landmark. His symbol was that of an erect phallus, and he was often closely connected with fertility deities, especially Pan and the nymphs.

In the *Phaedrus*, through the mouth of Socrates, Plato declared that "the story is that in the region of Naucratis in Egypt there dwelt one of the gods of the country, the god to whom the bird Ibis is sacred, his own name begins Thoth. He it was who invented numbers and arithmetic and geometry, and astronomy, not to mention draughts and dice, and most important of all writing."[435] Though Socrates' interlocutors regarded him as having invented the story, in antiquity, Hermes was regarded as having been a real person. The Christian father Lactantius dated Hermes before Plato and Pythagoras, and even St. Augustine, who condemned the philosophy of Hermes, still believed in his real existence:

> And what was their [Egyptians] goodly wisdom, think you? Truly nothing but astronomy, and such other sciences as rather seemed to exercise the wit than to elevate the knowledge. For as for morality, it stirred not in Egypt until Trismegistus' time, who was indeed long before the sages and philosophers of Greece, but after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, yea and Moses also; for at the time when Moses was born, was Atlas, Prometheus' brother, a great astronomer, living, and he was grandfather by the mother's side to the elder Mercury, who begat the father of this Trismegistus.[436]

Iamblichus maintained that Plato and Pythagoras derived their philosophy from the "wisdom" of the Egyptians found on the pillars of Hermes. Manetho was also thought to have derived his knowledge of the history and religion of the ancient Egyptians from secret hieroglyphics that had been inscribed on two pillars, called the Pillars of Hermes, that preserved this knowledge from before the Flood.[437] This story reflects a similar legend reported by Josephus about Seth, the third son of Adam, also often identified with Hermes. Josephus recounts that Adam had forewarned his descendants through Seth that sinful humanity would be destroyed by a Flood. According to Josephus, the descendants of Seth, identified by some with the *Sons of God* of the Bible, "also were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies, and their order."[438]In order to preserve their astrological science and philosophy, they raised two pillars, one of brick and the other of stone, on which were inscribed the keys to their knowledge, which, Josephus claimed, remain in Egypt to his day.

Having been dated to the same time period, Hermes was equated with Moses, who "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."[439]According to Artapanus, a Jewish philosopher of the third century BC, Hermes was also known as Moses,[440]while Manetho explained that Hermes was a king of Egypt who migrated to Greece, where he as known as Danaus.[441]The herald's staff of Hermes is an *Asherah* pillar, or the bronze serpents of Moses, poles with images of serpents which he had commanded the Israelites to erect to heal them from snake bites. The staff of Hermes, also known as the Caduceus, now the modern symbol medicine, was an image of two intertwined snakes, and a pair of wings attached to the staff above the snakes. The Caduceus is related to the staff of the healer Asclepius, the Latin name of Hermes, who was the Greco-Roman god of medicine, son of Apollo. The Centaur Chiron taught him the art of healing,

but Zeus, afraid he might render men immortal, slew him with a thunderbolt. Though Homer mentions him in the *Iliad* only as a skillful physician, he was eventually honored as a hero and worshipped as a god.

In the fifth century BC, the doctors from the Greek Island of Cos attained a high reputation, calling themselves Asklepiadai, descendants of Asclepius. The founder of the Asklepiada was Hippocrates, born in 460 BC, known as the father of medicine. Little is known of Hippocrates' life, and there may have been several men of his name, or he may have been the author of only some, or none of the books that comprise the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. The Asclepiadai may have been introduced to *Chaldean* doctrines by Berossus, who had established himself at Cos about 280 BC, and who had taught the myth of Oannes, who, like Thoth and Hermes, was attributed the role of having taught the arts of civilization to humanity.

The Corpus Hermeticum

Quite a number of collections of Hermetic writings must once have existed, the earliest of which was the text addressed to a King Nechepso by the priest Petosiris. Some texts were gathered together at an unknown date in what is called the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which still exists. Another collection was made by John Stobaeus in the fifth century AD, and most of it has been preserved. We know little of three others: one used by the Christian writer Lactantius, another quoted by Iamblichus in the early fourth century, and one of fifteen books cited by the Christian theologian Cyril of Alexandria in the early fifth century AD. Two others, longer texts stand alone. The first is the *Asclepius*, preserved in a Latin translation, possibly of the third century AD. It is known and cited by St. Augustine. The second is a dialogue between Isis and Horus, entitled *Kore Kosmu*, which may mean daughter of the world. Stobaeus contains extracts from it.

Although presented in an Egyptian framework, scholars have recognized that the Hermetic works contain very few genuine Egyptian elements. Frances Yates noted that:

> In any case, they were certainly not written in remotest antiquity by an all-wise Egyptian priest, as the Renaissance believed, but by various unknown authors, all probably Greeks, and they contain popular Greek philosophy of the period, a mixture of Platonism and Stoicism, combined with some Jewish and probably Persian influences.

The most famous text is the first text of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Poimandres*, in which the author tells us that he has been carried away in the spirit and met a superhuman being, Poimandres. The work begins with an outline of the creation of light and separation of darkness, the separation of the waters above from waters below, the separation of land and water, the creation of heavenly bodies, then birds, fish and land animals. C. H. Dodd, in *The Bible and the Greeks*, his extensive study of Jewish influence on the *Hermetica*, has determined that, "while the cosmogony of *Poimandres* is substantially a combination of Platonic and Stoic doctrines of a type familiar in the *Hermetica*, it is presented through the medium of a myth obviously similar to the creation-myth of Genesis."[442] In a sequence similar to the *Poimandres*, according to *Genesis* 1:1-2: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." After separating the light from the darkness, and the upper elements from the lower, God proceeds to create heavenly bodies, then birds and fishes and land animals.

These similarities were also recognized by Michael Psellus, a Byzantine scholar of the eleventh century AD, who remarked of the author, "this wizard seems to have had more than a passing acquaintance with holy writ. Making eager go of it, he tries his hand at the creation of the world, not scrupling to record the cherished Mosaic expressions themselves." Cyril of Alexandria, a Christian theologian of the fifth century AD, noted:

> …this Hermes of Egypt, although he was a theurgist, ever sitting in the temple precincts near the idols, had the good sense to acquire the writings of Moses, even if he did not use them at all blamelessly or correctly, having but a part of them… The one in Athens who collected the fifteen books called "Hermetic" made himself a record of this in his own writings.[443]

To excuse the obvious Neoplatonic influence in the Hermetic works, Iamblichus argued that: "for the books which are circulated under the name of Hermes contain Hermetic opinions, though they frequently employ the language of the philosophers: for they were translated from the Egyptian tongue by men who were not unskilled in philosophy."[444] However, the Hermetic works must be primarily seen as expressing philosophical ideas. According to the *Poimandres*, Light or Fire is Spirit, *Nous* or Mind. The *Logos* is the Son of God, at one with the Father, Mind. Next, Mind gives birth to a second spirit, the

Demiurge, who creates the seven Administrators or the planets, embracing in their orbit the visible universe. Their administration is called Fate.

The original spirit also gives birth to the original man, or archetypal man, to whom is assigned the world of the stars. To the Hermetic philosopher, Zosimus of Panopolis, the Primordial Man is the Son of God, or the First Man, whose name is Thoth:

> The *Chaldeans* and Parthians and Medes and Hebrews call Him Adam, which is by interpretation virgin Earth, and blood-red Earth, and fiery Earth, and fleshy Earth. And these indications were found in the book-collections of the Ptolemies, which they stored away in every temple, and especially in the Serapeum, when they invited Asenas, the chief priest of Jerusalem, to send a "Hermes", who translated the whole of the Hebrew into Greek and Egyptian.[445]

Though clearly derived from the mythology of the mysteries, C.H. Dodd maintained that "…it should be clearly understood that we have no reason whatever for supposing that the writers of the Corpus at any rate were devotees of any of these religions in the same sense of practicing the ritual which was their essential nature."[446] However, the *Poimandres* prescribes a mode of spiritual ascent through the seven planets, and into the eighth sphere, where the soul of the initiate is united with God. According to the *Poimandres*, man must first undergo a spiritual death and resurrection, followed by an ascent through the spheres of the seven planets, leaving behind him in each of them part of his being, the part which the original man had received from the stars. Finally he will be reduced to just himself, where he can enter the eighth sphere, to join the powers assembled there. With them, he comes before the Father and enters God.

The extremely influential *Asclepius* is a discussion between Hermes, Asclepius, Tat and Ammon. Following a cosmological exposition of the universe and man's purpose in it, the *Asclepius* then turns to the subject of theurgy, or of man's ability to create gods, a subject that was regarded by the Neoplatonists as comprising the wisdom of the "Egyptians". "Our ancestors," declares the *Asclepius*, "discovered the art of creating gods." They made statues, "and because they could not create souls, they conjured the souls of demons or messengers and introduced them by holy and godly mysteries into the images of the gods, so that they received the power to cause good and evil."[447] The first Asclepius and the first Hermes were among the gods created in this way, and they are the ancestors of the speakers in the dialogue. Isis was also made in this way. These gods are approached through sacrifices, hymns and praises.

Hellenistic Alchemy

Among the subjects within the large literature under the name of Hermes were alchemical works that represented of a system of magic, based on an assumed astrological affinity between the stars and certain minerals or plants. Close analogies of these works can be found in the famous Greek magical and mystical writings ascribed to Zoroaster, Osthanes and Hystaspes. The identification of metals with their respective planets is a doctrine borrowed from the Magi. According the Magi each of the most important metals belonged to one of the seven known planets. Lead was equated with Saturn, heavy, dull, and sluggish. Mars was iron, rust-red in color and important in warfare. Mercury, slithery and quick, was associated with the planet of the same name. The moon was silver, and the Sun, naturally, was gold. Essentially, as Jack Lindsay described, in *The Origins of Alchemy In Graeco-Roman Egypt*:

> It would seem then in the third and second centuries BC at Alexandria there went on a considerable fusion of Greek and Iranian thought. This fusion was expressed by bringing together the two great figures of Zoroaster the Persian and Hermes-Thoth the Egyptian in a large new corpus of magical recipes and ideas, above all in an endless series of pantheist correspondences between men, animals, plants, stones, stars and planets.[448]

In Hellenistic times, the founder of the alchemical art was thought to have been Osthanes, to whom several works on the nature of plants and minerals were ascribed. One of the first alchemical works, written by a certain Bolos of Mendes in the second century BC, was attributed to Democritus, the reputed student of Osthanes. One of the texts accredited to Bolos, the *Leyden Papyrus*, consists mostly of recipes, but in one passage, Democritus describes an incident of divine revelation in which he acquired his alchemical skills from his former master.

According to this text, after some years of instruction in the theories of alchemy, Democritus was nearing the point when he would undergo initiation into the mysteries of the secret art, but his teacher, Osthanes, suddenly dropped dead, and the only way to obtain the further guidance was to summon Osthanes back from Hades. Democritus claimed that he managed to do so after a great deal of prayer and

incantation. Unfortunately, Osthanes would tell him only: "The books are in the temple." Following a service of worship, one of the pillars of the temple opened up, and inside was an inscription: "Nature rejoices in nature; nature conquers nature; nature brings forth nature." Finally, his training made sense. All that he had learned about formulas for dipping copper into mercury or sprinkling base metals with arsenic, sulfur, zinc oxide, or antimony took on new logic and meaning, and Democritus became an adept.[449]

The doctrine of the alchemists was based on Jewish legend. According to Democritus, "it was the law of the Egyptians that nobody must divulge these things in writing… The Jews alone have attained a knowledge of its practice, and also have described and exposed these things in a secret language."[450] Together with magic and other illicit arts, alchemy was believed to have been revealed to mankind by the cursed Fallen Angels who had betrayed God's secrets. For this they had been punished, and a curse was put upon the forbidden knowledge which enabled man to rival the Creator. As a consequence, everywhere sorcerers confronted opposition. Throughout the first centuries AD, the tree of knowledge remained the symbol of such sinful investigation. With the eating of the forbidden fruit, man had become like God, knowing good and evil. The tree of knowledge and the serpent were therefore the most important symbols of alchemy.

In an early alchemical manuscript, a priestess who calls herself Isis, and who addresses her writings to her son Horus, declares that she owed her knowledge to the first of the angels and prophets, Amnael, and explains that she acquired her wisdom as a reward for intercourse with him. There was also Mary the Jewess. None of her writings have survived in complete form, but she is mentioned by her colleagues as if she might be identified with Moses' sister Miriam. The alchemist Olympiodorus from the fourth century AD, quotes the famous passage on the strength of which she has always been called a Jewess. Her teachings were reserved for Jews, for speaking of the "holiness" of her book, she said: "Do not touch the Stone of the Sages, for you are not of the seed of Abraham."[451] Other important alchemists were Theosebia, and a woman who called herself Cleopatra. The most notable fragment left behind by Cleopatra was a single page of symbolic diagrams. One of its images showed the famous symbol of the *Ouroboros*, a serpent swallowing its tail, with the phrase "The One is the All" inscribed within the circle.[452]

Philo of Byblos explained, "so Taautos (Thoth) himself regarded as divine the nature of the serpent and snakes, as did the Phoenicians and the Egyptians after him… Therefore, this animal is included in the rites and mysteries."[453] The Phoenicians called the snake the Good Demon, while the "Egyptians" named it *Kneph*, and portrayed it with the head of a hawk. Similarly, and perhaps related to the Leontocephalus of Mithraism, Porphyry related that the Persians describe the Sun as a bull, a lion, a dragon and a hawk.[454]According to Philo:

> Also the magus Zoroaster, in his sacred collection of Persian lore, says just this: "The one who has the head of a hawk is god. He is the first, imperishable, everlasting, unbegotten, undivided, incomparable, the director of everything beautiful, the one who cannot be bribed, the best of the good, the wisest of the wise. He is also father of order and justice, self-taught, and without artifice and perfect and wise and he alone discovered the sacred nature…Osthanes also says the same thing about the animal in the work entitled *Octateuch*. Therefore, all took their materials from Taautos [Thoth] and speculated on nature as previously indicated. They built temples and consecrated, in the temples' innermost shrines, the first letters, those created by serpents, and for them they celebrated feasts and sacrifices and rites. They considered them the greatest gods and the founders of the universe.[455]

The brother of Theosebia, Zosimus of Panopolis, of the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century AD, was probably the most important of the Alexandrian alchemists. Zosimus compiled the teachings of many earlier adepts to form what amounted to an encyclopedia of alchemy. He elaborated on the subject and gives the name of a very early master of the art, the mysterious Chemes. It was thought that Chemes had written a book which he called *Chema*, with which the Sons of God had given lessons to the daughters of men. From "Chemes" and "Chema" was derived *Chemia*, a name which was given to the art itself. The Greek work *Chemia* was the designation for alchemy until the Arabs added to it the article *al*.[456]

Zoroaster, Zosimus explained, agreed with Hermes that men could raise themselves above Fate, but he took the way of magic, while Hermes, on the other hand, took the way of philosophy.[457] To Zosimus, the mystic's aim was to free the soul from the evil confines of matter and return it to God. To obtain the perfection of gold, they had only to free the essence of the noble metal from the base materials that imprisoned it. The goal of the alchemist, he explained, was the pursuit of a "stone which isn't a stone, this precious thing which has no value, this polymorphous thing, which has no form, this unknown thing which is known to all."[458]

The alchemical process, to Zosimus "is the Mithraic Mystery, the incommunicable Mystery."[459] Essentially, the alchemists employed the language of chemical procedures as allegory. Converting lead into gold, implied the purification of the soul by removing successive levels of impurity, beginning with lead, which, according to the Mithraic system described by Celsus, is the first gate, the planet Saturn, then ascending through the six other planets, culminating in the Sun, symbolized by gold. Thus, as Lindsay maintained, explaining alchemy according to the system popularized by Numenius, "the soul in its ascent was thought to give back the qualities it had absorbed at each stage of its descent. Thus each halt was a sort of transmutation in terms of the relevant metal; after the seventh change came the absorption into the luminous bliss of the eighth sphere. Having come down from Ahura Mazda's presence by the low gate of the Crab, the soul went up by the lofty gate of Capricorn."[460]

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Chapter 12: Seth

Gnosticism

Gnosticism is the name used by scholars to refer as a group to the various heretical Christian sects that emerged at Alexandria. Though there are varying theories as to the origin of Gnostic thought, upon close examination, it clearly represents the meeting of Neoplatonic philosophy and the theology of the mysteries with Christianity. The word "Gnosticism" is derived from the Greek *gnostikos*, meaning "one who knows." What he knows is *gnosis*, the wisdom attained through revelation. In common with all Hellenistic mystical systems, the Gnostics believed that there is a divine spark in man that has descended from the divine realm above, which has fallen into the world of Fate, birth, and death, and that it can be awakened by its divine counterpart because of a revelation, or epiphany, and then be reintegrated into the spiritual world.

The basic principle of most religions is to behave towards others as we wish to be treated. According to the Bible, we are told "do unto others as you would they do unto you." Buddhism commands compassion toward all living creatures and Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, is reputed to having said, "do unto others as you would they do unto you, and from that come every other rule." The basis of these religions then is a principle of justice, and the requirement that it be implemented in the world by its adherents. On the contrary, the occultist seeks a knowledge that does not define justice, or how to treat his fellow man as an equal, but rather, he is lured by his vanity to seek out a type of knowledge that sets him apart from others, maintaining that it is the preserve of the elite.

Instead, the height of knowledge an occultist hopes to attain is a recognition that he is not bound by rules. Self-affirmation becomes the acknowledgment of that fact, and the single-minded pursuit of ones own will. Morality is merely a convention invented by society, or as the Gnostics claim, restrictive regulations imposed by an oppressive god. Their purpose is to liberate themselves from such constraints. The whisperings of one's own conscience are merely a mark of weakness, while the ability to transcend them, to act beyond the bounds of perceived morality, is strength. They adhere to the opposite of the divine principle of "do unto others," for as Aleister Crowley, godfather of modern Satanism, had said: "do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." Ultimately, because their knowledge is offensive, it is kept a closely guarded secret, offering as excuse that it cannot be understood by minds they deem more feeble.

Though in modern times, an entire library of Gnostic documents and Coptic translations from Greek originals was discovered near Nag Hamadi in Egypt, our knowledge of the Gnostics stemmed mainly from their opponents, early Church fathers like, Irenaeus (c. 185), Hippolytus (c. 230), and Epiphanus (c. 375). However, due to modern tendencies in scholarship and biases toward Christianity, the testimonies of the early Church fathers are considered unreliable. It is thought that, in their struggle to defend what they perceived as orthodoxy, they exaggerated or coloured their accusations against their enemies, and that Gnosticism merely represents an alternative form of Christianity unjustly suppressed by the chauvinism of the emerging Church. However, we need not consider their accounts as untrustworthy if we recognize that similar practices and teachings can be found in various other branches of Hellenistic mysticism.

The Gnostics applied a radical dualistic interpretation to Christianity, interpreting the Bible in reverse, by pitting the Creator of the universe, referred to as the Demiurge, against the true god who lies outside of creation. *Demiurge* was a term first used by Plato in the *Timaeus* as the agent other than God who takes the preexisting materials of chaos, arranges them according to the models of eternal forms, and produces the physical world. As Plutarch explained, the Supreme God responsible for creating the world, and commonly worshipped by the ignorant masses, is actually the evil god, while the true god is that one mistakenly accused of evil. This god, or demon, should be called Hades or Pluto, god of the Underworld, or the sublunary realm. This method of interpretation in reverse, which became common throughout Hellenistic mysticism, had formerly been adopted by the followers of Pythagoras. According to Iamblichus:

> Their writings also, and all the books which they published, most of which have been preserved to our times, were not composed in popular or vulgar diction, or in a manner usual to all other writers, so as to be immediately understood, but in a way not to be easily apprehended by their readers. For they adopted Pythagoras' law of reverse, in an arcane manner concealing divine mysteries from the uninitiated, obscuring their writings and mutual conversations.[461]

Essentially, the Gnostics combined the terminology of the Neoplatonists and the mythology of the mysteries with Christianity. They believed there was The Good from which a variety of Aeons, or emanations, were given off. The universe, according to the Gnostics, was viewed as consisting of concentric spheres, of which the earth was the center. These spheres were marked by the circular orbits of the planets, each governed by an Archon, a deity hostile to spiritual men. Beyond them was the sphere of the fixed stars known as the *Pleroma*, or totality. It was made of thirty Aeons, each corresponding to the thirty days of the month. Within these were the signs of the Zodiac whose earthly equivalents were the twelve apostles. The soul of man is pure spirit placed by The Good in a body of corrupt matter created by the Demiurge. To be reunited with The Good, the mystic must gain secret *Gnosis*, which will allow him to bypass the Aeons, as well as the most inferior, the Demiurge, creator of the material world. The primary function of Gnostic revelation was to free spiritual men from astral determinism, for according to the Gnostics, "until baptism… Fate is real, but after it the astrologers are no longer right."

A central doctrine of Gnosticism was that of the passage of the soul through the planetary spheres, the route through which was opened by the Saviour, knower of the sacred names by which to appease the gate-keepers, or Archons, that impede the souls ascent. Therefore, the mystical system of Gnosticism held obvious parallels to other schools of Hellenistic mysticism, namely the Mysteries of Mithras, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, but also with the early Jewish mysticism of the Merkabah, or which Gershom Scholem identified as *Jewish Gnosticism*. Scholem indicated:

> The fact remains that precisely these ideas were affirmed in the heart of an esoteric discipline within Jewish tradition, and not only among Jewish heretics, even though the role of the pagan planet-angels is here assumed by other archons. These archons threaten the ecstatic visionary at the gates of the seven celestial palaces, and – entirely in keeping with the doctrines of various gnostic writings of the same period – can only be overcome and compelled to permit him to pass by the display of a magic "seal," through the recitation of hymns, prayers, etc. One can still discern plainly the relation to late Jewish apocalyptic writings, whose ideas evidently form a plausible transition to both Jewish monotheistic Gnosticism and the heretical Gnosticism that tended toward dualism.[462]

The fact that not all Nag Hamadi documents concentrate on Christian content though reflects the complexity of the origins of Gnosticism. The *Paraphrase of Shem* seems to reflect a Jewish Gnostic perspective. The *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* is clearly a Hermetic treatise. One of the interesting features of this find is the presence of two editions of *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which seems to be a non-Christian philosophic document which has apparently been Christianized in a redacted piece called the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. Finally, the presence of a segment from Plato's *Republic* among the documents gives further witness to the syncretistic nature of Gnostic thinking. The longest tractate in the library, *Zostrianos,* purports to be from Zoroaster. The Gnostics attacked by Plotinus also possessed apocrypha attributed to Zoroaster, as did certain Gnostics, the disciples of Prodicus, mentioned by Clement of Alexandria. According to the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies*, a Gnostic doctrine fought by the apostle Peter, supposed Zoroaster to have been sent to combat the invading influence of evil demons in the world, and through his triumph over them, to bring in a golden age. The government of the world was thought to have been divided by two Aeons, one identified with the god of the Old Testament, a vengeful demon, the other with the Christ, the god of light.

Among those scholars who rejected the Christian origin of Gnosticism were Wilhelm Bousset, in the early twentieth century, who traced Gnosticism instead to ancient Babylonian and Persian sources. The philologist Richard Reitzenstein agreed, but he went on to argue that Gnosticism derived from ancient Iranian religion and was influenced by Zoroastrian traditions.[463] Jean Doresse, the great scholar of Gnosticism, in *The Secret Book Of The Egyptian Gnostics*, credits the *Magussaeans* with producing the body of spurious scriptures from which Gnosticism developed: "The principal book of this kind, given under the names of Zoroaster, Osthanes and Hystapes, dates back to the second century of our era. It was

these books, perhaps, which did the most to prepare the mythical framework in which our Gnosis was coming to birth."[464]

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Magian doctrines were probably transmitted to Gnostics by way of heretical Jewish sects:

> Iranian [Zoroastrian] dualism, perhaps mediated through heterodox (sectarian) Judaism or Hellenistic thought, may well have provided one of the essential preconditions for the rise of Gnosticism. As early as the second century, the anti-Christian writer Celsus compared the teaching of the Ophite Gnostics about heavens and gates with the mysteries of Mithras. More important is the thoroughgoing dualism of Iranian thought, with its conflict between the good god Ahura Mazda and the evil god Ahriman and the astrological setting later provided. There is also a primordial man who seems also to be the Saviour.

However, according to Moshe Idel, "far more than did scholars in the first half of the twentieth century, contemporary scholars of Gnosticism refer to Jewish influence on the emerging Gnostic literature; the studies of Gilles Quispel, George MacRae, B. Pearson, Gedalliahu Stroumsa, and Jarl Fossum have altered the earlier Iranian-Egyptian-Greek explanations of Gnosticism."[465] As Hans Jonas, the renowned scholar of Gnosticism, pointed out, "some connection of Gnosticism with the beginnings of Kabbalah, has in any case to be assumed, whatever the order of cause and effect."[466]The way *middot*, or qualities of God, such as wisdom, understanding, knowledge, truth, faithfulness, righteousness, etc., for the Gnostics became the "Aeons", the powers and the emanations of God which fill the *Pleroma*, the divine "fullness", is paralleled in the tradition of *Maaseh Bereshit*.[467] As in Gnostic literature, there is a magical and theurgic aspect to the technique of ascent in Merkabah, and there are very strong connections between Merkabah literature and Hebrew and Aramaic theurgic literature of the period. It is very similar to a number of important texts preserved among the Greek magical papyri and to Gnostic literature of the *Pistis Sophia*, which originated in the second or third century AD.[468]

In addition, M. Friedlander, maintained that Gnosticism originated in Judaism, and that the heretics, attacked by the rabbis of the first and second centuries AD, were Jewish Gnostics. Likewise, Scholem explains, "in the second century Jewish converts to Christianity apparently conveyed different aspects of Merkabah mysticism to Christian Gnostics. In the Gnostic literature there were many corruptions of such elements, yet the Jewish character of this material is still evident, especially among the Ophites, in the school of Valentinius, and in several of the Gnostic and Coptic texts discovered within the last fifty years"[469] Their opinions are confirmed by several ancient sources.[470] For example, in fragments quoted from Eusebius, we know that Hegesippus argued that the Gnostics were inheritors of various Jewish or baptist sects, such as the Essenes. Filastrius, the fourth century AD bishop of Brescia, numbers the Gnostic sects of the Ophites among the sects that flourished in Judaism before the advent of Christianity.[471]

Essentially, although there are what appear to be Zoroastrian influences on Gnosticism, these must be understood as belonging originally to esoteric Judaism, and attributable to the centuries of contact between Judaism and Zoroastrianism, dating back to the sixth century BC, which resulted in the curious amalgam of *Magussaean* teachings. Therefore, while Magian thought is often recognized in the conceptual development of the dualism apparent in Gnosticism, Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, it must have been derived originally from heretical Judaism, and evolved from the Judaic conception of a supreme God and His opponent, the devil.

Possibly, a number of early Jewish mystics, choosing to practice magic, though knowing well it was forbidden, in vengeful animosity towards their rejected faith, created a deliberately antagonistic interpretation of the creed. Hence, the creator god who rules this world is the evil god. Venerating everything their former faith denounced, the foreign gods with which God was in constant battle, were substituted for Him. Thus, the horned god of the ancient fertility rites, the god of the Underworld, or the dying god, equated with God's arch opponent the Serpent, becomes not the enemy of mankind, but its benefactor. It is he who is responsible for introducing the prized cult of magic to the first human pair. The creator god who rules this world is the evil god. That god devoted to the salvation of humanity, is he who lies outside of God's dominion, the true god, commonly regarded as the devil. By disguising these ideas as a hidden interpretation of the Bible, passed on in secret from initiate to initiate, they were sheltered from public scrutiny and opposition from the religious establishment, and as such, could exist side by side with orthodox versions of the religion, though, at times, even infiltrate into the very heart of mainstream Judaism. If ever pronounced to the non-initiated, these interpretations would have attracted severe reaction. Though, under the guise a new faith, Christianity, which had yet to erect an orthodox establishment, those

committed to a more radical interpretation of Jewish scripture, could boldly proclaim their views without fear of reprisal.

Therefore, to the Ophites, also known as Sethians, a Jewish baptismal sect in the tradition of the Essenes, that flourished around the first century BC to the first century AD, the God of the Bible is really the evil god. According to the Ophites, *Ialdabaoth*, or *Yahweh*, the god of the Old Testament, was proud, ignorant and vengeful. Though there were powers above him, he was covetous of the supreme power and claimed himself to be the only god. Dissatisfied with his creation, he wanted to destroy his work through a woman, Eve. But Sophia liberated man by sending a serpent that led him to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, forbidden to them by *Ialdabaoth*, to keep man ignorant. Through Sophia, Adam and Eve acquired knowledge of all things and began to turn away from their creator. Ialdabaoth cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise, and after Cain and Abel, they gave birth to Seth, who was of a superior race, and whose sons were the Sons of God. The Sons of God intermarried with the daughters of Cain and caused such corruption that Ialdabaoth unleashed the Flood, but Sophia saved Noah. When the world was repopulated, Ialdabaoth chose Abraham, establishing a covenant with him that if his descendants served him he would grant them the earth. These were later led out of Egypt by Moses who gave them the Law. While the prophets were servants of Ialdabaoth, Sophia allowed certain words to infiltrate their prophecies. Such words referred to the Primordial Man, the Aeon and to the Christ, for Sophia intended, without *Ialdabaoth*'s knowledge, to bring about the births of Jesus and John the Baptist.

The Ophites included a variety of Gnostic sects, such as the Naassenes and Cainites. According to the Cainites, the *Old Testament* reflected the view that God's creation of the world was perversely designed to prevent the reunion of the divine element in man with the unknown perfect god. They also reversed the Bible story by revering rejected figures such as Cain, Esau and the Sodomites. The Cainites were sometimes called libertine Gnostics, because they reversed their interpretation of the Bible text to such an extent that they believed that true perfection, and hence salvation, comes only by breaking all the laws of the Old Testament.

On the authority of Hippolytus, the Gnostics had first been called *Naasseni*, derived from the Hebrew name for the serpent, *naas*, before they called themselves *Gnostics*.[472] Similarly, Ophite, from Greek *Ophis*, means "serpent". To the snake worshipping Ophites, the Serpent, is the real god, the primordial man, or the *Logos*. It is he who liberates man from the injustice of the creator, by leading him to partake of the forbidden knowledge. According to Epiphanius, the Gnostics believed:

> We venerate the serpent because God has made it the cause of Gnosis for mankind. Ialdabaoth did not wish men to have any recollection of the Mother and the Father on high. It was the Serpent, who by tempting them, brought them Gnosis; who taught the man and the woman the complete knowledge of the mysteries from on high. This is why [its] father Ialdabaoth, mad with fury, cast it down from the heavens.[473]

Thus, the serpent was worshipped by several sects of the Ophites. The Ophites made a very special cult of these reptiles. They kept and fed them in baskets, and they held their meetings close to the holes in which they lived. They arranged loaves of bread upon a table, and then, by means of incantations, they lured the snake until it came coiling its way among the offerings, and only then did they partake of the bread, each one kissing the muzzle of the reptile they had charmed. This, they claimed, was the perfect sacrifice, the true Eucharist.[474]

The Nazarenes

Modern research has shown that there was no such place as Nazareth, but that the word is a mistranslation of *Nazarene*, a word used to refer to the earliest followers of Jesus, and the same word used by the Arabs to refer to Christians, *Nassara*. It should have been Jesus the Nazarene. Following the death of Jesus, a centralized Nazarene authority was well established in Jerusalem. According to later Christian chroniclers, this administrative hierarchy was to become known as the *Early Church*. Its most famous member was Peter. Its official head though, neglected by later tradition, was Jesus' brother Jacob, known as Saint James, or James the Just.

The Nazarenes did not claim Jesus to be a god, but considered him a mortal with a divine message, not brining a new faith, but preaching a reformation of Judaism. Although persecuted by the Jews, the Nazarenes in Palestine long remained a group within their original religion. They adhered closely to orthodox Jewish law, and practiced such sacraments as the Sabbath, circumcision, and other Jewish festivals. Sometimes the Nazarenes are confused with a Syrian Judeo-Christian sect of the fourth century, who accepted the divinity of Christ and his supernatural birth, though they also maintained strict

observance of Jewish laws and customs, a practice that had been abandoned by the majority of Jewish Christians. They used a version of a Gospel in Aramaic called the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, or the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*.

The Nazarenes were one of several Christian sects that originated in and around Palestine in the first centuries AD, including the Ebionites and the Elkasites. Little information exists on the Ebionites and surviving accounts are subject to considerable debate. The first mention of the Ebionites is in the works of the Christian theologian Irenaeus, in his *Adversus haereses*, "Against Heresies", in approximately 180 AD. Other sources include the writing of Origen and St. Epiphanius of Constantia. The Ebionites believed in one God and taught that Jesus was the Messiah, and the true "prophet" mentioned in *Deuteronomy* 18:15. They rejected the Virgin birth, instead holding that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary.

In post-apostolic times, the oral tradition of the emerging Christian church, that claimed to preserve the teachings of its founder, had begun to deteriorate, partly because many or most of the eyewitnesses to the earliest events of Jesus' life and death and the beginning of the church had died. As a consequence, as Christianity grew among non-Jewish communities, referred to as Gentiles, these became increasingly separated from the teachings of the Nazarenes of Jerusalem. Finally, from Bishop of Irenaeus onwards, the Nazarene community were treated as a deviant sect. Therefore, those books that compose the New Testament seem not to mirror the beliefs of the Nazarene community at Jerusalem, but were all compiled quite late and from hearsay.

In response to what were perceived as growing heretical tendencies, the emerging orthodoxy stressed their version of the apostolic tradition, by focusing on the gospels and letters of Paul, and distinguished them from Gnostic writings, such as the *Gospel of Truth*. By the end of the second century, Bishop Irenaeus used a list of works comprising something nearing our present *New Testament*, the four canonical Gospels, I and II John, *Revelation*, Acts, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a work later excluded from the canon, and the thirteen letters of Paul.

Originally, Paul, the "thirteenth apostle", went by the Jewish name of Saul, and was from Tarsus, famous home of Stoic philosophy. As a fanatical Sadducee, Paul actively participated in attacks on the Nazarenes. Then, on the way to Damascus, to arrest some Nazarenes there, so he tells us, he underwent a transformation. A "light from heaven" knocked him off his horse and "a voice", issuing from the light demanded, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul asked the voice to identify itself, and the voice answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, and you are persecuting me." The voice further instructs him to continue to Damascus, where he will be told what he must do. He abandons his former name of Saul and becomes Paul. Around 39 AD, Paul returns to Jerusalem, and according to *Acts*, is officially admitted to the Nazarenes.

However, according to Paul, in his *Letter to the Galatians*, his reception into the Nazarenes was with some hesitance. Nevertheless, he is sent to Tarsus by "James, the brother of the Lord." From Tarsus, Paul continues his mission, which lasts about fourteen years and takes him across virtually the whole of the eastern Mediterranean world, not only throughout the *Holy Land*, but to Asia Minor and across the sea to Greece. Unfortunately, James and the Nazarenes are eventually forced to send their own missionaries after him to undo his teachings, because Paul is now spreading teachings very different from the original message of Jesus.

The essence of Jesus' mission, according to the *Gospel of Matthew*, was that he was a reformer of Judaism, and called for a return to orthodoxy. Jesus is declared to have said: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them."[475] However, Paul's teachings blatantly contradicted this pronouncement. While the Nazarene community adhered strictly to the original precepts of Jewish Law, Paul claimed that by simply believing in Christ, a Christian was free from any obligation towards the laws of the Old Testament. According to Paul:

> We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us.[476]

Ultimately, Paul adopted a mystical interpretation, regarding the crucifixion was a form of ritual sacrifice in which Jesus, as the son of God, died for humanity's sins. Therefore, since Judaic Law existed only to divert us from our sinful natures, there was no longer any need to adhere to it. These teachings of Paul were derived from the mysteries, for as Firmicus Maternus described, in a mystery scene in which the

priest confides to the mourners of the dead god, "be confident, *mystai*, since the god has been saved: you too will be saved from your toils."[477]

Paul's teachings are of a clearly mystical inclination, nowhere reflected in the other gospels. Through his spiritual communication with Christ, Paul claims to have discovered "hidden mysteries" and "secret wisdom," which, he explains, he shared only with those Christians he deemed "mature." Although Paul is often thought to have been the enemy of the Gnostics, a closer look exposes that, either he was often susceptible to their influences, or that he may in fact have been one of the originators of Gnostic speculations. Elaine Pagels points out:

> Instead of repudiating Paul as their obstinate opponent, the Naassenes and Valentinians revere him as the one of the apostles who, above all others, was himself a Gnostic initiate. The Valentinians, in particular, allege that their secret tradition offers direct access to Paul's own teaching of wisdom and gnosis. According to Clement "they say that Valentinus was a hearer of Theudas, and Theudas, in turn, a disciple of Paul." When Valentinus' disciple Ptolemy tells Flora of "apostolic tradition" that "we too have received from succession," he refers apparently, to this secret tradition about the savior received through Paul. Valentinus himself often alludes to Paul (in the extant fragments, and very often in the *Gospel of Truth*, if, as H. Ch. Peuch and G. Quispel suggest, Valentinus is its author); his disciples Ptlolemy, Heracleon, and Theodotus, no less than Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement, revere Paul and quote him simply as "the apostle."[478]

The Gnostic Valentinus claimed that he received from Theudas, a disciple of Paul, initiation into a secret doctrine of God. Paul taught this secret wisdom not to everyone, and not publicly, but only to a select few. What this secret tradition reveals is that the one whom most Christians ignorantly worship as creator, God, the Father, is in reality, only the image of the true God. According to Valentinus, the orthodox preachers mistakenly ascribed to God what actually applies only to the Demiurge.[479] Whoever achieves this gnosis is ready to receive the secret sacrament called redemption, meaning "release," or freedom from moral obligation.

Paul understood the resurrected Jesus as a mystical figure, the Archetypal Man. The original man, or Archetypal Man, formed before the human or earthly man, is the true image of God, the beginning of creation and the Lord of it. Paul says:

> So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living soul"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.[480]

The hidden wisdom of Paul is related to the secret mystery of Sophia, that is, to the passion, fall, and restoration of Sophia, the pattern for the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

> However, we speak wisdom [Sophia] among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this age [Aeon], nor of the *Archons* of this age, that come to naught; But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before [in the presence] of the *Aeons* [Divine Beings dwelling with the Father in the *Pleroma*] unto glory; which none of the Archons of this age knew for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.[481]

Aeons has many meanings in Greek, including age, space, or a spiritual being governing a vast space or dimension either in the heavens (Pleroma) or below. According to the Valentinian school of theology, which inherited its teaching from Paul, the *Aeon* of this Cosmos refers to a usurper god, called the Demiurge, the evil creator god, the Bible's Yahweh. Valentinian theologians claimed that, according to Paul, portions of the Mosaic code and the Old Testament contained ordinances which derived from a usurper god and not from the Highest God, whom they identified as the Father of Jesus. Archon is the Greek word for ruler, and the power of the air is identified with the devil by Valentinians. The Archon was known in the first and second century under many names, including Ialdabaoth, Saclas or Sammael.

The Church Fathers

Christianity emerged at a time when the mysteries were at the height of their popularity, and though it rejected paganism outwardly, it absorbed several of its concepts, derived ultimately from the mysteries, rationalized by the early Church Fathers through their adherence to Neoplatonic philosophy. According to Anthony Buzzard, "the mingling of Hebrew and Greek thinking was set in motion first in the second

century by an influx of Hellenism through the Church Fathers, whose theology was colored by the Platonists Plotinus and Porphyry."[482] Essentially, as scholars have noted, traditional Christian orthodoxy, though claiming to derive its doctrine from authentic sources, is actually an amalgam of Biblical themes and Neoplatonism.[483]

Because Gnosticism appealed to the principles of Platonism to provide philosophical justification for its doctrines, philosophy came to be seen by the early Christians as the mother of heresy. However, being the Hellenistic Age, the supremacy of Greek culture led the early Christian theologians and apologists to declare that many of the ideas in Christianity had been prefigured in the teachings of the Greek philosophers. The rationalization of Christianity with Platonic philosophy was initiated by Justin Martyr. He was born early in the second century AD, and as a young man went to Ephesus to study philosophy. But while meditating in solitude on the seashore Justin met an old man who refuted the Platonic doctrine of the soul, and proceeded to tell him about the prophets of the *Old Testament* who foretold the coming of Christ.

Justin's conversion however, did not mean the abandonment of philosophical inquiry. On the contrary, he viewed Christianity as the "true philosophy." The transcendent incomprehensible God of Plato is the God of the Bible, and he surmised that the Jewish scriptures must have been made available to Plato and the Greeks philosophers. The influence of Platonic philosophy becomes apparent in Justin Martyr's theology. He uses the concept of the divine *Logos* to explain how the transcendent Father of all deals with the inferior, created order of things. The Son-*Logos* is necessary to mediate between the supreme Father and the material world. The divine *Logos* inspired the prophets and was present in Jesus Christ. Justin insists that the *Logos* is "other than" the Father, derived from the Father in a process which does not diminish the being of the Father, but in a manner in which one torch may be lit from another.

Clement of Alexandria, the great opponent of Gnosticism, was confident that, because God had planted the seeds of truth in all men, there is much to be learned from Platonic metaphysics, from Stoic ethics, and from Aristotelian logic. Little significant information about Clement's early life. Clement was converted to Christianity by his last teacher, reputedly a former Stoic philosopher, and the first recorded president of the Christian catechetical school at Alexandria. Clement succeeded his mentor as head of the school and became the intellectual leader of the Alexandrian Christians. He drew heavily on Philo, and followed both Philo and Justin Martyr, in claiming that the Greek philosophers plagiarized their teaching from Moses.[484]

Clement's successor as head to the catechetical school of Alexandria was Origen, who, according to Prophyry, had attended lectures given by Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Plutarch and Plotinus. Origen wrote a work entitled *Stromateis* in which he attempted to interpret Christian concepts in Platonic language. To Origen, God first created not the material world, but a realm of spiritual beings endowed with reason and free will and dependent on the Creator. To explain the Fall, he borrowed an idea from Philo of Alexandria, and suggested that the spiritual beings became "sated" with the adoration of God, and fell by neglect, gradually turning away from God to what is inferior. The material world was brought into being as a result of this Fall.

Through this interest in philosophy, the Christian Fathers introduced pagan concepts into Christianity, which philosophy had long rationalized into its theology. As Church historians point out, believers in God as a single entity were "at the beginning of the third century still forming the large majority."[485] The *Gospel of Matthew* did not originally include Jesus' supposed instructions to his followers to preach to gentiles the words: "immersing them in the name of the father the son and the holy ghost." This piece of mythology was a later introduction. Eusebius, who wrote in the early fourth century AD, quoted from some manuscripts of *Matthew* that contained such an addition and some that did not. Essentially, from the Platonic concept of the Monad and the Dyad, the early Church fathers composed the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, whereby Jesus was regarded as one of three entities, including a Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, though all comprising a single Godhead.

The trinity was adopted into Christianity through the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria, whose formulation of the Logos, or the "Word", as an intermediary between God and creation, helped to lay the groundwork for Neoplatonism, Gnosticism as well as the philosophical framework of the early Christian Fathers. In anticipation of the Christian doctrine, Philo called the Logos the First-Begotten Son of God, the man of God, the image of God, and second to God. As Philo had described, the one transcendent God was beyond the reach of mere man, therefore, the need for a mediator between God and man, and thus Christ was interpreted as the *Logos*. The fourth gospel of the New Testament, the *Gospel of John*, also known as the Gnostic Gospel, refers to Jesus as the "Word", translated from the Greek *Logos*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God."[486] Later it states: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace."[487]

The creed of Jesus as Son and God was finally formalized and instituted as an orthodox tenet at the Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD. This international conference of the early Christian community was held in response to a deep theological dispute that divided the Roman empire, between Christians of Antioch and those of Alexandria. Christians in Alexandria believed that Jesus preexisted eternally as a divine being, and that he had become human by appearing as a man, but not a man. The Christians of Antioch were led by Arius, who stressed that Jesus could not be one and the same God. Arius' basic argument was that the Son is not self-existent, but must be a creation of God, created out of nothing and has had a beginning.

The Arian creed finally provoked a crisis within the church when Arius was excommunicated by Alexandria's Bishop Alexander. The Roman emperor Constantine sent Arius and Alexander each a letter asking them to resolve the dispute. Unable to do so, Constantine decided personally to summon all Christian leaders to the first-ever world Christian council, the Council of Nicaea. The point of contention was whether Jesus was a mere man who had been commissioned by God to preach His message, or whether he was actually one with God, "of one substance with the Father." Constantine ruled in favor of the Alexandrians.

Under pressure of banishment, all but two of those present signed a revised statement of faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The original Nazarene creed of the one God was suppressed, the books of Arius and his sympathizers, known as Arians, were ordered burnt, and a reign of terror was proclaimed against all those who did not conform with the new official Christian doctrine. Although the Council said little about the Holy Spirit, over the next half century, Athanasius defended and refined the creed. By the end of the fourth century AD, under the leadership of the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, the doctrine of the Trinity basically took the form it has maintained ever since.

Constantine

The situation of the Christians within the expanding Roman Empire was always precarious, and Christians in Rome had been constantly suppressed because their beliefs were thought to challenge the traditional emperor worship. They were very much a minority group with no legal status. As time passed the suppression became even more severe, until it once more reached the proportions of Nero's reign and became outright persecution. Their difficulties would not be alleviated until Constantine, who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. To mark the beginning of a new era, the capital of the empire was transferred to the new Christian city of Constantinople.

From that point on, practice of the mysteries declined quickly. However, Constantine's commitment to Christianity is suspect, and his opposition to the mysteries unclear. His disposition towards Christianity seems to have been rather a recognition of the diplomatic importance of acknowledging the emerging Christian community, which was by then becoming increasingly numerous, and Constantine required mass support against his rival Maxentius, for the imperial throne. In 312 AD, at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine defeated Maxentius, leaving Constantine's claim unchallenged. Immediately before his victory, Constantine is said to have had a vision. A vision which was later reaffirmed by a prophetic dream he had, of a radiant cross suspended in the sky, upon which was inscribed, "by this sign you will conquer." In response, Constantine ordered the shields of his troops emblazoned with the Christian monogram, known as the *labarum*, a wheel-shaped sign formed by the first two letters of the word *Christos,* an *X* (Chi) placed in front of *P* (Rho), the Greek letters *Chi Rho*.

Instead, it seems Constantine had some sort of vision in the precincts of a pagan temple to the Gallic Apollo. The state religion of Rome during Constantine's time was pagan Sun worship, for which he acted as its chief priest for much of his life. According to a witness accompanying his army at the time, Constantine's vision was of the Sun god, the deity worshipped by certain cults under the name of *Sol Invictus*, the "Invincible Sun." There is evidence that, just before the vision, Constantine had been initiated into a cult of Sol Invictus. In any case, the Roman Senate, after the Battle of Milvian Bridge, erected a triumphal arch in the Coliseum, and according to the inscription on this arch, Constantine's victory was won "through the prompting of the Deity," Sol Invictus. Constantine's reign was called a "Sun emperorship," and Sol Invictus figured everywhere, including on the imperial banners and the coinage. By an edict promulgated in AD 321 Constantine ordered the law courts closed on "the venerable day of the Sun," and decreed that this day be a day of rest.

The cult of Sol Invictus, of Syrian in origin, was harmonized with the cult of Mithras, with which it was so similar that the two are often confused. Imposed by Roman emperors on their subjects a century before Constantine, and instead of being eliminated in the time of his reign, it seems to have to have survived by being absorbed into Christianity. In common with Jesus, Mithras was born in a cave

surrounded by animals and shepherds at the Winter Solstice in December, dates that had specific astronomical significance. In the Julian calendar, the twenty-fifth of December was reckoned the winter solstice, and was regarded as the *Nativity of the Sun*, because from this date the length of the day began to increase, and therefore, was regarded as the day of the rebirth of the Sun-god and the rejuvenation of life. The *Gospels*, however, say nothing as to the day of Christ's birth, and accordingly the early Church did not celebrate it. In time, though, the Christians of Egypt had come to regard the sixth of January as the birth of the Saviour, and that date gradually spread until, by the fourth century AD, it was universally established in the East. Finally, however, at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century AD, the Western Church, which had never recognized the sixth of January as the day of the Nativity, adopted the twenty-fifth of December as the true date.

Christian authors, like Justin Martyr and Tertullian, noted the similarities between Christianity and Mithraism, but claimed that the mysteries were demonically inspired imitations of the true Christianity. To Justin Martyr: "Jesus took bread, and… said, "this do ye in remembrance of me, this is my body"; and, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "this is my blood"; and gave it to them… Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithra, commanding the same thing to be done." [488] To Tertullian, "washing is the channel through which they are initiated into the sacred rites of some notorious Isis or Mithras… at the Eleusinia they are baptized to achieve regeneration, and the remission of their sins. Which fact being acknowledged, we recognize here also the zeal of the devil rivaling the things of God, while we find him, too, practicing baptism." [489] Tertullian states that Mithras "in the kingdom of Satan, sets his marks on the forehead of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread, and introduces an image of resurrection… What also must one say to Satan's limiting his chief priest to a single marriage: He too, has his virgins; he, too, his proficients in continence… Satan has shown such emulation in… administration of Christ's sacraments" that he "succeeded in adapting to his profane and rival creed the very documents of divine things and of the Christian saints." [490]

Effectively, Jesus became the dying god of the mysteries, whose death and resurrection was celebrated every spring, known as Easter. Most of the churches had decided to observe Easter replacing the Jewish *Passover*. The Jewish Passover festival was ostensibly celebrated to commemorate the night God slew the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, expect those houses marked with the blood of a sacrificed lamb, which He passed over. In actuality, Passover was an assimilation of the spring rites that celebrated the death and resurrection of Tammuz. The *Book of Ezekiel* speaks of as an abomination among the Jews, with Jewish women sitting by the gate of the Temple weeping for the foreign god.[491]

In Phrygia, where numerous Jewish colonies were established, Tammuz, known as Attis, was assimilated to Dionysus-Sabazius, which an etymology that dates back to the Hellenistic period equates with *Yahweh Zebaoth*, the Biblical Lord of Hosts.[492] Cumont maintained: "undoubtedly he belonged to a Jewish-pagan sect that admitted neophytes of every race to its mystic ceremonies."[493] According to Lydus, a Byzantine astrologer of the sixth century AD, "the Chaldeans call the god Dionysus (or Bacchus), Iao in the Phoenician tongue (instead of the Intelligible Light), and he is also called Sabaoth, signifying that he is above the seven poles, that is the Demiurgos."[494] In the first century AD, Cornelius Labeo, equated Iao with Dionysus, from the following *Oracle of Apollo of Claros*:

> Those who have learned the mysteries should hide the unsearchable secrets, but, if their understanding is small and the mind weak, then ponder this: that Iao is the supreme god of all gods; in winter, Hades; at spring's beginning, Zeus; the Sun in summer; and in autumn, the splendid Iao.[495]

The Dionysiac symbolism of the wine-cup, the sacred bowl carrying the blood of the god, familiar to Mithraism, and other mystical systems, had a strong presence in early Jewish synagogue art. Goodenough notes that wine symbols were the most prominent of any kind, including vintage scenes, vines, bunches of grapes, the wine cup or the cup as a fountain, and therefore, "…it was plain that we had a great amount of Jewish art from the period, and that this art was elaborately Dionysiac, had indeed the same vocabulary of Dionysiac borrowing as that used by the early Christians."[496] A similarity between the Jewish Passover and the rites of Dionysus was perceived by a number of ancient authors. According to Tacitus, the priests of the Jews, "used to perform their chants to the flute and drums, crowned with ivy, and a golden vine was discovered in the Temple; and this has led some to imagine that the god thus worshipped was Prince Liber (Dionysus)."[497] In a dialogue, Plutarch presents several speakers enjoying a symposium and discussing the identity of the Jewish god. One of the speakers, Moeragenes, proposes that there is reason to equate the Jewish god with Dionysus:

> Most of the relevant proofs can be pronounced or divulged only to those of us who have been initiated into the Perfect Mysteries celebrated every other year, but what I am going to speak of is not forbidden in conversation with friends… First, the time and character of the greatest, most sacred holiday of the Jews clearly befits Dionysus. When they celebrate their so-called Fast, at the height of the vintage, they set out tables of all sorts of fruit under tents and huts plaited for the most part of vines and ivy. They call the first of the two days Tabernacles. A few days later they celebrate another festival, this time identified with Bacchus not through obscure hints but plainly called by his name, a festival that is a sort of *Procession of Branches* or *Thyrsus Procession*, in which they enter the temple each carrying a thyrsus. What they do after entering we do not know, but it is probable that the rite is a Bacchic revelry, for in fact they use little trumpets to invoke their god as do the Argives at their Dionysia.[498]

Easter, from the Greek *Eorestes*, or Astarte, the festival of death and resurrection, was made to coincide with the spring rites of other contemporary cults and mystery schools. The death and resurrection of Attis was officially celebrated at Rome on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of March, the latter being regarded as the spring equinox, and therefore as the most appropriate day for the revival of the god of fertility who had been dead or sleeping throughout the winter.[499] Similarly, other Christian holidays were assimilated to pagan festivals. The festival of St. George in April replaced the ancient pagan festival of the Parilia. The festival of St. John the Baptist in June has supplanted a Midsummer festival of water. The festival of the Assumption of the Virgin in August has ousted the festival of Diana, and the feast of All Souls in November is a continuation of an old heathen feast of the dead.

The cross is one of the oldest talismans in the world. The labarum suggests by its name and shape, an echo of the double-axe symbol, the *labrys*, an ancient cult symbol of Zeus.[500] The letter *Chi* was used by the Greeks as a solar symbol, and the abbreviation of the Greek name for Saturn, Chronos, as was the wheel-shaped sign formed by the first two letters combined, an X (Chi) placed in front of P (Rho).[501] In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes God as creating the circle of the planets and the circle of the fixed stars in the form of a *Chi*, Ezekiel's "wheel inside a wheel", and among the Mithraists, the intersecting circles on the globe on which the Leontocephalus is made to stand. This *Psychogonia* passage was the source of much comment by the Neoplatonists and others, and Justin Martyr in his *Apologia*, considered that Plato interpreted his *Chi* from the brazen serpents that Moses had erected as a sign in the form of a cross.[502]

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Chapter 13: Idris

The Dark Ages

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, European civilization is said to have gone into a *Dark Age*. The idea of a *Dark Age* was contrived to account for the supposed break between classical and later European civilization, a notion based on the false supposition that the Greeks and Romans were somehow the ancestors of the Europeans. However, throughout the period of classical civilization, those nations that would eventually comprise modern Europe were already mired in barbarism, their emergence from which would not be achieved until they were finally introduced to the arts and sciences of classical antiquity during the Crusades by the Arabs. In fact, it had been these northern "barbarians" that had been responsible for nearly extinguishing the light of the Roman Empire, when the Visigoths, under Alaric, sacked Rome in 410 AD.

In any case, the capital of the Roman empire had already been transferred to Constantinople, in the eastern arm of the empire, where the survival of classical civilization was sustained unchecked until their conquest by the Turks in 1453 AD. Byzantium, by which the Empire is usually referred to, was derived from an ancient Greek colony on the European side of the Bosphorus, midway between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, which was refounded as the new Rome by the emperor Constantine in 330 AD, and given the name *Constantinople*. Though modern scholars use the term *Byzantium*, to the Byzantines themselves, they were the rightful heirs of the Roman Empire, and they called themselves *Romaioi*, or Romans.

In the East, the Persian empire continued to dominate. In the third century AD, the Parthians, weakened by repeated Roman invasions, were replaced by the Sassanians, an Iranian dynasty who extended the empire's boundaries, and challenged Roman power in the Middle East. Under the leadership of Ardashir I, the Sassanians created an empire that was constantly changing in size as it reacted to Rome, to Byzantium to the west, and to the Kushans of Afghanistan to the east. At the time of Shapur I, in the last half of the third century AD, the empire stretched from Georgia in the north, to Oman in Arabia in the south, to the Indus river in the east, and to the upper Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in the west. At the Shapur I founded the city of Gondeshapur, in which became the center of ancient sciences. A school was set up, the *Academy of Gondeshapur*, on the model of that at Alexandria, in which medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and logic were taught, mostly from Greek texts translated into Syriac, but also elements of Indian and Persian sciences were included.

The Sassanians did much to revive Persian culture, making Zoroastrianism the official state religion. Traditional accounts explain that the early Zoroastrian scriptures kept by the Achaemenids were destroyed by Alexander, though Valakhsh, an Arsacid king, ordered the search for and collection of all parts of the scriptures that had survived, and put to writing that which had been preserved through oral tradition. This work was then continued through Ardashir and Shapur I, traditionally considered to be the founder of the orthodox worship of Mazda. Zoroastrian fire-altars were established in numerous places throughout the empire, yet a remarkable number of faiths such as, Zurvanism, the worship of Mithras, though not in its Roman form, and the veneration of local deities such as Anahita and Ishtar, were all widely popular. Though, at various times, followers of other faiths suffered official persecution. An inscription of Shapur I boasts of having attacked various religions in the empire, including Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Manicheanism.

Manicheanism was founded by an individual named Mani, born near Baghdad in 214 AD, to a family related to the Persian royal house. As a youth, Mani was introduced by his father into an unspecified mystical sect that emphasized asceticism and celibacy, practiced baptism, and wore white robes. This sect was a Jewish-Christian one with Gnostic tendencies, resembling that of the Essenes, known as the *Mughtasilah*, that is, those who wash, or baptize, themselves. However, Mani protested against his upbringing, and around 240 AD, he began to propagate his own teachings, and became

renowned for his spiritual healing and exorcisms. His followers proclaimed him "the new Jesus" and even credited him with a virgin birth.

Mani regarded Zoroaster, Buddha, and Jesus as his forerunners and declared that he, like them, had received essentially the same enlightenment from the same source. His teachings were a fusion of Gnostic Christianity with aspects of earlier Zoroastrian and Mithraic traditions, purporting that the creator god was evil, and offered salvation through gnosis. Inner gnosis reveals that the soul, which shares in the nature of God, has fallen into the world of matter and must be saved by means of spirit or intelligence, *Nous*. At death the soul of the righteous returns to Paradise, but the sinful soul is condemned to a cycle of reincarnations. In the fulfillment of time the Messenger will come. Atlas, the World Supporter, will throw off his burden, heaven and earth sink into the abyss, and a universal conflagration ensues, during which the wicked are tormented. When the separation of light from darkness is complete eternal tranquillity reigns.

In AD 276, by order of the king, Mani was imprisoned, flayed to death, and decapitated, and his mutilated body was put on public display. Nevertheless, within Mani's lifetime, his religion had spread to the eastern provinces of the Sassanian empire, and in defiance of attempts at its suppression, Manicheanism spread with extraordinary rapidity throughout the Christian world. From Egypt it moved across the northern Africa, where St. Augustine temporarily converted to the faith, and reached Rome in the early fourth century. The fourth century marked the height of Manichaean expansion in the West, with churches established in southern Gaul and Spain. Attacked by the Christian Church as well as the Roman state, it disappeared almost entirely from Western Europe by the end of the fifth century, and from the eastern portion of the Empire during the course of the sixth century.

Islam

Modern Europeans are not direct inheritors of classical civilization. Contrary to popular belief, the arts and sciences of antiquity were introduced to them to them by way of the Arabs. After first conquering the Sassanids in the seventh century AD, the Arabs created a brilliant civilization, eclipsing that of Byzantium, which dominated and attracted the attention of the world throughout the Dark Ages. Regrettably, the accomplishments of Arab civilization are little studied in the West, not being considered part of the direct course of "Western" history. Concealing obvious racial and religious prejudices, the reason most often offered for ignoring the role the Arabs, is that it did not exercise a profound influence in the development of Western culture. Quite the opposite is true. In many ways, Arab civilization was a direct continuation of classical civilization, and contributed fundamentally to emergence of European culture.

The impetus behind the dramatic rise of the Arabs was a revolutionary religion, that of the Muslims, known as Islam, which emerged in a then remote part of the world, in what is modern-day Saudi Arabia. Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, and the Arabs, were descendants of the first of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael, while the Jews were descended from his second son, Isaac. Ishmael had migrated, probably sometime around the beginning of the second millennium BC, with his mother Hagar, Abraham's Egyptian slave-girl, to Arabia. There, he and Abraham built the famous Kabba, the cube-shaped structure which became the focal point of the Islamic faith, and Ishmael intermarried with the Arab tribes to become the ancestor of Mohammed.

The Arabs had been favoured with a geographical landscape that left them nearly impenetrable, and which allowed them to escape subjugation to the rule of either the Persians or the Romans. Cut off from the cultural developments of the rest of the world, the Arabs were a barbarous people, inundated in superstition and tribal warfare. Herodotus wrote that the Arabs worshiped as sole deities Orotalt, whom he identifies with Dionysus, and Alilat, identified with both Urania and Aphrodite. The Arabs not only worshipped *Allah*, the supreme Semitic God, but also a number of female deities whom they regarded his daughters. Among these were Alilat or *Al-Lat*, *Al-Uzza*, and *Manat*, who represented respectively the Sun, Venus, and Fortune.

As a young man, Mohammed, determined to solve the social and moral ills of his country, would spend days at a time meditating in his favorite retreat, in the Mountain of Light. Finally, at the age of forty, he was visited by the angel Gabriel and imparted with a revelation from *Allah*, Arabic for "the God." The revelation was later compiled in written form after his death into what is now known as the *Koran*. Mohammed's teachings claimed, not to pronounce a new message, but simply to restore and correct God's original revelation. His was the same religion which had already been revealed to a long line of prophets, beginning with Adam, through Abraham, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. Like Mohammed, they had all preached to humanity the same message of monotheism, the worship of a single transcendent and omnipotent deity. Unfortunately, according to Muslim teachings, with time, the Jews altered the Bible, corrupting the original message, while the Christians had ascribed divinity to Jesus, equating him with the pagan trinity, though in truth he was a mortal with a divine message.

Mohammed admonished the Arabs to abandon their worship of statues and false idols, and to acknowledge Allah, the sole God. Unfortunately, the ruling tribes of Mecca, who profited from administering the religious precincts, were committed to preserving the traditional superstitions, and tried to suppress the propagation of Mohammed's message through brutal forms of repression. These tactics eventually forced Mohammed to move with a band of followers to the town of Medina, just north of Mecca. Known as the *Hejirah*, this migration inaugurated a ten-year struggle, including several battles, between the first Muslims and the pagans of Mecca. Finally, when Mohammed came to Mecca for battle in 630 AD, the Meccans chose to surrender and accept Islam. Upon entering the city, Mohammed offered gifts to all, and brought an end to the rule of paganism by demanding the destruction of all the idols in Mecca.

Following Mohammed's death in 632 AD, the spread of Islam continued at a very rapid pace. A series of famous Caliphs, meaning successors, named Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali, united the Arab clans for great raids into Syria and Mesopotamia. Within an amazingly short period of time, the Muslims completely conquered the Persian Empire of the Sassanids, Egypt, and though unable to take the city of Constantinople itself, stripped the Byzantine Empire of its eastern provinces. The Arabs also extended Islam eastward to the Indus River and the frontiers of China, and westward into North Africa, and toward the end of the century, Byzantine rule over the coast of Africa was ended by a maneuver which drove the Greeks from Carthage.

By defeating Ali, the fourth Caliph, Muawiyah became successor and transferred the seat of authority to Damascus. Five years before his death, he induced the leaders of the empire to recognize his son Yazid as his successor, placing the caliphate firmly in the hands of the Umayyad family. From this point on, a Caliph was no longer selected on his merit, but by hereditary succession, and, as a consequence, the incompetence of successive rulers, led to the deterioration of Arab civilization. Apparently, "visitors from Arabia and religious scholars from Kufah were shocked at the elegance and pomp of the Damascus court and were scandalized by the flow of wine, the singing girls, and the devotion to the chase exhibited there. All these seemed far removed from the teachings of Mohammed. As the wealth and power of the ruling society increased, idleness, pleasure seeking, and disregard for Muslim virtues multiplied."[503]

Baghdad

Opposition accelerated against the Umayyads, who were finally overthrown by the Abbassids, led by Abu al-Abbas, a descendant of an uncle of the prophet Mohammed. It was at the end of Abbas' reign, with the accession to the caliphate in 754 AD of his brother, Abu Jafar, that the true inauguration of the great era of Arab rule began. This ancestor of the next thirty-five caliphs took the title of *al-Mansur*, meaning "rendered victorious". In 762-766 AD, al-Mansur built a new capital at Baghdad near the site of the ancient city of Babylon. This new circular fortress-palace grew within a few decades into a fabled luxury-filled city that has impressed the imagination of the world for centuries. During the great first century of the Abbasids, Baghdad was the hub of the Middle East, officially named *Madinat al-Salam*, the "City of Peace."

From the corners of the known world royal embassies came bearing gifts and seeking the favor of the Caliph of Baghdad. Most publicized of these, at least in the West, was the mission sent by Charlemagne in 797 to secure greater safety for Frankish pilgrims to the Holy Land. No mention of this embassy has been found in eastern sources, and there is little evidence that it ever accomplished any of its aims. Yet, the trophies brought back from the journey, the most fantastic being an elephant, so magnified the incident for the West that Baghdad became an almost legendary place. This was the world that produced the *Arabian Nights*, tales replete with magical and occult lore, through which the magnificence of the court at Baghdad of al-Mansur's successor Harun al-Rashid became renowned in the West.

The splendour of the Abbasid regime was enhanced by their generous patronage of artists and artisans of all kinds. Many of the arts and techniques of handicraft of China, India, Iran, and the Byzantine Empire, and those of the early civilizations of Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia were studied by the Arabs. The science of paper-making was acquired from China, and by the tenth century, paper mills existed in Iran, Iraq, and Egypt. Paper made from flax facilitated the production of books on an enormous scale. According to Marco Polo, "in Baghdad itself a great variety of materials are worked – cloth of gold, silk, damask, brocade and cramoisy, embroidered with many different designs of animals. Most of the pearls imported from India into Christendom are pierced in Baghdad, and the city is a center for the study of the laws of Mohammed, of necromancy, physics, geomancy and physiognomy."[504]

From the Greek philosophers, the Muslim scholars, writing in Arabic, created a school of philosophy that had a profound and recognized influence on Christian philosophers of medieval Europe. Their conquests brought the Arabs within the strongly Hellenized territories of Syria and Egypt, along with

the western part of Sassanian Persia. Like Alexandria in Egypt, the Academy of Gondeshapur, which lasted long after the establishment of the Abbassid Caliphate, became an important source of ancient learning in the Islamic world. The sciences of the Greeks, Romans, Iranians, and Hindus were translated into Arabic and assimilated into Muslim culture.

In 830, Al Mamun, successor to Harun al-Rashid, established the *Bayt al Hikmah*, or "House of Wisdom", consisting of a library, an academy, and housing a staff of translators. By the middle of the ninth century the main works of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Galen, and Hermetic works, had been translated into Arabic. Arabic translations of the works of philosophy served mainly to transmit Greek learning to the Christians and Jewish worlds.[505] There were Neoplatonist philosophers prior to the rise of Islam who were not Christians, but the process of transmitting Greek philosophy to the Muslims was essentially conducted by the Christians as translators. Eastern Christians had preserved the Greek philosophic and scientific traditions and at the time of the Muslim conquests there were centers of Greek learning in Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt. The translators, most of whom were Nestorian and Jacobite Christians, began their activities during the early Abbasid period and they continued for about two hundred years.

From the early tenth century until the early thirteenth, Jewish philosophers, living in Muslim lands, produced a wide range of philosophical literature in Arabic. Saadia ben Joseph, a Gaon of the tenth century and head of the rabbinical academy at Sura near Baghdad, was the first major Jewish philosopher of the Muslim period. He produced a translation of the Bible into Arabic, and his Arabic commentaries made the rabbinic understanding of the Bible readily available. His poetic works stimulated the revival of Hebrew poetry. More importantly, through his commentary on the *Sepher Yetzirah*, and his philosophical treatise *Beliefs and Opinions*, Saadia legitimized for Judaism the synthesis of the Bible with Greek philosophy. Baghdad, with its Jewish population of approximately 40,000, was the focal point of the world-wide Jewish community of the Middle Ages, and the center of Kabbalistic science. A mystical wave is said to have swept Judaism during the period and stimulated a broad literature of Merkabah and related texts. These circles produced a rich literature that, in addition to contemplation of the Chariot, included techniques which continued the tradition of earlier magical papyri. Many formulae are preserved from the period by Jewish *Masters of the Name*, often for non-Jewish customers.[506]

Another important school of translators of Greek works into Arabic, though primarily interested in mathematical and astronomical works, was centered at Harran. Following the closing of the Academy, the last of the Neoplatonists moved east, seeking temporary refuge at the court of the Persian king, though, finding their situation inhospitable, they departed from Persia to an unknown destination, some say to Harran in northwestern Iraq. Harran was the seat of one of the most important sources of occult influences in Islamic world, a sect known as the Sabians, a Jewish-Gnostic group, who were also known as Mandaites, Mandaens and Nazoreans, not to be confused with the pre-Christian Nazirites or Christian Nazarenes.

According to al-Biruni, a Muslim scholar of the eleventh century, the Sabians were originally the remnant of Jews exiled at Babylon, where they had adopted the teachings of the Magi. These, he believes, were the real Sabians. However, he indicates, the same name was applied to the so-called Sabians of Harran:

> They derive their system from Agathodaemon, Hermes, Walis, Maba, Sawar. They believe that these men and other sages like them were prophets. This sect is much more known by the name of Sabians than the others, although they themselves did not adopt this name before 228 A. H. under Abbasid rule, solely for the purpose of being reckoned among those from whom the duties of Dhimmies (protected non-Muslim community) are accepted, and towards whom the laws of Dhimmy are observed. Before that time they were called heathens, idolaters, and Harranians....[507]

The Sabians of Harran acquired their name through a confusion on the part of the Muslims of this Gnostic group with the *Sabeans* mentioned in the *Koran*. There are three religious communities that are recognized as legitimate in Islam, and allowed to pursue their faith under Muslim rule, because they possess a "Book": the Jews, Christians, and Sabeans. Therefore, in 830 AD, when the Caliph al-Mamun, who was campaigning against the Christian armies of the Byzantine Empire, passed through Harran and observed among the crowds that gathered around him, a number of curiously dressed people, he asked them who they were and to which *People of the Book* they belonged. In response to the caliph's question, the curiously dressed group apparently simply answered that they were *Harranians*. The caliph gave them an ultimatum and told them that they had to declare themselves Muslims or as another People of the Book. Some converted to Islam or to Christianity, although, others consulted an expert in Islamic law who advised

them to call themselves "Sabeans", since the Sabeans, the people of Saba, or in the Old Testament, Sheba, were a group officially recognized in the *Koran*.

When the Sabians were accorded formal recognition by the Caliph, to legitimize their status they were required to name the book which constituted their sacred scripture. In compliance, they cited certain texts ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Thus, Hermeticism became the official religion of the "Sabians", acknowledged as such by the Islamic authority. Therefore, the Sabians of Harran then became the custodians of Hermeticism, preserving it intact while other schools of thought had been absorbed into Islam, Judaism or Christianity.[508]

The Sabians, according to Chwolsohn, author of a monumental work, the *Ssabier*, retained a mixture of Babylonian and Hellenistic religion, superposed with a coating of Neoplatonism.[509] As Majid Fakhry has explained:

> Their religion, as well as the Hellenistic, Gnostic, and Hermetic influences under which they came, singularly qualified the Harranians to serve as a link in the transmission of Greek science to the Arabs and to provide the Abbasid court from the beginning of the ninth century with its greatly prized class of court astrologers.[510]

The little we know of the Sabians, from the fragmentary and mixed archeological evidence available, is compounded by confusing accounts from Muslim writers. They professed to follow Hermes and Agathodaimon, identified with Seth and Enoch. Essentially, like other dualistic sects, the Sabians taught the possibility of salvation through gnosis, which is attained in bypassing evil Archons that obstruct the ascent of the soul through the heavenly spheres to reunion with the supreme deity. The Sabians recognized a supreme deity, the primal cause of the universe, who had no contact with mankind but had placed the universe under the rule of the planets. Hence the Sabians worshipped the planets, or rather the demonic beings that governed them. They were said to sacrifice to the gods of the seven days of the week, whose names were partly Babylonian and partly Greek. They were also reputed to celebrate "mystery" rites addressed principally to Tammuz or to Shamal, lord of the *Jinn*, and, in which they were suspected of making use of human sacrifice.[511]They were reputed to sacrifice a child, whose flesh was boiled and made into cakes, which were then eaten by a certain class of worshippers.[512]

Islamic Science

The spread of occult and Gnostic doctrines, from such sources as the Sabians of Harran, gave rise to numerous sects based on a mystical approach to Islam, referred to as Sufism. Their effect was such that the unity of theology as well as politics was forever lost in the Muslim world. The orthodox Muslims, known by the name of Sunnis, regarded the elected Caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, as legitimate successors of the prophet. However, the party of revolt, known as the *Shiah*, with their leader, Mohammed ibn Sabba, a Jew converted to Islam, claimed the Caliphate for the descendants of Mohammed through Ali, a cousin of Mohammed who had married his daughter, Fatima. The division ended in open warfare. Ali was assassinated, his elder son Hassan was poisoned in Medina, his younger son Hussein fell at the battle against the supporters of Uthman, deaths which are still mourned yearly by the Shiah to this day.

Until that point, in spite of these divisions, the Shiah had yet to deviate from the fundamental doctrines of Islam, and merely claimed a different line of successorship from that recognized by the Sunnis. However, the Shiah did eventually adopt doctrinal difference, and the discoveries of the earliest Sufis shows how their ideas and those of the Shiah were at an early stage interdependent.[513] The Sufis were the outcome of the general spread of mystical trends and an interest in philosophy, especially Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and the Gnostic traditions of the Sabians. Formerly, their beliefs and practices were thought to have been drawn from various non-Islamic sources in ancient Europe and even India, and according to E.H. Palmer, in *Oriental Mysticism*, published in 1867, Sufism was "the development of the Primeval religion of the Aryan race."[514] As Julian Baldick explains, "in the past there has, inevitably, been an attempt to see Islamic mysticism as an Aryan or Indo-European racial reaction of the conquered Iranians to their Arab, Semitic rulers."[515] However, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* maintains, "…the spread of Sufism in the eighth century was probably due the revival of Jewish mysticism in Mohammedan countries of that period."[516] In fact, noted French scholar of Islamic mysticism, Henry Corbin, has identified that the primary symbolism of Sufi teachings was derived from Sabian symbolism.

Through the influence of Sufism, the central institution of the Shiah, the *Imam*, the office occupied by their leaders, had acquired a mystical significance, transformed into a metaphysical being, a manifestation of God and the primordial light that sustains the universe and bestows true knowledge on man. To the Shiah, the true and hidden meaning of the *Koran* could only be known through the Imam,

because he alone is infallible. The office of Imam was thought to have been passed on directly from Ali by nomination down to the sixth Imam, Jafar as Sadiq, one of the most influential leaders of the Shiah during the early Abbasid period. As descendant of the prophet Mohammed's daughter Fatima, he was believed by many to be in the direct line which transmitted the esoteric teachings of Islam, confided to them by Mohammed himself, regarded as the doctrines of Sufism. Jafar as Sadiq was the great Sufi teacher whose name appears on almost all the chains of transmission of Sufi lore, and master and teacher of the great Arab alchemist Jafar Ibn Hayyan, or Gerber as he was known to the West, also referred to as *The Sufi*.[517]

The Shiah split again over the question of Ali's successors, though both factions retained their allegiance to the descendants of Ali. The Shiah majority followed Jafar's son Musa al-Kazim and Imams in his line, through to the twelfth who disappeared in 873 AD. Those loyal to the twelve Imams became known as the Twelvers. They adopted a pacifistic stance toward the government of the Abbasids, and prepared to wait until the twelfth Imam should return as the messiah to avenge injustices against the Shiah, and restore justice before the Day of Judgment. Some of Jafar's followers however, remained loyal to Jafar's eldest son, Ismail. These were known as the Ismailis or Seveners, and soon became a source of continuing revolution.

Ismaili philosophers created an inclusive framework for a history of religions, in which they tried to place figures such as Zoroaster and communities such as the Sabeans.[518] According to Jean Doresse, Ismailism was genuinely Gnostic:

> Not only do these sectaries regard Adam as the first of the prophets; they also make Abraham the head of the generation of the Perfect, to which Zoroaster belonged. One of their writings, which date from about the year 1300, announces that at the resurrection Melchizedek will come as a judge, and that he will then reveal the divine mysteries which the prophets have kept secret during the entire period in which humanity was subject to the religious law. The author of another treatise, of the fifteenth century, adds that Melchizedek is identical with Seth.[519]

It is generally considered that a set of Sufi treatises known as the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Loyal Friends*, a philosophical and religious encyclopaedia with elements of Pythagorean, Neoplatonic, Zoroastrian, and Indian lore, was composed by a secret fraternity connected with the Ismailis. Though their origin is subject to controversy, Yves Marquet, one the leading experts on the subject of the Epistles, has proposed that they incorporate the earliest comprehensive body of Ismaili doctrine, drawn up in the ninth century by the highest officials of the movement, possibly even by an Imam, under the influence of the Sabians of Harran.

Pythagoras, according to the *Epistles*, was a "monotheistic sage who hailed from Harran."[520] According to the *Epistles*, the soul may seek to rejoin its heavenly abode "through the pursuit of wisdom in the Socratic manner, and the practice of asceticism in the Christian manner, coupled with devotion to the Muslim faith."[521] In this way, the purging of the soul from its material corruption due to its confinement to the body may be achieved, such that it will be able to perceive "those spiritual forms and luminous entities" which only the purified soul is able to perceive. As long as the soul is weighed down by the body and engrossed in desires, it will be unable to "ascend to the spheres and contemplate directly what lies there," or partake of that bliss which Hermes Trismegistus enjoyed, as did Aristotle, Pythagoras, Jesus and Mohammed.[522]

Through a study of the Neoplatonic writings, which included such works as Plotinus' *Enneads* and Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Muslim mystics had become acquainted with such typical doctrines as: that God is best conceived as the One, that He is most correctly described by negative attributes, that the world came into being through emanation, that in the process of emanation the *Logos* serves as intermediary between God and the world, that the soul is a substance, and that the final act of understanding is a kind of "illumination."

The earliest of the prominent Arab philosophers was Al-Kindi, known to the West as Alkindius, born in Kufah in the first half of the ninth century. Called the "Philosopher of the Arabs", he excelled in the study of optics, chemistry, medicine, and music, but above all he was a philosopher. A Neoplatonist of the school of Plotinus and Porphyry, al-Kindi also studied the ideas of Aristotle and Plato. A century later, al-Farabi (Alpharabius), a Turk from Transoxiana, blended Aristotelian, Platonic, and Sufi thought. He was dependent on the astrological and philosophical beliefs of the Sabians, and he eventually shocked the orthodox Muslims by claiming a pantheistic doctrine that purported the world was uncreated and had no beginning.[523]

While Al-Farabi is regarded as the founder of Islamic Neoplatonism, Ibn Sina, better known in the West as Avicenna, is usually considered to be Islam's foremost Neoplatonic philosopher. Apart from the

works of Aristotle and his Greek commentators, and Al-Farabi, the chief formative influences of Ibn Sina's thought appear to have been the *Epistles of the Brethren of Sincerity*.[524] Avicenna thought that from God there emanated a series of ten intelligences or spheres, and believed that the destiny of every human being was written in the stars. Avicenna's best-known works were medical writings, in which he drew a mental link between each part of the body and one of the planets, and timing his treatments accordingly. He also reaffirmed the idea of correspondence between the planets and the various metals. Ibn Rushd, a Muslim judge and philosopher, who lived in Cordoba, Seville, and Marrakesh, and died in 1198 AD, wrote in the fields of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, law and theology, and built on the systems of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and his fellow countrymen. Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle though, were more popular and influential in Christian Europe than they were in the Muslim world.

Study of Greek philosophy also caused controversy within the orthodox branch of Islam, known as Sunni Islam. *Kalam*, or speculative theology in Islam, in its early stage, was merely a defense of Islam against believers in other religions. As interest in philosophy grew among Muslim thinkers, *Kalam* adopted the methodology of the Greek skeptics and the Stoics, directed against the Islamic philosophers who attempted to fit Aristotle and Plato into a Muslim context. Several schools of *Kalam* developed, the most significant of which was the Mutazilites, appearing in the eighth century, the first Muslims to use the categories and methods of Hellenistic philosophy to derive their major and distinctive dogmatic points. In the ninth century, Mutazilism became the state creed of the Abbasid caliphate, but in the century that followed, reaction against it culminated in the formulation of Sunni, or orthodox, theology.

The last great figure in the line of classical Sufism was al-Ghazali, who helped to make Sufism an acceptable part of orthodox Islam. In 1091 Ghazali was made head of the college in Baghdad. Ghazali was viewed as a *Mujaddid*, or "Reformer". For four years, to great admiration, he taught *Kalam* and delivered critiques of the Neoplatonist philosophies of al-Farabi and Avicenna and of Ismaili thought. Although, he passed through a spiritual crisis that rendered him physically incapable of lecturing for a time. According to his autobiographical work *The Deliverer from Error*, the more he taught, the more he doubted, until his will and voice became paralyzed. In 1095, he retreated from public life, attempting to arrive at a more satisfying faith. He undertook a radically skeptical reexamination of all of the paths available to the pious Muslim, culminating in an incorporation of the inspired experience of the Sufi into Islam.

Neoplatonism in Islam may be said to have reached its furthest limits of development in the thought of Ismaili Sufi theologians such as that of Suhrawardi and Ibn al Arabi. Suhrawardi was known as *al-Maqtul*, "the Slain", in reference to his execution in 1191, on charges of unorthodoxy, and by order of Saladin, one of the most famous Muslim leaders against the Crusades, who had come to power in Egypt after defeating the Fatimids. Suhrawardi, "the Master of Illumination", as he became known, established a complex Neoplatonic hierarchy of lights in which the divine and quasi-divine are seen all in terms of light. Claiming to unite the Zoroastrian and Hermetic traditions, Suhrawardi was largely responsible for the development of Sufism as a theosophical system based on Hellenistic traditions. He traced a genealogy of the illuminationist wisdom dating back simultaneously through a Greek tradition, including Pythagoras and Plato, and a Persian tradition, including Zoroaster to Hermes Trismegistus. Pythagoras and Plato, to Suhrawardi, represented those who perfected philosophy and attained illumination. Yet, beyond them still, are those who have passed out of the human realm, into the celestial hierarchy of invisible beings, whose chief is the *Qutb*, the Pole or Axis, symbolized by the celestial pole.

The one regarded as the greatest of all Sufi theosophical writers in Arabic was Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240) who was born in Spain. Ibn al-Arabi was instructed in mysticism by two Spanish woman saints. Performing the traditional pilgrimage to Mecca, he met there an accomplished young Persian lady who represented for him the *Sophia*, or divine wisdom. He taught that all existence is but a manifestation of God, the one ultimate divine reality which is totally "other", an undifferentiated unity, but in whom the archetypes of all potential beings exist. This is the "unknown God" from whom emanates a hierarchy of divine beings, the lowest of which is the Lord of revelation and creation, who is also called the First Intellect, also called the "Mohammadan Reality". He is the archetype through whom man was made, incarnated in a Perfect Man in every generation, or the perfect Sufi. This man, the *Qutb* or Pole, most fully manifests the nature of God. Ibn al-Arabi saw himself as such a "pole" and he called himself the seal (the most perfect) of the saints.

The popularity of Hermetic teachings spread by the Sabians also helped to shape the pursuit of chemistry among the Arab scientists, which was studied mostly in connection with alchemy. Even the name alchemy affirms the Arabic origin of chemistry, being derived from the Arabic term is *al-kimiya*. The greatest Arabic alchemist was ar-Razi, a Persian physician who lived in Baghdad in the late ninth and early tenth century, who drew his central concepts from the Sabians.[525] The most famous was Jabir ibn Hayyan, known to the West as Geber, from whom we derive the word *gibberish*. Jabir's works, translated into Latin

in the twelfth century AD, proved to be the foundation of Western alchemy and chemistry. A continuing legacy of Arabic chemistry is to be found in such European words as "al-kali", "alcohol," "antimony," and "alembic" and "aludel" all have their origin in Arabic alchemy.

The Arabs' fascination with alchemy was essentially founded on a work called the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus, not known during the Hellenistic era. Hermes, like Seth, was said to have inscribed his knowledge on two pillars, and Herodotus described the pillars of the Phoenician Hercules: "one was of pure gold; the other was as of emerald which gleamed in the dark with a strange radiance." Although, the Arabs identified Hermes with a prophet mentioned in the *Koran*, named Idris, equated with the prophet Enoch of the Bible. Idris passed on his wisdom to his son Seth, identified as the Hermetic Agathodaimon, who passed it on to Zoroaster, and from him to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists.

The *Emerald Tablet* comes from a larger work called *Book of the Secret of Creation*, which exists in Latin and Arabic manuscripts, and was attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, called Balinus by the Arabs. The very brief text of the *Emerald Tablet* consists of:

> Tis true, without falsehood, and most real: that which is above is like that which is below, to perpetrate the miracles of one thing. And as all things have been derived from one, by the thought of one, so all things are born from this thing, by adoption. The Sun is its father, the moon is its mother. Wind has carried it in its belly, the earth is its nurse. Here is the father of every perfection in the world. His strength and power are absolute when changed into earth; thou wilt separate the earth from fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with care. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends again to earth to receive the power of the superior and the inferior things. By this means, thou wilt have the glory of the world. And because of this, all obscurity will flee from thee. Within this is the power, most powerful of all powers. For it will overcome all subtle things, and penetrate every solid thing. Thus the world was created. From this will be, and will emerge, admirable adaptations of which the means are here. And for this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three part of the philosophy of the world. What I have said of the sun's operations is accomplished.

Muslim astronomy, which was closely related to astrology, started from Persian, Greek, and Indian contributions. The main professional observatories were at Gondeshapur and Baghdad. Al-Mansur was the first Caliph to call Jewish scholars around him in order to develop the study of the mathematical sciences, especially astronomy. In the year 777 the learned Jew, Jacob ben Tarik, founded a school for the study of astronomy and astrology at Baghdad which soon had a high reputation. Among those trained at the school was Al-Kindi, but it was one of Al-Kindi's pupils, Abumassar, who the Europeans of the Middle Ages regarded as the greatest Arabian astrologer. A prominent Sabian of Harran named Thabit ibn Qurra determined the altitude of the Sun, and the length of the solar year. Mohammed al-Battani, or Albategnius, recorded observations on the appearance of the new moon, the inclination of the ecliptic, the length of the tropic and sidereal year, and eclipses of the Sun. The astronomer and geographer al-Biruni at Ghaznah in Afghanistan proposed that the earth rotates on its axis and reckoned quite accurately latitudes and longitudes for every important city in the Middle East.

Mathematics and astronomy were closely related. Building on Indian and Greek works, Middle Eastern scholars advanced mathematical knowledge considerably. The greatest achievement of the Arab mathematicians was the adoption and use of "Arabic numerals," later appropriated by the West. The use of these numerals, including the use of zero and the placing of the digit in a series to denote units, tens, hundreds, and so on, made everyday arithmetic possible and simplified calculations, enabling Arabs to take the square and cube roots of numbers with ease. In the ninth century al-Khwarizmi of Khurassan did a study on numerals which later circulated in the West. Through his name came the word "algorism." He wrote on the solution of quadratic equations, and from the title of one of his books was derived the word "algebra".

Moorish Spain

As F. M. Roberts has indicated, "to no other civilization did Europe owe so much in the Middle Ages as to Islam."[526] Effectively, it was the transfer of Islamic learning by way of the thriving civilization of Moorish Spain that introduced for the first time the arts and sciences of classical civilization to the barbaric tribes of Europe, rescuing them from centuries obscurity. The Muslim leader Tarik crossed the Strait of Gibraltar in 711 AD, and established a base which still is called Tarik's mountain, *Jabal Tarik*, or Gibraltar. Crushing the Visigoth forces, Tarik fanned out northward. Malaga, Cordoba, and Toleda fell, and Tarik found

himself master of half of Spain. Within two years nearly all of Spain had been overrun by Muslim forces, and within six or seven years the conquest was nearly completed. The Arabs called the province *al-Andalusiai*, "Land of the Vandals," and it, or some part of it, remained a Muslim land for almost eight centuries.

Abd al-Rahman, an Umayyad prince, having succeeded in escaping the slaughter of his family by the Abbasids, gained power in Spain, and established an independent Umayyad dynasty, which, ruling at Cordoba, maintained a court that enjoyed an eminence that rivaled Baghdad. Many distinguished scholars, scientists, and intellectuals of the Muslim world flourished under their patronage. At its zenith in the tenth century, Cordoba had 500,000 inhabitants, with 300 public baths, a royal palace comprising 400 rooms that ranked second only in size and splendor to those at Baghdad and Constantinople, and 700 mosques, including, the *Al Hambra*, which is considered by some to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.[527]

The greatest Andalusian scholar was Ibn Rushd, known to the West as Averroës**,** who integrated Islamic traditions with ancient Greek philosophy. Born in 1126, Averroës was well versed in the Muslim sciences, trained in medicine, and accomplished in philosophy, and rose to be chief *qadi*, or judge, of Cordoba. After the death of the philosopher Ibn Tufayl, Averroës succeeded him as personal physician to the caliph. At the request of the caliph, he produced a series of summaries and commentaries on most of Aristotle's works and on Plato's *Republic*, which exerted considerable influence in both the Islamic world and Europe for centuries. Deprived of followers among the Muslims, he gained exponents among the Jews and Christians.

In Cordoba, the Caliphs treated the Jews with extraordinary favour and tolerance. Ultimately, according to Johnson, in *The History of the Jews*, "the rapport the educated Jewish community established with the liberal caliphs recalled the age of Cyrus and brought to Spanish Jewry a gracious, productive and satisfying way of life the Jews were not, perhaps, to find anywhere else until the nineteenth century."[528] Since Arabic philosophers promoted the synthesis of Greek philosophy with the teachings of Mohammed, similar study of the Jewish religious works in philosophic terms became the pervading mode of thought in the Jewish schools of Spain, leading to what came to be known as the *Golden Age* of Hebrew literature. The most important Jewish Neoplatonist was Solomon Ibn Gabirol, known to the West as Avicebron. With him, the center of Jewish philosophy shifted to Spain, including Abraham ibn Daud's defense of the rabbinical tradition according to Aristotelian philosophy, Judah ha-Levi's attack on philosophy, and Moses Maimonides' great combination of Judaism and Medieval Aristotelianism, secured the place of philosophy as a legitimate aspect of rabbinical study.

A new Hermetic text was written in Spain in the tenth century, which would exercise a prominent influence in the West, and which claimed to expound on the methods used by the Sabians of Harran. In Arabic, the book is called the *Ghayat al-hakim*, or "Goal of the Wise." Through a mistranslation of the name of the author, Maslama al Mujriti, to whom it was erroneously attributed, it is known to Western scholars as the *Picatrix*. As one of the most important texts for all of later magical tradition, the work was known among devout Christian scholars as the "forbidden book." As late as the end of the nineteenth century, one commentator so loathed it that he "hoped it may never be translated into any modern language."[529] In effect, the *Picatrix* is a manual of astrological magic, which offered detailed instructions for invoking and manipulating the celestial influence of the planets. "All things in this world," it asserts, "obey the celestial forms." And: "All sages agree that the planets exercise influence and power over this world… from this it follows that the roots of magic are the movements of the planets."

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, according to the *Penguin History of the World*, "Spain's Islamic civilization reached its greatest beauty and maturity in a golden age of creativity which rivaled that of Abbasid Baghdad. This left behind great monuments as well as producing great learning and philosophy."[530] Many have pointed out that the imprint of Islamic culture in Spain is still evident in language, manners and art.[531] From Muslim Spain, northern Europe would receive agricultural and irrigation techniques, oranges, lemons, sugar, and the guitar. The survival of technical vocabulary of commerce is evident as well, with such words as tariff, *douane*, magazine, and it was Arab merchants that taught the Christians to keep accounts. Ultimately, remarks Enrique Sordo, author of *Moorish Spain*, "the products of this crucible spread out towards Christian Europe and touched Scholastic Philosophy, Romanesque Art, the School of Medicine at Montpellier, the poetry of the troubadours and the mysticism of Dante.[532]

The Assassins

An alleged member of the Brethren of Purity was Abdullah ibn Maymun, a charismatic leader who had succeeded in capturing the leadership of the Ismaili movement in about 872 AD. Abdullah ibn Maymun is

variously described as a Jew, as a follower of the Mesopotamian Christian heretic Bardasanes, and, most commonly, as a Zoroastrian dualist. Abdullah founded a sect known as the Batinis, though he had found his true supporters not among the Shiah, but among various non-Muslim sects, the Sabians of Harran, and the students of Greek philosophy. Through seven degrees of initiation, he gradually unfolded the final mystery, revealing that Imams, religions, and morality were nothing but an imposture and an absurdity, which the rest of mankind, the "asses", as he called them, were incapable of understanding.

The first open acts of violence resulting Abdullah's teachings were carried out by the Qaramitah. A certain Hamdan, surnamed Qarmat, had become the leader of the Qaramitah in Arabia, where a number of Arabs were soon enlisted in the society. He put forward to them arguments borrowed from the Gnostic dualism, permitted them pillage, and taught them to abandon prayer, fasting and other precepts. As a result of these teachings, the Qaramitah rapidly became a band of brigands, pillaging and massacring all those who opposed them, and spreading terror throughout the surrounding districts. The Qaramitah succeeded in dominating Iraq, Yemen, and especially Bahrain, and in 920 extended their ravages westwards. They took possession of the holy city of Mecca, in defense of which 30,000 Muslims were killed.

While Seveners believed Ismail to have been the seventh and last Imam, the majority of Ismailis believed the successorship of the Imam continued in the line of the Fatimids, who set up their own caliph and moved their capital to Cairo in 973. After their establishment of their power in Egypt, the character of the teaching of the Fatimids was not very different from the code of Abdullah Ibn Maymun, and his more violent initiate, Qarmat. The founder of the Fatimid dynasty was Ubeidullah, known as the *Mahdi*, claiming descent through a line of "hidden imams", from Muhammad, son of Ismail, and through him from Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet. He was accused of Jewish ancestry by his adversaries the Abbasids, who declared that he was the son or grandson of Ahmed, son of Abdullah ibn Maymun, by a Jewess.

Under the fourth Fatimite Caliph, Egypt fell into the power of the dynasty, and bi-weekly assemblies men and women, known as *societies of wisdom*, were instituted in Cairo. In 1004 AD, these acquired greater importance by the establishment of the *Dar ul Hikmat*, or the House of Knowledge, by the sixth Caliph Hakim. Under the direction of the Grand Lodge of Cairo, the Fatimids continued the plan of Abdullah ibn Maymun's secret society, with the addition of two more degrees, making nine in all. The initiate was persuaded that all his former teachers were wrong, and that he must place his confidence solely in those Imams of the Ismailis, in contradistinction to the twelve Imams of the Twelvers. Eventually, he was taught to disregard the precepts of Mohammed, and the doctrines of dualism were introduced and the unity of God, the fundamental doctrine of Islam, was destroyed. Finally, in the ninth degree, the adept was shown that all religious teaching was allegorical and that religious laws need be observed only to maintain order, while the man who understands the truth may disregard all such doctrines.

Hakim was raised to the rank of a divinity by Ismail Darazi, a Turk who in 1016 announced in a mosque in Cairo that the Caliph should be made an object of worship. Hakim, who believed that divine reason was incarnate in him, four years later, proclaimed himself a god, and the cult was finally established by one of his viziers. Hakim's cruelties, however, had so outraged the people of Egypt that a year later he was murdered by a group led, it is said, by his sister, who afterwards concealed his body, a circumstance which gave his followers the opportunity to declare that the divinity had merely vanished in order to test the faith of believers, but would reappear in time and punish apostates. This belief became the doctrine of the Druzes of Lebanon, whom Darazi had won over to the worship of Hakim. Druzes do not appear to have embraced the atheism of Abdullah ibn Maymun, but to have incorporated a fertility cult and Sabianism into the avowed belief of the Ismailis in the dynasty of Ali and his successors.

The Ismailis were to find in 1090 another notorious exponent in the Persian Hassan Saba. Having initially converted to the Ismaili sect, and then declaring himself to be a convinced adherent of the Fatimid Caliphs, Hassan Saba journeyed to Cairo, where he was received with honor by the *Dar ul Hikmat*. His actions having eventually embroiled him in disgrace, Hassan fled to Aleppo. After enlisting recruits in a number of cities, he succeeded in obtaining the fortress of Alamut in Persia on the Caspian Sea, where he completed the plans for his great society, later to become infamous by the name of the *Hashishim* or Assassins. It is alleged that the Assassins derived their name from the Arabic *hashishim*, or "eaters of hashish," referring to the marijuana plant they used for ritual purposes. Hassan took the traditional title of *Sheikh al Jabal* or Old Man of the Mountain. Taking as his groundwork the organization of the Grand Lodge of Cairo, Hassan reduced the nine degrees to their original number of seven. Initiates into his society were offered degrees of illumination similar to the Eleussynian Mysteries practiced in ancient Greece. Members of the society were also taught the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. "Nothing is true and all is allowed" was the basis of their secret doctrine.

At Alamut, Hassan and his followers established a castle, or the Eagle's Nest. Perched 600 feet above a valley gorge and surrounded by mountains, it was virtually impregnable. According to a legend

reported by Marco Polo, the Old Man had made, “the biggest and most beautiful gardens imaginable. Every kind of wonderful fruit grew there. There were glorious houses and palaces decorated with gold and paintings of the most magnificent things in the world. Fresh water, wine, milk and honey flowed in streams. The loveliest girls versed in the arts of caressing and flattering men played every musical instrument, danced and sang better than any other women.”[533] The Old Man had persuaded his men that this was the Paradise described by Mohammed. He would make them fall asleep, so that when they awoke, they would find themselves in the garden. Having enjoyed all its pleasures, they were so assured of the existence of Paradise, that they were willing to risk their lives on any mission assigned to them.

The Assassins waged an international war of terrorism against anyone that opposed them but eventually ended by turning on each other. The Old Man of the Mountain himself was murdered by his brother-in-law and his son Mohammed. Mohammed, in his turn, while aiming at the life of his son Jalal ud-Din, was anticipated by him with poison, who was again avenged by poison, so that from Hassan the Illuminator down to the last of his line of Grand Masters, all fell by the hands of their next-of-kin. Finally in 1250 AD, the conquering hordes of the Mongol leader Mangu Khan swept over Alamut an annihilated the dynasty of the Assassins.

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Chapter 14: Metratron

The Age of Scholasticism

The Arab empire began to fall into decline in the tenth century. Although comprising a massive territory, spanning from North Africa to Asia, and united by a common Islamic culture, the Islamic world was divided among several semi-autonomous states, under a single Caliphate at Baghdad. The most prominent of these was the Fatimid dynasty which controlled Egypt, most of Syria and the Lebanon. This territory included the great shrines of Mecca and Medina, the holy sites of the Muslim faith. Spain was under the caliphate of the Umayyads. The heartland of the caliphate, Iraq and western Iran and Azerbijan continued to be ruled by the Abbassids.

In the eleventh century a new power arose in the northeast, in Turkestan, known as the Seljuks, descendants of Turks converted to Islam. After taking eastern Iran and Iraq, and then occupying Syria and Palestine, the Turks invaded Asia Minor, and inflicted one of the worst defeats in the history of the Byzantine empire at Manzikert in 1071 AD. The Byzantines, driven from all but the coastal regions of Asia Minor, and with Nicaea in Muslim hands by 1092 AD, brought the Muslims dangerously close to Constantinople.

It was this threat that prompted the Byzantine emperor Alexius Comnenus to seek aid from the West. Alexius' appeal came at a time when relations between the Eastern and Western branches of the Christian world were improving, for difficulties between the two, in the middle years of the century, had resulted in a *de facto*, though not formally proclaimed, schism. However, stories of dangers and molestation of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem reached the West, which began to realize that the revived power of the Muslim world now seriously menaced them as well. The Council of Clermont, convened by Pope Urban in 1095 AD, the transaction of many important items of ecclesiastical business took place, which included a canon that granted full *indulgence*, that is, absolution from sin for those who undertook to aid Christians in the Holy Land. Then in a great outdoor assembly, the pope addressed a large crowd stressing the plight of Eastern Christians, and the desecration of the holy places. The response was immediate and overwhelming, probably far greater than Urban had anticipated.

Several unorganized and generally miscellaneous bands, including some armed men, commonly known as the People's Crusade, set out across Europe. The most famous of these, brought together by a strangely popular preacher, Peter the Hermit, and his associate Walter the Penniless, arrived at Constantinople after causing considerable disorder in Hungary and Bulgaria. Other bands largely from northwest Germany, that committed atrocities against Jewish communities, were dispersed before reaching the Byzantine frontier. Alexius received Peter cordially and advised him to await the arrival of the main Crusader force. But the rank and file grew unruly, and on August 6, 1096 AD, they were ferried across the straits. Though, as Peter returned to beg for aid, they were ambushed and all but annihilated by the Turks.

The main crusading force began to move as Urban had directed, in August 1096 AD. In 1097 AD, crusaders, accompanied by a Byzantine contingent, captured Nicaea. Further advances across Anatolia were even more difficult, and it was only after suffering many casualties that the crusaders occupied Antioch, one of the great cities of the Lebanon. Not far from Beirut, the army entered the territory of the Fatimid caliphs of Cairo, who had occupied Jerusalem in August 1098 AD. Finally, in 1099 AD, the Christian army, by then considerably reduced, took Jerusalem and massacred the entire population of the city, slaughtering "a great multitude of people of every age, old men and women, maidens, children and mothers with infants, by way of solemn sacrifice" to Jesus. The crusaders had proudly ridden through the city, "knee deep in the blood of the disbelievers."[534] Ultimately, not only Jerusalem, but the entire eastern coast of the Mediterranean, was taken over by a series of similar crusader's states.

A few scholars followed in the wake of the first crusaders and settled in eastern cities such as Antioch, where they found and translated Arabic books hitherto unknown to the West. This cultural interchange with the Muslims effected as a result of the Crusades marked the

beginning of Europe's emergence from the Dark Ages. Three other centers of exchange were important. Important works of translation were made by Western scholars in Constantinople, as well as Sicily, which had been ruled by Arabs for a century and a half beginning in 902, a highly sophisticated society, where four languages and traditions met, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew. Although the Sicilian translators had the advantage of possessing the Greek texts for translation, it was the Moors of Spain that were the principal source of the new learning to Western Europe.

The Islamic transmission of the knowledge of antiquity began with astrology, astronomy and mathematics. Ptolemy's astronomy reached the West, and was considered a basis for cosmology and navigation until the sixteenth century. Of the works of Al-Kindi, considered one of the greatest Arab philosophers, more survive now in Latin than in Arabic. Islamic cartography was much more advanced than that of Europe throughout the Middle Ages, and the astrolabe was a Greek invention, but its use was spread in the West by Arab writings. The invention of perspective, which transformed European art, is said to have come from thirteenth century Arab Spain. Another important introduction was the science of medicine. Aside from introducing the works of Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates, Arabic sources and teachers also brought a body of therapeutic, anatomical and pharmacological sciences, and the Persian experts of medical studies wrote works which remained the standard textbooks of western studies for centuries.

Turning to the works of Arab scientists led to the discovery of the ancient Greek philosophers. From the twelfth century on, scholars in Spain and Italy, where Christians were in contact with Muslim learning, prepared Latin translations of the Arabic texts of Aristotle. Although, in Islamic countries, the understanding of Aristotle was influenced by Noeplatonic conceptions, where the so-called "Theology of Aristotle" was in fact, Porphyry's commentary on Plotinus' *Enneads*.[535] The most influential Arabic commentators on Aristotle were the Neoplatonist Avicenna, and Averroës, referred to reverently as "The Commentator". A third great commentator was the twelfth century Jewish philosopher, an adherent of the Aristotelian worldview, Moses Maimonides, also born in Spain, who wrote his main works in Arabic.

The recovery of the complete Aristotelian corpus, and of Muslim commentaries upon Aristotle's works, exercised a tremendous influence in the West during the second half of the twelfth century AD. Inaugurating the first of the European renaissances, the Age of Scholasticism, named after scholastic philosophy, because it was propounded and studied in universities, i.e., schools. Among the leading centers of cultural exchange between Spain and Southern France was the University of Montpellier, near the foothills of the French Pyrennees, where there were a handful of lawyers and physicians, but the majority being composed of Churchmen. These Monks and friars transcribed into Latin the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, Pythagoras, and Democritus, along with the manuscripts of Geber, Rhassis, and Avicenna.

The Church, faced with the renewed challenge of philosophy, first tried to forbid the study of Aristotle, fearing that his paganism would corrupt students' minds. Instead, a number of scholars set out to fit Aristotle, and the rest of Greek thought, as well as Arabic learning, to Christianity. The first theologian of the Middle Ages who boldly accepted the challenge of the new Aristotelianism was a thirteenth century AD Dominican, Albertus Magnus, one of the more influential members of the Montpellier community, and one of the most renowned scholars of his generation. Although he did not know Greek, he conceived a plan of making accessible to the Latin West the complete works of Aristotle, by way of commentaries and paraphrases.

More famous was Albertus Magnus' pupil Thomas Aquinas, who shared his master's great esteem for the ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle, and also for the more recent Arabic and Jewish thinkers. Aquinas' own philosophical views are best expressed in his theological works, mainly his *Summa theologiae* and *Summa contra gentiles*. For Aquinas, reason and faith cannot contradict each other because they come from the same divine source. In his day conservative theologians and philosophers regarded Aristotle with suspicion and favoured the more traditional Christian Neoplatonism. Thomas believed that their suspicion was due, in part, to the fact that Aristotle's philosophy had been distorted by his Arabic commentators, so he wrote his own commentaries on Aristotle to show the supposed soundness of his system, and to convince contemporaries of its value for Christian theology.

The Mediaeval Kabbalah

Bordering on Muslim Spain, the Languedoc, in the western part of Southern France, known as Provence, and populated by Franks, Arabs and Jews, was an area of thriving cultural interchange. This *Judea of France*, as it has been called, was peopled by a medley of mixed races, Iberian, Gallic, Roman, and Semitic, who spoke the language of *Oc*, or *langue d'Oc*, a curious mix of Mediaeval French, Spanish and Arabic. It was here that Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* was translated into Hebrew and began to exercise its tremendous influence over Europe. However, conservative medieval Jews began to turn away

from Maimonidean Aristotelianism, conceiving of Aristotle as the root of theological errors. Thus, the way was opened for the reception of Plato, and for the Kabbalah, formulated in the Languedoc region, which provided an emphasis on the Platonic tradition of medieval philosophy.

As indicated by Scholem, although derived from earlier traditions, the emergence of the Kabbalah in Southern France, sometime between 1130 and 1180, represented a combination of a revival of Neoplatonism with Jewish Gnosticism, or Merkabah. Effectively, Kabbalah was marked by a synthesis, accomplished by the Jewish mystics of Provence, of the cosmology of the *Sepher Yetzirah* and a lost Gnostic tradition belonging to the first centuries AD, that had been long forgotten in Judaism. This lost tradition was recovered through the discovery of a work that made its appearance in Provence in the latter half of the twelfth century, entitled the *Sepher ha-Bahir*, or the "Book of Brightness". The circumstances of the *Bahir's* appearance, a fragmentary and badly assembled text, written in the form a *Midrash*, and full of sayings attributed to ancient rabbinical authorities, are unknown to scholars. Kabbalists themselves considered the book to be much older, attributing its oldest traditions to the teacher of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi ben Haqana, of the first century AD, and crediting many of the book's sayings to the *tannaim* and *amoraim*.

However, as Scholem noted, it is doubtful that the attribution to some of the later autors is always original, for often it appears as if they were the result of later redaction in which names were added or altered.[536]Rather, it appears to represent a form of early classical Gnosticism, which had long disappeared from Judaism, and had survived only in non-Jewish sources. As Gershom Scholem recognized:

> The language and concepts are the same, and we look in vain for an answer to the question how this terminology could have originated or been-recreated anew in the twelfth century, unless there was some filiation to hidden sources that were somehow related to the old Gnostic tradition.[537]

How this tradition survived is unknown to scholars, though Scholem suggests a possible route by way of the Sabians. He maintains, "the earliest strata of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* which came from the East, prove the existence of definitely Gnostic views in a circle of believing Jews in Babylonia or Syria, who connected the theory of the Merkabah with that of the "aeons".[538] Whether the Mandean doctrines influenced the development of the Kabbalah, or vice-versa, is unknown.[539]Drower has suggested that the parallels between Mandaean and Kabbalistic ideas reflect a common Gnostic origin, a "subterranean stream of ideas which emerges" in a variety of religious movements.[540] Deutsch, in *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism and Merkabah Mysticism*, recognizes that "at present, we must be satisfied with acknowledging the phenomenological parallels between the Mandaean and Kabbalistic traditions, although we must also seriously consider the possibility that both Mandaean and Kabbalistic sources drew on a common pool of earlier (Jewish?) theosophic traditions."

Essentially, the *Bahir* transforms the Merkabah tradition into a Gnostic one, whereby the ten Sephiroth of the *Sepher Yetzirah* become "Aeons", divine attributes or emanations, as powers within the Merkabah, said to symbolize the creation of the universe. The object of the *Bahir* is to present the origin of things and a course of history centered on the Chosen People. According to the *Bahir*, the universe is the manifestation of ten emanations, hierarchically organized into three upper and seven lower manifestations. At the bottom of this hierarchy is the *Sophia* or "Wisdom", also known as the divine Presence, the Shekhinah, a feminine entity and daughter or wife of God, who has special charge of the visible world. The Shekhinah is also identified with the "Community of Israel," based on the allegorical interpretation of the *Song of Solomon*, representing the relationship of God to the chosen nation in terms of a marriage bond.

The *Bahir* introduced the concept of reincarnation into Kabbalistic speculation, referred to as *gilgul*, and the notion of a cosmic tree to symbolize the flow of divine creative power. The divine emanations are represented by the allegory of a tree, which forms the image of the Archetypal Man, and watered by the *Sophia*, from which souls blossom forth. The tree possesses twelve directions, like the twelve signs of the Zodiac. To these branches correspond three regions of the world, the Serpent or Dragon, the Sphere and the Heart. Each has twelve "overseers" or archons, totaling thirty-six powers, to correspond with the thirty-six decans of astrology. Each of the thirty-six archons are found in the other, and, all are found in the Dragon, who, according to the *Sepher Yetzirah*, "is placed over the universe like a king upon the throne."[541]

The Zohar

The pupils of the early Kabbalists, coming from Spain to study in the Talmudic academies of Provence, were the principal agents of the Kabbalah's transplantation to that country, where they were responsible for the production of the *Sepher ha Zohar*, or *Book of Light*, the most important medieval Kabbalistic text. According to the *Zohar*, the *Mysteries of Wisdom* were imparted to Adam by God while he was still in the

Garden of Eden, in the form of a book delivered by the angel Razael. From Adam the book passed on to Seth, then to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, and later to Moses, one of its principal exponents. Other Jewish writers however, declare that Moses received it for the first time on Mount Sinai and communicated it to the *Seventy Elders*, by whom it was handed down to David and Solomon, then to Ezra and Nehemiah, and finally to the Rabbis of the Talmudic era.

However, the *Zohar*, was compiled in 1286 AD by Moses de Leon in Castille, Spain, though its content was attributed to the second-century Palestinian mystic Simeon ben Yohai, a disciple of Rabbi Akiva. The *Talmud* relates that for twelve years the Rabbi Simeon and his son Eliezer concealed themselves in a cavern, sitting in the sand up to their necks. They meditated on the sacred law and were frequently visited by the prophet Elijah. In this way, Jewish legend adds, the great book of the *Zohar* was composed and committed to writing by the Rabbi's son Eliezer and his secretary the Rabbi Abba. Nevertheless, Moses de Leon's wife and daughter continued to maintain that he had composed it all himself.

The Zohar offers an esoteric interpretation of the Bible through a system of decoding known as Gematria, according to which each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, and therefore every word of the Bible text can be reduced to a mathematical equivalent. The use of letters to signify numbers was known to the Babylonians and the Greeks. The first instance of Gematria dates to the inscription of Sargon II from the eighth century BC, which states that the king built the wall of Khorsabad 16,283 cubits long to correspond with the numerical value of his name. The use of Gematria was widespread in the literature of the Magi and among the mystics of Hellenistic times. The Gnostics equated Abraxas and Mithras on the basis that the numerical value of their names was 365, corresponding to the days of the solar year. The use of Gematria was apparently introduced during the Second Temple period, even within the Temple itself, where Greek letters were used to indicate numbers. In Rabbinic literature, Gematria makes its first appearance in the second century AD.[542] Gematria was also similar to the practice of repeating divine names or the word-mysticism of the Sufis.

According to the system of Gematria, words of similar numerical values are considered to be explanatory of each other. For example, the numerical value of the angel Metatron and the name of the Deity, *Shaddai,* each add up to 314, so one is the symbol of the other. There are two parts to a system known as *Notariqon*. Firstly, every letter of a word is taken for the initial or abbreviation of another word, so that from the letters of a word a sentence may be formed. The second part of *Notariqon* is the exact reverse. Lastly, *Temura* is permutation, according to which one letter is substituted for another preceding or following it in the alphabet, and thus from one word another word of totally different spelling may be formed. Finally, certain meanings are thought to be hidden in the actual shapes of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

In the *Zohar* are extensive discussions of the ten Sephiroths which emanate from the *Ein-Sof*, the Ancient of Days, corresponding to the Zurvanite god of Time, or the transcendent unknowable God of the Neoplatonists, which exists above and beyond everything, but also, in accordance with the principle of pantheism, in everything. In their totality the ten Sephiroth make up "the tree of the Sephiroths" or "the tree of life," which from the fourteenth century onward, is depicted by a detailed diagram that lists the basic symbols appropriate to each Sephiroth. The common order of the Tree of Life and the names most generally used for the Sephiroth follow an order replicating the pagan pantheon. They are: 1) Keter Elyon ("supreme crown") or simply Keter; (2) Hokhmah ("wisdom"); (3) Binah ("intelligence"); (4) Gedullah ("greatness") or Hesed ("love"); (5) Gevurah ("power") or Din ("Judgment," also "rigor"), (6) Tiferet ("beauty") or Rahamim ("compassion"); (7) Nezah ("lasting endurance"); (8) Hod ("majesty"); (9) Zaddik ("righteous one") or Yesod Olam ("foundation of the world"); (10) Malkhut ("kingdom") or Atarah ("diadem").

The Ten Sephiroth form the image of the Archetypal Man, like the Gnostic doctrine of the Son of Man who is equated with the Decad.[543] Kabbalists refer to him as Adam Kadmon. He is the form Ezekiel saw in the Chariot, at times equated with the level of the second Sun, and the mediator between the *Ein-Sof* and the hierarchy of worlds, and sometimes with the *Ein-Sof* itself. He represents the Macrocosm, which God created in His own image before creating the human man, the Microcosm.

From the first Sephiroth emanate both a male and a female potency, Wisdom and Intelligence, forming the first trinity, representing the head of the Archetypal Man. Together they comprise the original pagan trinity, where *Keter* is the father, *Hokhmah* is Wisdom, the female daughter Sophia, and *Binah* is Intelligence, the son, equivalent to *Nous* or the *Logos,* and the remaining seven Sephiroth accord with the seven planets. Kingdom, the tenth Sephiroth, encircles all the other nine, inasmuch as it is the *Shekhinah*. The twenty-two paths of the Tree of Life each represent one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, as well

as an astrological indicator: Fire, Air and Water, the seven planets, the twelve signs of the Zodiac, totaling twenty-two.

The Archetypal Man and the Ten Sephiroth comprise the World of Emanations, the first of four worlds, each further away form the source and less pure in substance. The second is the World of Creation, called "the Throne", inhabited by the angel Metratron, the name given to Enoch when he ascended into Heaven. Metratron is the original body of the *Shiur Komah*, or the hypostatic form of God. He is often identified with a pillar or divine phallus, symbolized in the *Sepher Yetzirah* and the *Bahir* as the Tree of Life and the Dragon Teli, or the celestial pole and the constellation Draco.[544] Therefore, he is said to govern the visible world, preserve the harmony and guide the revolution of the spheres, and to be the leader of the legions of angelic beings. For the Manichaeans and for the Mandaeans, the Architypal Man is represented as the divine phallus. The pillar is also the Tree of Life, on which, like Plato's "Spindle of Necessity", the souls of the righteous ascend after death from the lower world to the paradise of light from which they came. Similarly, in the Jewish *Midrash Konen*, the souls of the righteous ascend and descend on this tree to the heavens and from there to the celestial paradise, named the Garden of Eden, "as a man ascends and descends upon a ladder."[545]

In the *Myth of Er*, Plato describes the "Spindle of Necessity" as "a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in color resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer." Similarly, according to the Zohar: "It is forbidden for a person to look at the rainbow for it is the appearance of the supernal image; it is forbidden for a person to look at the sign of his covenant [divine phallus] for it symbolizes the righteous of the World."[546] Elliot Wolfson has shown that the divine phallus was an important, perhaps primary, object of visionary experience since the earliest Kabbalistic literature. In addition, he has argued that Metratron, specifically, was often identified as the hypostatic personification of the divine phallus. Here, Wolfson points out that "covenant" indicates the male organ, and that the term "rainbow" euphemistically signifies the phallus in rabbinical and Kabbalistic sources.[547]

The third world is the World of Formation. The myriad of the angelic beings that populate this world are divided into ten ranks, each set over a different part of the star, planet or element which he guards. Last is the World of Matter, made up of the lowest elements, subject to constant changes and corruption, and is the world of the evil spirits. These are divided again into ten grades, each lower than the other. The first two are nothing more than the absence of all visible form, the third is the abode of darkness, while the remaining seven are the "the seven infernal halls," occupied by the demons, who are the incarnation of all human vices. These seven hells are subdivided into innumerable compartments corresponding to every type of sin, where the demons torture the human beings who were led astray while on earth. The prince of this region of darkness is Samael, the evil spirit, the serpent who seduced Eve. His wife is the Harlot, or the Woman of Whoredom. The two are treated as one, and are called "the Beast."[548]

Man was created, not by the *Ein-Sof*, but by the Sephiroth, and is the counterpart of the heavenly Adam, the Archetypal Man. Man, the Microcosm, is a reflection of the Archetypal Man, the Macrocosm. Therefore, according to the dictum of the Kabbalah, "as above, so below," a sympathy exists between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, explaining how the various parts of the universe, such as the planets, may have an effect on human existence. It is also the central doctrine of magic, the means the Kabbalist must use to correct the disorder of the universe. For, as soon as man was created everything was complete, and everything was comprised in man. However, Adam's sin introduced separation into what should have been united, and every subsequent sin is a repetition of that original separation. His original sin disrupted the harmony of the universe, and consequently, man's mission is to restore the world to its primordial condition and to reconnect the upper and lower worlds. It is the task of the Kabbalist to correct this separation through the employment of magic, in order to join together what has been separated.

Repairing the separation created by Adam's sin is the historical plight of the Jewish people as a whole. In the fulfillment of God's plan, the Jews will be returned to *Zion*, the Promised Land, and united with the Messiah, *Moshiah*, the Son of David. Ultimately, the dispersion of the Jewish people was assimilated to the Orphic doctrine of the divine spark in exile in the material world, whereby the nation of the Jews was equated with the *Shekhinah*, as the bride of God, exiled in this world, and separated from her beloved to whom she longs to return.[549]

The inner history of the Jewish people, and the entire world, was identified with the recurrent reincarnations, through which the heroes of the Bible struggled to restore the universe to its original unity. Paradoxically, emphasis was eventually laid upon the souls descended from Cain, such that many of the great figures of Jewish history are represented as stemming from his line. As the messianic era approaches, the number of these souls will increase. When all of the preexisting souls in the world of the Sephiroth shall have descended and occupied human bodies, passed their period of probation, and have returned

purified to the bosom of the infinite Source. Then, the Messiah will descend from the region of souls, and the great *Jubilee* will commence.

Witchcraft

Of the strange magical and mystical cults sent fleeing into southern Europe with the Muslim advances were the Bogomils. Their name signifying in Slavonic *friends of God*, the Bogomils, in the ninth century, migrated from Northern Syria and Mesopotamia to the Balkan Peninsula, particularly Thrace. Their doctrine, founded on a Gnostic dualism, may be summarized as follows: God, the Supreme Father, has two sons, the elder Satanael, the younger Jesus. To Satanael, who sat on the right hand of God, belonged the right of governing the celestial world, but, filled with pride, he rebelled against his Father and fell from Heaven. Then, aided by the companions of his fall, he created the visible world, the image of the celestial, having like the other its Sun, Moon, and stars, and last he created man and the serpent which became his minister. Later Christ came to earth in order to show men the way to heaven, but His death was ineffectual, for even by descending into Hell he could not defeat the power of Satanael.

The belief in the impotence of Christ and the necessity therefore for appeasing Satan, not only "the Prince of this world," but its creator, led to the further doctrine that Satan, being all-powerful, should be worshipped. Nicetas Choniates, a Byzantine historian of the twelfth century, described the followers of this cult as Satanists because, "considering Satan powerful they worshipped him lest he might do them harm."[550] Subsequently, they were known as Luciferians, their doctrine being that Lucifer was unjustly driven out of Heaven, that one day he will ascend there again and be restored to his former glory and power in the celestial world. They worshipped Lucifer, regarding the material world as his work, and holding that by indulging in carnal pleasures they were accommodating their Demon-Creator. It was said that a black cat figured in their ceremonies as an object of worship, also that at their nocturnal orgies, sacrifices of children were made and their blood used for making the Eucharistic bread of the sect.

Towards the end of the twelfth century Luciferianism spread eastwards through Styria, the Tyrol, and Bohemia, even as far as Brandenburg. By the beginning of the thirteenth century it had invaded western Germany, and in the fourteenth century reached its peak in that country, as also in Italy and France. The cult had now reached a further stage in its development, and it was not the mere propitiation of Satanael as the prince of this world practiced by the Luciferians, but actual Satanism, the love of evil for the sake of evil, which formed the doctrine of the sect known in Italy as *la vecchia religione* or the *old religion*.[551] With the rising influence of magic in that country, it was from Italy that came the most skillful adepts in the art of alchemy, astrology, magic, and demon invocation, who spread themselves over Europe, and particularly France.

Merkabah and other magical tendencies had reached Italian Jews from Baghdad as early as the ninth century. Italian Jewish tradition clearly shows that the rabbis of Italy were well versed in the subject, and tells of the miraculous activity of one of the Merkabah mystics who emigrated from Baghdad and performed wonders through the power of the Sacred Names. The methods of the Kabbalists often tended to be more magical and theurgic than mystical, and as Gershom Scholem remarks, "this may have something to do with the origin of the medieval stereotype of the Jew as magician and sorcerer."[552]

Throughout Europe, and from the earliest times, the Jews were charged with practicing black magic. They were rumored to worship the devil in the form of a cat or a toad in their synagogues, where they invoked his help in their malevolent designs. They were accused of practicing the ritual murder of children, of using stolen church property for purposes of desecration, etc. Many of the same accusations were brought against the witches of the Middle Ages. In their ceremonies of devil invocation, witches were reputed to blaspheme the ceremonies of the religion they belonged to. The desecration of the Holy Sacrament was known as the Black Mass, later termed a Sabbat, apparently for the Jewish Sabbath. At these nocturnal celebrations, a pact with the devil was to take place, the participants would defile the Christian sacraments, spit on the cross, denounce Christ, and swear allegiance to Satan.

Eventually, however, the Church of Rome attempted the brutal suppression of witchcraft. Between 1421 and 1440 the Inquisition held a series of trials in the Dauphine district of south-eastern France. The medieval witch-hunt was instigated through the publication, in 1484, of the *Malleus Maleficarum* or *Hammer of the Witches*, written by two Dominican monks who were members of the Inquisition. Until then the medieval Church had dismissed the witches as ignorant peasants suffering from delusions and worshipping pagan gods, but this document significantly altered that perception. According to it, witchcraft was a diabolical heresy which conspired to overthrow the Church and establish the kingdom of Satan on Earth. Pope Innocent VIII agreed with the diagnosis, and in 1486, issued a papal bull condemning witchcraft.

According to their confessions, witches flew by night to meet at "synagogues", riding on demonic horses, or on broom-sticks smeared with ointment made from the bodies of babies. There, they worshipped Satan, who appeared as a black cat or a man with shining eyes, wearing a crown and black clothes. They feasted, danced and copulated with each other, with their familiar spirits and sometimes with the devil himself. The witches made a formal pact with the devil, paid him homage, gave him the obscene kiss, a kiss on his rectum, and sacrificed children and black cats to him. They made magic potions from children's bodies. The devil taught them the work of evil magic and they reported on the harm they had done since previous meetings. In some cases he made a mark on their bodies as a sign of their allegiance to him.

Modern apologists claim that witchcraft was merely the survival of ancient paganism, a benign form of nature worship that suffered undue persecution at the hands of an oppressive clergy. Some suggest the Church, as a patriarchal authority, feared the growing power that women might gain from clandestine associations through witchcraft, and attempted its brutal suppression. Therefore, the stories about pacts with the Devil, Sabbaths and broomsticks were forged, and the trials were a sham. False confessions were elicited through torture. The female victims represented the powerless in society, elderly widows, young, headstrong girls, or practitioners of ancient folk wisdom like herb craft and midwifery, and thus made ideal scapegoats. However, in many areas, the acquittal rate of suspected witches was very high. The ratio of males to female convictions and executions varied widely. The use of torture to force confessions of witchcraft varied from country to country, and was as low as twenty five percent in some places. Many confessions were freely made, and many witches who confessed and recanted their error later withdrew their recantation. More importantly, a vital fact ignored was the burning of judges, doctors, the nobility, including the immolation of many priests and nuns.

In the medieval witch trials it was alleged that the witches actually had intercourse with a ram or goat, thought to have been the form assumed by the devil. Judging by the confessions and the pictures which artists based on them, the devil of the witches was the horned god of the Underworld, the fertility god of the ancient mysteries, like the Greek god Pan or the satyrs, the lustful goatish creatures who had human body with the horns, ears, loins, legs and hooves of goat. Similarly, Satan is linked with the goat in Jewish literature, and the *Zohar* relates that when the Israelites invoked evil spirits, these appeared to them under the form of he-goats and made known to them all that they wished to learn.[553] Azazel, another name for Satan, leader of the Sons of God, was connected with the Jewish scapegoat ritual. Down to 70 AD, a goat was selected each year "for Azazel". It was formally loaded with the sins of the people and sent away into the wilderness "to Azazel" (*Leviticus* 16). The ritual was not forgotten and in the thirteenth century, with Rabbi ben Nahmen (Nahmenides) explaining that:

> God has commanded us, however, to send a goat on Yom Kippur to the ruler whose realm is in the places of desolation. From the emanation of his power come destruction and ruin; he ascends to the stars of the sword, of blood, of wars, quarrels, wounds, blows, disintegration and destruction. He is associated with the planet Mars. His portion among the peoples is Esau, a people who live by the sword; and his portion among the animals is the goat. The demons are part of his realm and are called in the Bible *seirim* (he goats); he and his people are named *Seir*. [554]

Azazel and the "Sons of God" lusted for mortal women and it seems that the *seirim* or goat-demons, assigned to Azazel by Nahmenides, and mentioned several times in the Old Testament, may have done so too, for *Leviticus* 17:7 says, "So they shall no more slay their sacrifices for satyrs (*seirim*), after whom they play the harlot" and, "neither shall any woman give herself to a beast to lie with it."[555] Chapter 22 of the *Book of Exodus*, which was so frequently cited as a justification for witch-hunting, says: "You shall not suffer a witch to live", followed immediately by, "Whosoever lies with a beast shall surely be put to death. He that sacrifices unto any god save the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed."

The copulation of women with a divine goat was also reported in antiquity. In medieval times, the devil was known as the Goat of Mendes because at this temple in ancient Egypt, rituals were performed involving naked priestesses performing sex with goats. According to Plutarch, after Set dismembered Osiris' body, his penis was never found and Isis made a gold replica of it and buried it at Mendes, where there was a temple dedicated to the goat god. Plutarch noted that the most beautiful women were selected to lie with the divine *Goat of Mendes*. Herodotus mentioned that the people of Mendes in the Nile Delta venerate all goats, especially male ones: "one of them is held in particular reverence, and when he dies the whole province goes into mourning. Mendes is the Egyptian name for both Pan and for a goat. In this province not long ago a goat tupped a woman, in full view of everybody, a most surprising incident."[556]

Alchemy

Of the alchemical manuscripts that reached Europe, those of the Hellenistic alchemist Zosimus had much less impact than the work of ar-Razi and other Arabs, which emerged among the translations made in Spain about 1150 AD by Gerard of Cremona. According to Seznec, "thanks to the Crusades, and to the penetration of Arab philosophy and science into Sicily and Spain, Europe came to know the Greek texts with the Arab commentaries, in Latin translations for the most part made by Jews. The result was an extraordinary increase in the prestige of astrology, which between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries enjoyed greater favor than ever before."[557]

Allusions to alchemy are found already in the *Zohar*, and it certainly was an important component of the practical Kabbalah of Mediaeval times. Astrology and alchemy were two aspects of what is known as practical Kabbalah, which, according to Gershom Scholem, was understood to refer to all magical practices that developed in Judaism from Talmudic times through to the Middle Ages.[558] For the most part, practical Kabbalah was a supposedly purely motivated "white" magic, and only the most perfectly virtuous persons were permitted recourse to it, and even then, never for private benefit, and only in times of emergency and public need.

Before 1300 AD, the subject of alchemy was under discussion by the German philosopher, scientist, and theologian, Albertus Magnus, known as Albert the Great. Albertus had claimed that the Virgin Mary had granted him the gift of high intelligence, and that she had actually appeared to him. In his study he was to have kept a bronze statue that had been cast by his pupil Thomas Aquinas. One day, Albertus anointed the figurine with an elixir, causing it to spring to life. For a time, the statue proved extremely useful. It ran errands, swept the floor, and performed all kinds of domestic chores. The robot had a major drawback, though: it had a tendency to chatter incessantly. The noise eventually was so bothersome that Aquinas took a hammer and pounded the robot to bits. Among the British, the foremost alchemist was the English philosopher and scientist Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar and Oxford don. All sorts of tales are associated with him. He was accused of having conjured the elements, of summoning the devil, of fabricating a mirror that revealed the future, and of sculpting a brass head capable of talking. Like many occultist of the period, he found himself in conflict with the Church authorities, and in 1284 he was jailed by Pope Nicholas IV, and remained in prison for the next ten years.

Since all things in nature were charged with the divine spirit and therefore aspired to a higher, more perfect state, metals too, gradually perfected themselves in the earth's bosom. Thus even lead, through a natural process of transmutation, would eventually turn in to silver or gold. The alchemist's hope then, was to manipulate this natural process by performing the transmutation in the laboratory. One vital part of the process was the mysterious agent known as the Philosophers' Stone, described by the fourth century alchemist Zosimus as a "stone which is not a stone." Usually in the form of a red powder, the stone was credited with miraculous powers. Not only could it help transmute base metals into gold, it reputedly could soften glass, render its owner invisible at will, or give an alchemist the ability to levitate, or enable him to converse with angels or even to understand the language of animals. Often synonymous with the stone was the elixir, whose specific attribute was the power to cure disease and prolong life.

Alchemists perused ancient manuscripts, and worked to find the coveted formula through experimentation, a labour that was generally known as the Great Work. There were many theories about how to pursue the *Great Work*, and each one carefully guarded his theories, experiments, and even the equipment used in the process. "I swear to you upon my soul," the thirteenth-century alchemist Ramon Llull vowed to his readers, "that if you reveal this, you shall be damned." A later adept, writing under the name of Basil Valentine, warned that "to speak of this even a little further would mean being willing to risk to sink into hell." As Englishman Thomas Norton wrote in the fifteenth century: "This art must ever secret be. The cause whereof is this, as ye may see: If one evil man had thereof all his will, All Christian peace he might easily spill, And with his pride he might pull down, Rightful kings and princes of renown."[559]

The story of Nicholas Flamel, born around 1330, a mixture of his own writings, municipal records, and anecdotes, was one of the best-known tales of the philosopher's stone during the Middle Ages, particularly in France. Flamel is said to have had a dream one night seeing an angel with a book. The angel said, "Flamel, behold this book of which thou understandes nothing; to many others but thyself it would remain forever unintelligible, but one day thou shalt discern in its pages what none but thyself will see."[560] In 1357, browsing through old manuscripts, Flamel came across the same book he saw in his dream. The title of the book was *Abraham the Jew, Prince, Priest, Levite, Astrologer and Philosopher to the Nation of the Jewes, by the Wrath of God Dispersed Among the Gaules, Sendeth Health*. Although, the text assumed that the reader had an understanding of Kabbalah as well as a command of alchemy.

Flamel spent many frustrating years studying the work. At last, on a journey to Spain, he claimed to have met a converted Jew in Leon, who explained it to him. On returning to Paris, he proceeded to apply what he had learned and performed the first of a series of alchemical transmutations. He reported that he

transmuted a half-pound of mercury into silver "finer than silver which is mined." Three months later he attempted a second experiment and this time is alleged to have succeeded in producing pure gold. Flamel supposedly performed only one more transmutation, and suddenly became the wealthy benefactor of a number of religious and charitable institutions. According to reputable municipal records, he founded and endowed fourteen hospitals, three chapels, and seven churches in Paris alone, and a like number in Boulogne.

As with their Hellenistic counterparts, to a number of Mediaeval alchemists, transmutation was allegorical of spiritual development. As one adept wrote: "False alchemists seek only to make gold; true philosophers desire only knowledge. The former produce mere tinctures, sophistries, ineptitudes; the latter inquire after the principles of things."[561] To George Ripley, an English monk born in 1415, who also spent many years puzzling over books before journeying to foreign lands in search of the secret of the philosopher's stone, turning lead into gold was not the real point of the exercise. What was more important to him was his comparison of the twelve chemical steps to a spiritual process. Calcination corresponded to the self-reproach that removes the barrier of human shortcomings to reveal the inner person. In subsequent steps, that inner person is separated into spirit, soul, and body before undergoing a mock death and spiritual rebirth that culminates in the reunion of a purified spirit and a purified body.

One of the most famous figures in the history of alchemy was the man known as Paracelsus, who through his development and use of chemically prepared medicines, established the basis for the study of pharmacy. Paracelsus was born in 1493, given the name of Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, but later changed his name to Paracelsus, meaning "beyond Celsus," a reference to the first-century Roman physician. After traveling throughout Europe and to the Middle East, he was appointed as Basel's official physician. Paracelsus began to attract students from all over Europe and set off a storm of controversy that began when he made the bold announcement that his lectures would be based, not on the traditional teachings of accepted authorities, but on his own experiences and methods. He is to have said, "the universities do not teach all things, so a doctor must seek out old wives, gypsies, sorcerers, wandering tribes, old robbers, and such outlaws and take lessons from them. A doctor must be a traveler."[562] To emphasize his break with tradition, he burned the works of Galen and Avicenna, the "Prince of Physicians", at the bonfire held on Saint John's Day.

The foundation of the medical teachings of Paracelsus were derived from the sympathetic magic of the Kabbalah, the belief that each human being, representing the Microcosm, was ultimately linked to the cosmos, or Macrocosm, and that whatever had an effect upon the one would have a similar effect upon the other. Health emanated from God, the "Great Physician," and sickness, as Paracelsus saw it, was merely a breakdown in the celestial harmony that normally exists between nature and humankind, or Macrocosm and Microcosm. To restore health, the physician had to restore the balance through the use of chemical remedies, called *arcana*. In these processes, the physician was required to rely on the mediation of influences as the rays of stars, and what Paracelsus referred to ambiguously, "the breath of the Lord."[563]

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Chapter 15: Baphomet

The Merovingians

Southern France in the age of the Crusades was the locale of a cultural revolution that significantly impacted the course of Western history. The important products of this period were, not only the Kabbalah of Judaism, but a Christian heresy known as the Cathars, the cult of chivalry, romance literature and the legends of the Holy Grail. Though scholars tend to dismiss the findings of Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln, the authors of the controversial *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, and though their conclusions certainly cannot be fully accepted, nevertheless, their research has helped to point out some of the important connections between these several trends. According to their research, Godfroi de Bouillon, the leader of the First Crusade, had constituted a mysterious order known as the Priory of Zion, which allegedly could be traced back to a Gnostic named Ormus, who was supposed to have lived in the first century AD, when he was converted to Christianity by the apostle Mark, and formed a secret society which united esoteric Christianity with the teachings of the pagan mysteries.[564] The purported aim of the Order was the reestablishment of the Merovingians, a Jewish dynasty which claimed descent from Jesus through Mary Magdalene. The full name of this clandestine organization was the Priory of Our Lady of Zion, "Our Lady" referring not to the Virgin Mary, as would be commonly assumed, but to Mary Magdalene.

Supposedly, immediately following the capture of Jerusalem, the Priory of Zion convened a secret meeting to elect the King of Jerusalem. The throne was offered to Godfroi, but he declined the title, accepting instead that of *Defender of the Holy Sepulcher*. Though, when Godfroi died in 1100 AD, his brother Baudoin did claim the title. Finally, by 1108 AD, the order had mysteriously disappeared, and no record of its whereabouts survived. However, according to the research of the authors of the *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, the Priory of Zion continued to operate for several centuries, led by Grand Masters who represented some of Europe's most prominent figures, and apparently continues to exist today, pursuing its original aim: the re-establishment of the Merovingian dynasty of France, of which Godfroi was supposedly a descendant. Although we cannot verify the existence of the Priory of Zion before the twentieth century, the purported connections between the Merovingians and the legends of the Holy Grail help us to better understand some of the trends that took place in these twelfth century.

The Merovingians were a Frankish dynasty that ruled France beginning at the end of the fifth century AD. They were originally from Scythia north of the Black Sea, where they were known as the Sicambrians, taking their name from Cambra, a tribal queen of about 380 BC. Then, in the early fifth century AD, the invasion of the Huns provoked large-scale migrations of almost all European tribes. It was at this time that the Sicambrians, a tribe of the Germanic people collectively known as the Franks, crossed the Rhine and moved into Gaul, establishing themselves in what is now Belgium and northern France, in the vicinity of the Ardennes.

Purportedly, the Merovingians were of Jewish descent. In actuality, as the historian Cecil Roth noted, culturally the Jews could be termed the first Europeans.[565]As early as 700-600 BC, Phoenician and Semitic trade routes traversed the whole of southern France, from Bordeaux to Marseilles and Narbonne. There were Phoenician settlements not only along the French coast but inland as well, at such cities as Carcassonne and Toulouse, where many articles of Semitic origin. In the early Roman empire, there was a Jewish colony in Rome, and distinctive Jewish communities were found as far north as Lyons, Bonn and Cologne, and as far west as Cadiz and Toledo. When Jerusalem was sacked in 70 AD, prompting a massive exodus of Jews from Palestine, certain cities in southern France, like Arle, Lunel, and Narbonne, provided a haven for Jewish refugees.

Certain important details of the history of the Merovingians are related in the Fredegar' *Chronicle*, a facsimile of which is in the *Biblioteque Nationale* in Paris. It is an extensive seventh century historical work whose manuscript was presented to the Nibelungen court, and recognized by the state authorities as a comprehensive, official history. Fredegar, who died in 660 AD, was a Burgundian scribe, and his *Chronicle*

covered the period from the earliest days of the Hebrew patriarchs to the era of the Merovingian kings. It made reference to numerous sources of information, including the writings of St. Jerome, translator of the Old Testament into Latin, Archbishop Isidore of Seville, author of the *Encyclopedia of Knowledge*, and Bishop Gregory of Tours, author of the *History of the Franks*. Fredegar's *Prologue* asserts that his own researches were even more painstaking than those of other writers he quotes. He tells how the Sicambrian line of "Franks", from whom France acquired its name, were themselves first so called after their chief Francio, a descendant of Noah, who died in 11 BC. Prior to their Scythian days Francio's race originated in ancient Troy after which the French city of Troyes was named. The city of Paris, established by the sixth century Merovingians, likewise bears the name of Prince Paris, the son of King Priam of Troy, whose liaison with Helen of Sparta sparked the Trojan War.

According to the research of the authors of the *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, the Merovingians were further descended from the Israelite Tribe of Benjamin, that had originally settled in ancient Greece, in the district of Arcadia. In the *Dossier Secrets*, discovered by the authors, references are made to a story in the Bible that could explain the arrival of the Tribe of Benjamin in Arcadia. In a story that mirrors the rape of Helen and the Trojan War, *Judges* tells of a Levite traveling through Benjamite territory, who is assaulted and his concubine raped by worshippers of Belial (Baal). Calling representatives of the twelve tribes to witness, the Levite demands vengeance for the crime, and at a council, the Benjamites are instructed to deliver the misfits to justice. For some reason, however, the Benjamites do not, and engage the Levites in a war to protect the *sons of Belial*. The result is a bitter and bloody struggle between the Benjamites and the remaining eleven tribes, and it appears that following this conflict many, if not most, of the Benjamites went into exile. Their exile supposedly took them to Arcadia in Greece, apparently recounted in the myth of Danaus, the son of King Belus (Baal).

As the descendants of the Tribe of Benjamin, the Merovingians were also descended from Cain. (insert footnote for Gardner) They supposedly bore a distinctive birthmark, which distinguished them from all other men, rendered them immediately identifiable, and which attested to their semi-divine or sacred blood. Different writers apparently disagree on what this mark was, but most believe it was a sort of red cross, found either on the chest or on the back, and some have assumed that the Bible reference of the dwelling of God between the shoulders of Benjamin refers to this birthmark. The mark was their legacy as the purported descendants of Cain, for when God had found his crime, He banished him and "appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him." Another important symbol adopted by the Merovingians, was the of the lily, or *fleur-de-lis*, which became associated from time to time with the French state and French nobility. The *fleur-de-lis*, a highly stylized depiction of the real flower, was a common Jewish symbol. Not only are lilies frequently mentioned in the songs of David, but early Jewish coinage also featured similar lilies.[566]The great book of the *Zohar* begins with an exposition of the mystical significance of the lily, described as the the symbol of the Jewish congregation, in interpretation of the *Song of Solomon*, where the beloved is described as, "like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens."[567]

The Merovingians derived their name from Merovee. Merovee (Merovech or Meroveus), according to a curious story recounted by both Gregory of Tours and subsequent tradition, was born of two fathers. When already pregnant by her husband, King Clodio, Merovee's mother supposedly went swimming in the ocean. In the water she is said to have been raped by a sea dragon, an unidentified aquatic creature from beyond the sea: *bestea Neptuni Quinotauri similis*, "a beast of Neptune similar to a Quinotaur." Merovingian monarchs were also renowned to possess curious powers, and were often called "sorcerer-kings" or "thaumaturge-kings". The Roman Church proclaimed them irreligious, and the Catholic Gregory of Tours described them as "followers of idolatrous practices."[568] Frequently called the long-haired kings, the Merovingians were occult adepts, initiates in arcane sciences, and practitioners of esoteric arts. They were said to be capable of clairvoyant or telepathic communication with beasts and with the natural world around them, and to wear powerful magical necklaces.

The most famous of all Merovingian rulers was Merovee's grandson, Clovis I, who reigned between 481 and 511 AD. Gaul was the richest and largest area of the western empire, but the Frankish tribes had not succeeded in organizing a single state, until Clovis defeated the surviving Roman forces in 486 AD. During his reign and that of his sons, Frankish power was extended over nearly all of Gaul and far into Germany. The Frankish kingdom eventually became the strongest and most extensive of the new German states, and it was the only one that truly survived into later centuries, from it being descended the modern states of both Germany and France. Clovis converted to Roman Christianity, and an accord was ratified between him and the Roman Church, followed by a great wave of conversion, by which the Roman Church was effectively saved from the threat of the increasing popularity of the Arian heresy. Clovis was granted the title of New Constantine, presiding over a Holy Roman Empire.

Clovis' successors did not retain the ruthlessness of the founder of the Frankish dynasty, and instead became mere figureheads, puppets of the Mayors of the Palace, in whose hands was the real power. On Clovis' death, his son Dagobert, acceded to the kingdom of Austrasia, but was deposed by a conspiracy on the part of Pepin the Fat, the king's mayor of the palace, which the Church of Rome approved, and immediately passed the Merovingian administration of Austrasia to Pepin. Pepin was followed by Charles Martel, one of the most heroic figures in French history, and who was the grandfather of Charlemagne, according whose name the dynasty came to be known in history as that of the Carolingians.

Prior to the fall of Dagobert, the Merovingian district of Septimania in southern France had been in Islamic hands. Septimania had become an autonomous Moorish principality with its own capital at Narbonne, and paying only nominal allegiance to the amir of Cordova. From Narbonne the Moors of Septimania began to strike northward, capturing cities as deep into Frankish territory as Lyons. Though, by 738, Charles had driven the Moors back, laying siege to Narbonne. Narbonne, defended by both Moors and Jews, however, proved impregnable.

Charles Martel died in 741, and was succeeded by his son, Pepin III. Narbonne, however continued to resist, withstanding a seven-year long siege by Pepin's forces. The problem was resolved by a pact with the city's Jewish population, according to which Pepin would receive Jewish aid against the Moors, and Jewish endorsement for his claim to a biblical succession. In return Pepin would grant the Jews of Septimania a principality and a king of their own.

According to Dr. Arthur Zuckerman, author of *A Jewish Princedom in Feudal France, 768-900*, in 759 the Jewish population of Narbonne turned suddenly on the city's Muslim defenders, slaughtered them, and opened the gates of the fortress to the besieging Franks. Shortly thereafter the Jews acknowledged Pepin as their nominal overlord and validated his claim to an apparently legitimate biblical succession. Pepin, in the meantime, kept his promise, and in 768 a Jewish principality was created in Septimania, that paid nominal allegiance to Pepin, but was essentially independent. A ruler was officially installed as the *Son of David* and King of the Jews. In the Mediaeval romances he is called Aymery, but according to existing records, he seems to have taken the name Theodoric or Thierry, and was a Merovingian, a descendant of Dagobert. He was recognized by both Pepin and the caliph of Baghdad as "the seed of the royal house of David." Theodoric was the father of Guillem de Gellone, about whom there were at least six major epic poems composed before the era of the crusades. The device of his shield was the Lion of Judah. At the height of his power, he included as part of his dominion, northeastern Spain, the Pyrenees, along with the region of Septimania.

Pepin's son Charles, famous throughout history as Charlemagne, assumed the throne and took advantage of his brother's death in 771 to unite the Carolingian territories, to which he added many conquests, notably Saxony, Aquitaine, and Septimania, inaugurating the Holy Roman Empire. Under the Carolingians, Septimania became part of the kingdom of Aquitaine, but became a separate duchy in 817. As a separate entity it disappeared from history in the ninth century, as the territory passed into the hands of the counts of Toulouse, and was known from then on as the Languedoc region of southern France. By the twelfth century, the family tree of the Merovingians bifurcated and spread to other parts.

Certain descendants of Theodoric and Guillem de Gellone remained in Narbonne, but there were others in subsequent centuries that attained more prestigious domains, including Lorraine and the kingdom of Jerusalem. In the ninth century the bloodline of Guillem de Gellone culminated in the first dukes of Aquitaine, and also became aligned with the ducal house of Brittany. In the ninth century Hughes de Plantard, a lineal descendant of both Dagobert and Guillem, became father of Eustache, first count of Boulogne. Eustache's grandson was Godfroi of Bouillon, duke of Lorraine, who inaugurated the Crusades and conquered Jerusalem.[569]

However, Dr. Zuckerman's work has not been reviewed in historical journals without some skepticism. As Nathaniel Taylor has indicated, Zuckerman's evidence is quite late, and not irrefutable. Nevertheless, the legend was common by the twelfth century, when the tales of the Holy Grail were compiled. Zuckerman's primary source was fourteenth or fifteenth century copy of a manuscript of the Sefer ha-Kaballa containing a version of the legend. In addition, a Latin prose epic of similar date, the Deeds of Charlemagne at Carcassone and Narbonne, tells of the Jews of Narbonne requesting that Charlemagne confirm the status of their leader, a king of the House of David. According to Taylor, "the legend of Charlemagne's installation of the dynasty, and of associated grants of privileges, follows a literary pattern which was extremely common in this erea in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. To embellish and mythologize the past, and particularly to invent connections to Charlemagne, was a frequent subterfuge of the area's monastic communities, but it appears also to have been true of other social groups – including the Jews. We cannot now determine the validity of the Davidic origins of the Jewish dynasty of

Narbonne – or even its continuity, or the names of individual *nesiim* [Jewish leaders]– before the eleventh century."[570]

In any case, as late as 1143, Peter the Venerable of Cluny, in an address to Louis VII of France, condemned the Jews of Narbonne who claimed to have a king residing among them. In 1144, Theobald, a Cambridge monk, spoke of "the chief Princes and Narbonne where the royal seed resides." In 1165-66 Benjamin of Tudela, the famous Jewish traveler and chronicler, reports that in Narbonne there are "sages, magnates and princes at the head of whom is… a remnant of the House of David as stated in his family tree."[571]

The Cathars

The Priory of Zion was purportedly responsible for the institution of an order of crusading knights, the Templars, or Knights Templar, which has often been suspected of association with the heretical Christian sect known as the Cathars, or *Church of Love*. To most scholars, the origin of the Cathars, from the Greek *cathari* meaning *pure ones*, remains unclear. Some believe the Cathars to be inheritors of the Gnosticism of Manicheanism. Manichaean schools were particularly active in Spain and southern France, and by the time of the Crusades, had established links with other Manichaean sects in Italy and Bulgaria. Others still, consider the Cathars to have been derived from the Bogomils of the Balkans.

However, the Cathars differ from the Bogomils in important respects, and Manichean was merely a term commonly used by Western clerics to refer to heretics in general. A third more plausible theory posits the possibility of an indigenous development. There is a possibility, as both movements emerged simultaneously, in the very same district, the Languedoc, that Catharism was in part derived from the Kabbalah. Several thirteenth century Christian polemicists had reproached the Cathars for their relations with Jews, and Johnson notes that, "the Church was by no means wide of the mark when it identified Jewish influences in the Cathar movement…"[572] In *Jewish Influences on Christian Reform Movements*, Louis I. Newman concludes:

> ... that the powerful Jewish culture in Languedoc, hwich had acquired sufficient strength to assume an aggressive, propagandist policy, created a millieu wherefrom movements of religious independence arose readily and spontaneously. Contact and association between Christian princes and their Jewish officials and friends stimulated the state of mind which facilitated the banishment of orthodoxy, the clearing away of the debris of Catholic theology. Unwilling to receive Jewish thought, the princes and laity turned towards Catharism, then being preached in their domains.[573]

Though they diverged on points of essential doctrine, the Cathars do seem to have adopted a number of ideas from the Jews. As Scholem has pointed out, the Cathars agree wth the Kabbalists on a number of points, but that, "the question of a possible link between the crystallization of the Kabbalah, as we find it in the redaction of the *Bahir*, and the Cathar movement must also remain unresolved, at least for the moment. This connection is not demonstrable, but the possibility cannot be excluded."[574]

The Cathars were divided into two classes, or degrees. Laity were known as credents, or believers. They were not required to follow the rigid rules of abstinence reserved for the elect *perfecti*, or *bonhommes* (good men), who formed the hierarchy of the Cathar church. Anyone, man or woman, aspiring to join the *perfecti* faced a probationary period lasting at least two years. During that time, he or she gave up all worldly goods, lived communally with other *perfecti*, and abstained from partaking of meat and wine.

The following account by one of their opponents, Raynaldus, in his *Annales*, offers a full description of the Cathars' Gnostic beliefs:

> First it is to be known that the heretics held that there are two Creators; viz. one of invisible things, whom they called the benevolent God, and another of visible things, whom they named the malevolent God. The New Testament they attributed to the benevolent God; but the Old Testament to the malevolent God, and rejected it altogether, except certain authorities which are inserted in the New Testament from the Old; which, out of reverence to the New Testament, they esteemed worthy of reception. They charged the author of the Old Testament with falsehood, because the Creator said, "In the day that ye eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ye shall die;" nor (as they say) after eating did they die; when, in fact, after the eating the forbidden fruit they were subjected to the misery of death. They also call him a homicide, as well because he burned up Sodom and Gomorrah, and destroyed the world by the waters of the deluge, as because he

> overwhelmed Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, in the sea. They affirmed also, that all the fathers of the Old Testament were damned; that John the Baptist was one of the greater demons. They said also, in their secret doctrine, (in secreto suo) that that Christ who was born in the visible, and terrestrial Bethlehem, and crucified in Jerusalem, was a bad man, and that Mary Magdalene was his concubine; and that she was the woman taken in adultery, of whom we read in the gospel. For the good Christ, as they said, never ate, nor drank, nor took upon him true flesh, nor ever was in this world, except spiritually in the body of Paul....
>
> They said that almost all the Church of Rome was a den of thieves; and that it was the harlot of which we read in the Apocalypse. They so far annulled the sacraments of the Church, as publicly to teach that the water of holy Baptism was just the same as river water, and that the Host of the most holy body of Christ did not differ from common bread; instilling into the ears of the simple this blasphemy, that the body of Christ, even though it had been as great as the Alps, would have been long ago consumed, and annihilated by those who had eaten of it. Confirmation and Confession, they considered as altogether vain and frivolous. They preached that Holy Matrimony was meretricious, and that none could be saved in it, if they should beget children. Denying also the Resurrection of the flesh, they invented some unheard of notions, saying, that our souls are those of angelic spirits who, being cast down from heaven by the apostacy of pride, left their glorified bodies in the air; and that these souls themselves, after successively inhabiting seven terrene bodies, of one sort or another, having at length fulfilled their penance, return to those deserted bodies.[575]

Fearing Church repression, the first Cathars kept their faith in secret. But the sect soon attracted such a following that it could operate openly under the protection of powerful feudal lords able to defy the Pope. They had established communities in Northern Italy, the Alpine regions and Southern France. In southern France, Catharism, and a vaguely similar movement known as Waldensianism, virtually became the region's official religions, under the political control of Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, himself a follower of the Cathar faith.

However, matters between Cathar and Catholic authorities came to a head, when one of the count's squires murdered a special envoy sent to Toulouse by Pope Innocent III. The assassination so enraged the pope that he declared the Cathars "worse than the very Saracen" and called for a crusade to wipe it out.[576] The Church charged the heretics with devil worship, human sacrifice, cannibalism, incest, homosexuality and celebrating the Black Mass. In 1209 an army of some thirty thousand knights and foot soldiers from northern Europe descended on the Languedoc, and in reference to the Languedoc center at Albi, the campaign was called the *Abligensian Crusade*. The edict of annihilation referred not only to the mystical Cathars themselves, but to all who supported them, which included most of the people of Languedoc. When an officer inquired of the Pope's representative how he might distinguish heretics from true believers, the famous reply was, "Kill them all. Let God sort them out." Final defeat came upon the Cathars at their famous stronghold of Montsegur in the foothills of the Pyrennees in 1244, when more than 200 Cathar priests were massacred by the Christian forces.

The Templars

Since a more or less continual state of warfare existed between the Arabs and Christians in the Holy Land, the Catholic Church initially welcomed the service of the order of crusading knights, known as the Templars. The famous Templars are well recognized as the typical image of the crusaders, who, like the Cathars, wore long white mantles, emblazoned with the equal armed red cross "pattee," also the notorious mark of Cain of the Merovingians. Concerned with ensuring safe passage of Christian pilgrims between the port of Jaffa, in what if now Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, the order was founded in 1118 by French nobleman, Hughes de Payens, and eight other veteran soldiers. The knights took their name, *Poor Knights of the Temple*, from the holy city's Temple of Solomon, the site on which they supposedly were first stationed.

Although founded in the name of Christianity, a military religious order was contrary to church policy, which prohibited clergy from bearing arms. Knights were a warrior class, and the Church tended to view them as godless and licentious. The creation of the Knights Templars was seen as a way of redeeming a lawless class, and in fact, many of those recruited to the Templars had been previously excommunicated. Bernard de Clairvaux described them as "unbelieving scoundrels, sacrilegious plunderers, homicides, perjurers, adulterers." Whatever his views on warriors in general, Bernard, founder of the Cistercian monks, was a great admirer of the order, and its unofficial patron. Calling them "Christ's legal executioners," he absolved Templars from the sin of killing as long as their victims were enemies of the

Church. In 1128, the Order was sanctioned by the Council of Troyes and the Pope, and a rule was drawn up by St. Bernard under which the Templars were bound by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, dedicating themselves to the *Mere de Dieu*, or the Mother of God.

Though their stated purpose was the defense of Christian pilgrims, according to many accounts, the true aim of the order was the recovery of treasure buried inside the Temple in Jerusalem. In 70 AD, when Jerusalem was razed by the Romans, the Temple was sacked and the sacred contents were carried back to Rome. Three and a half centuries later, in AD 410, Rome in her turn was sacked by the invading Visigoths, under Alaric the Great. As the historian Procopius tells us, Alaric made off with "the treasures of Solomon, the King of the Hebrews, a sight most worthy to be seen, for they were adorned in the most part with emeralds and in the olden time they had been taken from Jerusalem by the Romans."[577] This treasure was supposedly later reclaimed when the Merovingians married into the Visigoths.

However, as the story goes, not all of the treasure had fallen originally into Roman hands. Just prior to the plunder, the most sacred relics were buried in a subterranean chamber, and were not discovered until 1127 by the Templars. In 1867, Captain Wilson, Lieutenant Warren and a team of Royal Engineers found strong support for these rumours. They had re-excavated the area and uncovered tunnels extending vertically, for some 25 metres, before fanning out under the Dome of the Rock, which is generally thought to be the site of King Solomon's temple. Crusader artefacts found in these tunnels attest to Templar involvement. More recently, a team of Israeli archaeologists, intrigued by the Warren and Wilson discovery, reinvestigated the passage and concluded that the Templars did in fact excavate beneath the Temple.[578]

Occult historian Laurence Gardner maintains that the Templars retrieved, not only the famous Ark and its contents, but an untold wealth of gold bullion and hidden treasure. It was not until very recently, in 1956, that evidence of a possible hoard within the Temple came to light at Manchester University, when the deciphering of the Qumran *Copper Scroll* was completed that year. It revealed that an "indeterminable treasure", along with a vast stockpile of bullion and valuables, had been buried beneath the Temple. Most importantly, in addition, the Templars also to have found a wealth of ancient manuscript books. Although this is a theory that cannot be proven, it may account for the mysterious appearance, between 1130 and 1180-1200, of the *Sepher ha-Bahir*, described by Kabbalists as having reached them from Palestine, in extremely mutilated form, as remnants of scrolls, booklets and traditions, and representing, according to Scholem, a tradition of classical Gnosticism of a kind that had been lost since the first centuries AD.

Shortly thereafter, the Templars became immensely wealthy and through some knowledge newly acquired, they supposedly brought about a revolution in European architecture, constructing impressive new cathedrals, in a style previously unknown to the West, known as Gothic. According to legend, the cathedrals and other major Gothic constructions were mainly the work of the *Children of Solomon*, a guild of masons of the Cistercian Order, instructed by St. Bernard, from the translation of the secret geometry of King Solomon's masons, who, under their own master, Hiram Abiff, were denoted by degrees of knowledge and proficiency.[579] Their most renowned accomplishments were the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, which was begun in 1163, Chartres in 1194, Reims in 1211, and *Amiens* in 1221. In drafting the Constitution for the Order of Knights Templar in 1128, St. Bernard specifically mentioned a requirement for "the obedience of Bethany, the castle of Mary and Martha," and thus, apparently, the great Notre-Dame cathedrals of Europe, were dedicated not to Jesus' mother Mary, but to Mary Magdalene.

This new style of architecture, a departure from Romanesque, in fact, was profoundly influenced by Islamic architecture, chiefly through Spanish examples, such as the Great Mosque at Cordoba and the Alhambra in Granada. The forerunner of the stained glass in the European cathedrals was the enameled and variegated varieties of Sidon, Tyre and other Syrian cities, a survival of the ancient Phoenician industry.[580] The ribbed vault, the flying buttress, and the pointed arch, which marked its transition from Romanesque architecture, are all details which can be traced directly to the Islamic style. As well, the slightly splayed entrance ways that began to appear in Islamic mosques are very prominent in Gothic architecture.

The Templars grew increasingly powerful, amassing not only great wealth, but political clout as well. The Templars were constantly engaged in high-level diplomacy among nobles and monarchs throughout the Western world and the Holy Land. Ships owned by the Templars and other military orders carried not only fighting men to the Middle East, but also ferried wealthy pilgrims as paying passengers. Through their proficiency in financial matters they had become international financiers, becoming the bankers for every throne in Europe, and for certain Muslim potentates as well. By the thirteenth century, the Templars, along with the grand masters of the related orders of warrior monks, the Knights of St. John and the Teutonic Knights, had gained considerable political power, controlling forty percent of the frontiers of Europe.

Jerusalem fell to Muslim leader Saladin, and by 1291, nearly the whole of the Crusader holdings in Palestine came into Arab control. The Templars established their new headquarters in Cyprus, but with the loss of the Holy Land, the purpose of their existence was lost. Suspicion about order began to mount. The nature of the true allegiances of the order was in doubt, as it became generally believed that the Templars were engaged in forming secret pacts with the Muslims. This rumor seems to have been confirmed when the Order entered into an alliance with the Amir of Damascus against the Hospitallers of Knights of St. John. It is known that there were frequent examples of the Templars forging alliances with the Muslims, and that they had established contacts with the Ismaili sect of the Assassins in a plot to gain control of Tyre.

The legends recounted that the Knights of Templar learned from the "initiates of the East" a certain Jewish doctrine which was attributed to St. John the Apostle.[581] The *Christians of St. John*, known as Johannites, and reputed to inhabit the banks of the Euphrates, were purportedly the Sabians of Harran, often identified with the Gnostic sect of the Mandeans. In *Mandeans of Iraq and Iran*, E.S. Drower maintains that in the mass of material offered by Arab authors there is a good deal to indicate that the Sabians had points of common belief of the Mandeans, and that the Sabians merely chose to adopt the language of Neoplatonism in order to lend an air of scholarship and philosophy to their tenets.[582] Scholars believe they originated in a Jewish-Gnostic group from Jordan, who emigrated to Babylonia in the first or second century AD, and among those still living in Iraq, Gnostic books are preserved dating from seventh or eighth century. According to Scholem, Jewish Gnostic ideas may have been mediated to them fby way of the Ophites: "from this source a considerable number of esoteric traditions were transmitted to Gnostics outside Judaism, whose books, many of which have been discovered in our own time, are full of such material – found not only in Greek and Coptic texts of the second and third centuries but also in the early strata of Sabian literature, which is written in colloquial Aramaic."[583]

The Mandeans were sometimes referred to as *Johannites* because they revered John the Baptist, whom they regarded as the prophet of the ancient religion of Moses, and therefore, as Kurt Rudolph has pointed out, "the attempt has been made to deduce from this that we have here historical traditions of the disciples of the Baptist, but this cannot be proved up to now. It is more likely that the Mandeans took over legends of this kind from heretical Christians, possible Gnostics, circles and shaped them according to their ideas."[584] To the Mandeans, Jesus was a false Messiah sent by the devil. Therefore, as Eliphas Levi describes, "the Templars had two doctrines; one was concealed and reserved to the leaders, being that of Johannism; the other was public, being Roman Catholic doctrine." According to Johannite doctrine, derived ultimately from Talmudic or Kabbalistic sources, Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary, and that as a boy, he was taken to Egypt where he was initiated into the secret doctrines of the priests, and returned to Palestine to deceive the people with his magic.[585] According to the Johannite legend, Moses was initiated in Egypt, where he learned the highest mysteries, which he then passed on to his brother Aaron and to the leaders of the Israelites. Jesus was then instructed in these traditions at a school in Alexandria, in the degrees of Egyptian initiation, giving rise to the legend that he had belonged to the Essenes, by which he initiated or baptized his disciples in the manner of St. John.

By the end of the thirteenth century the Templars had become suspect, not only in the eyes of the clergy, but of the general public as well. Philippe IV of France was particularly suspicious of them. With Papal support, Philippe persecuted the Templars in France and endeavored to eliminate the Order in other countries. He urged the Pope to take action against the Templars, but before the Pope was able to find out more about the matter, the King took the law into his own hands and had all the Templars in France arrested on October 13, 1307.

The Templars were charged with practicing witchcraft, of denying the tenets of the Christian faith, spitting or urinating on the cross during secret rites of initiation, worshipping a skull or head called *Baphomet* in a dark cave, anointing it with blood or the fat of unbaptized babies, worshipping the devil in the shape of a black cat and committing acts of sodomy and bestiality. A great number of the knights, including the Grand Master himself, Jacques du Molay, confessed to most of these accusations. Candidates entering the Order were said to have been ordered to kiss their initiator on the mouth, the navel, the penis and the anus, and at the climax of the ceremony the initiate indulged in an act of sodomy with the chaplain. Templars admitted they had been shown the cross on which was the figure of Christ, and asked whether they believed in Him, and when they answered yes, they were told in some cases that this was wrong because he was not God, but was a false prophet. According to one Templar confession, the reason for not believing in Jesus was "that He was nothing, he was a false prophet and of no value, and that they should believe in the Higher God of Heaven who could save them."[586]

Some confessors added that they were shown an idol or a bearded head, which they were told to worship. One of the most famous charges against the Order was, "that in each province they had idols,

namely heads. That they adored these idols, that they said the head could save them, and that it could make riches." Baphomet, the idol worshipped by the Templars has been variously described as an androgynous deity with two faces and long white beard, or a human skull, which uttered oracular prophecies and guided the destiny of the Order.

Speculation as to the exact nature of the Baphomet venerated by the Templars has been rife. Indicating a connection to fertility symbolism, Baphomet was said to make "the trees flower, and make the land germinate."[587] In his book *De Occulta Philosopia* written in 1530, the German occultist and magician, Henry Cornelius Agrippa, mentioned the Templars in connection with the Gnostics and the worship of the pagan fertility god Priapus, the ugly son of Dionysus and Aphrodite, whose symbol was a huge erect penis, and the Greek, half man half goat god, Pan.[588] Some considered the Templars to have been Muslim coverts, Baphomet being an old French word for Mohammed. Joseph von-Hammer-Purgstall, in the early nineteenth century, described Baphomet as an androgynous phallic god, from an orgiastic cult the Templars inherited from Gnostic predecessors, and perhaps the Ophites, by way of the Assassins. In the nineteenth century, occultist Eliphas Levi reproduced an illustration of the idol, which seems to be based on an effigy found on the Commanderie of Saint Bris le Vineux, a building owned by the Order. The gargoyle is a bearded horned figure with female breasts, wings and cloven feet, sitting in a cross-legged position. According to Levi, the head of Baphomet combines the characteristics of a dog, a bull and a goat, representing the three sources of the pagan mystery tradition: Egypt, the jackal god Anubis, who was the guide of the dead to the Underworld and is identified with the Greek Hermes; India, the sacred bull who may be the origin of Mithras, and Judea, the scapegoat sacrificed in the wilderness to cleanse the sins of the tribe.[589] More recently, Dr. Hugh Schonfield, expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, claimed there is a link between the Templars and the Essenes. He states that the name Baphomet can be translated, by reference to a secret Essene code, to read Sophia.[590]

Jacques de Molay, leader of the Templars, confessed before an assembly of academics at the University of Paris that the charges against them were true. Nevertheless, accusations against the Templars are often considered unfounded by apologists, claiming that confessions were received under torture. Though, many members confessed without torture and confirmed stories obtained by the agents of King Phillipe infiltrated into the Order.[591] Certain evidence was provided by trial at the hands of the Pope, where torture was not employed. He received in private a "certain Knight of the Order, of great nobility and held by the said Order in no slight esteem," who testified to the abominations that took place on the initiation of the Brethren, the spitting on the cross, and other obscenities. The Pope then decided to hold an examination of seventy-two French knights, also conducted without torture. The first sitting took place in 1309, when the Grand Master and 231 Knights were summoned before the pontifical commissioners. Although a number of the Knights, including the Grand Master, now retracted their admissions, some incriminating confessions were again recorded. In Italy, at Ravenna, Pisa, Bologna, and Florence torture was not employed and blasphemies were admitted, while in Germany, torture was employed but no confessions were made and a verdict was given in favour of the Order.[592]

Edward II of England had refused to listen to any accusations against the Order, but in 1309, when Clement V had himself heard the confessions of the Order, a Papal Bull was issued declaring the guilt of the Templars, and Edward II was persuaded to arrest the Templars and order their examination. In France more serious measures were applied and fifty-four Knights who had retracted their confessions were burnt at the stake on May 12, 1310. Edward II of England was reluctant to turn against the knights but, as Philip's son-in-law he was in a difficult position. Templars were finally suppressed in England as elsewhere by the Council of Vienna in 1312, when Phillippe forced Pope Clement to outlaw the Order. And, two years later, on March 14, 1314, Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master of the Order, was burned at the stake.

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Chapter 16: Percival

Parzival

The second half of the twelfth century seems to have contributed to a revolution in European culture, closely connected with the Templars and the Cathars, and under some degree of Kabbalistic influence, that resulted in the art of chivalry and the legends of the Holy Grail. Although Christian in content, most of twentieth-century scholarship concurs in the belief that the romances of the Holy Grail rest ultimately on a pagan foundation of Celtic mythology, and a fertility ritual connected with the cycle of the seasons, the death and rebirth of the year. It is clear, however, that the legends of the Holy Grail are concerned with the theology of the ancient mysteries, pertaining to the descent to the Underworld of the dying god, representing the rebirth of the initiate to a new spiritual life through knowledge of the true god.[593] Essentially, the Grail legends were Kabbalistic allegories of the trials and perils that beset the mystic on his journey towards mystical union with God.

Arthurian legend is founded on a body of stories and medieval romances, known as the *matter of Britain*, centering on the legendary king Arthur. European fame came through the Welsh monk Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, written between 1118 and 1135, who, by drawing on classical authors, the Bible, and Celtic tradition, created the story of a British kingdom, to some extent paralleling that of Israel. Merlin is thought to have been based on a historical Welsh bard of the sixth century AD, but it was the story related by Geoffrey that inspired subsequent romancers. Geoffrey's source was the ninth-century *Historia Britonum* of Nennius, which introduced a prophet-king, Ambrosius, born without a father, but who otherwise claimed to be the son of a Roman consul. Geoffrey identified Ambrosius with Merlin, born of the devil through his seduction of a nun, the demons having sought, through this union, to bring about the birth of the Antichrist. Fortunately, his mother repented, and yet, though baptized, Merlin retained certain miraculous powers.

As the story goes, Merlin disguised Uther Pendragon through magical methods to look like Igerna's husband, that he might lie with her, and that through this adulterous union, conceive Arthur.[594] Arthur becomes ruler at the age of fifteen and at once enters upon his career of victory by defeating the Saxons. He marries Guinevere and establishes a court, the fame of which spreads far and wide. In a series of wars he conquers Scotland, Ireland, Norway, and Gaul. Finally, he makes war against Rome, but, though victorious, is compelled to turn back to protect his wife and kingdom from the treacherous designs of his nephew Mordred. Arthur is mortally wounded and mysteriously removed to the Isle of Avalon, from whence he will reappear some day to restore his people to power.

Towards the end of the twelfth century Arthurian legend makes its appearance in French literature, but entirely transformed under the influence of the ideals of chivalry and courtly love. Courtly Love, in French *Amour Courtoise*, was a product of the Cathar culture, the *Church of Love*.[595]Courts of love were supposedly operating in the castles of the nobility of the Languedoc, with Church inquisitors hinting of practices of orgies. Courtly Love, representing a code that prescribed the behaviour of ladies and their lovers, provided the theme of an extensive courtly medieval literature that began with the troubadours, the traveling poet musicians of courtly love, written in the *langue d'Oc* of Provence. Cathar themes are pervasive in their songs, many of the troubadours themselves being Cathars, or simply reflecting the values of their patrons.

The troubadours were inspired by the Sufi mystics of the Islamic world. Wandering Sufis, traveled on foot from city to city, teaching songs and cryptic words, and sometimes not speaking at all. Sufi musical jesters and *ariakeens* (harlequins) dressed in patchwork costumes, the *khirqah* of the Sufis, originally made from shreds and patches. P. Hitti, in the *History of the Arabs*, commented that, "the troubadours… resembled Arab singers not only in sentiment and character but also in the very forms of their minstrelsy. Certain titles which these Provencal singers gave to their songs are but translations from Arabic titles."[596]According to J. B. Trend, in *The Legacy of Islam*, the poems of the troubadours "…are, in

matter, form and style closely connected with Arabic idealism and Arabic poetry written in Spain."[597]In the love poetry of the Sufis, originally inspired by the *Song of Solomon*, in praise to the bride of God, sometimes God is addressed directly, but often the deity is personified by a woman. It was the goddess worship of the Sufis, expressed in the form of love poetry dedicated to ladies, and a deference towards women, which became known as the art of chivalry. The predominant theme in troubadour poetry was unrequited love for noble ladies, who were usually married. This love took on a quasi-religious tone, their love becoming veneration, elevating the lady to near-divine status. Denis de Rougemont, in Love in the Western World, offers the following conclusion:

> There occurred during the twelfth century in Languedoc and in the Limousin one of the most extraordinary spiritual confluences of history. One one hand, a strong Manichaen religious current, which had taken its rise in Persia, flowed through Asia Minor and the Balkans as far as Italy and France, bearing the esoteric doctrines of Maria Sophia and of Love for the Form of Light. ON the other hand, a highly refined rhetoric, with its set of forms, themes, and characters, its ambiguities invariably recurring in the same places, and indeed its symbolism, pushes out from Iraq and the Sufis, who were inclined alike to Platonism and Manichaeism, and reaches Arabic Spain, then, leaping over the Pyrenees, it comes in the south of France upon a society that seems to have but awaited its arrival in order to state what it had not dared and had not been able to avow either in the clerical tongue or in the common vernacular. Courtly lyric poetry was the offspring of that encounter.[598]

The first troubadour was the Duke Guillaum of Aquitaine, of Merovingian descent, who lived from 1071 to 1112. The Duchy of Aquitaine was begun with count Bernard Plantevelue, descended from the Merovingian Dagobert II. Guillaum was the grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who became instrumental in turning her court, then frequented by the most famous troubadours of the time, into a center of poetry and a model of courtly life and manners. Eleanor inherited the Duchy of Aquitaine, or former Septimania, and, marrying the heir to the French throne Louis VI, became queen of France. However, Eleanor's conduct aroused Louis's jealousy and marked the beginning of their estrangement. Their marriage was finally annulled in 1152. Eleanor then regained possession of Aquitaine, and later married the Henry Plantagenet, who became Henry II, king of England in 1154. She bore the king five sons and three daughters, one of whom was Richard the Lion-Hearted, who succeeded his father to the throne of England.

It was Marie of Champagne, daughter Eleanor of Aquitaine, a decisive influence in the transmission of Courtly culture across Europe, who encouraged the composition of Chretien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, that started the association of the Grail with king Arthur. Chretien fashioned a new type of narrative based on the matter of Britain., writing five romances *Erec*, *Cligès*, *Lancelot*, or *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au lion*, and *Perceval*, or *Le Conte du Graal*, written about 1190 AD, the earliest extant work on the Grail. The poem of Chretien, tells of Perceval's visit to the Grail castle, where he sees a *Graal* borne in by a damsel. Its accompaniments are a bleeding lance and a silver plate. It is a precious vessel set with jewels, and so resplendent as to eclipse the lights of the hall. All the assembled knights show it reverence. Mindful of an injunction not to inquire too much, Perceval does not ask concerning the significance of what he sees, and thereby incurs guilt and reproach. Though Chretien's poem was left unfinished, it was continued by four different authors who gave different endings to it.

Parzival, written between 1200 and 1210, by Wolfram von Eschenbach's, a knight of Bavarian origin, was the most celebrated romance of the time, and has been considered by some to be of profound mystical significance. Wolfram believed Chretien's version of the Grail story was wrong, and less accurate than his own which was based on privileged information. Wolfram claimed to have obtained his information from a certain Kyot de Provence, who would have been Guiot de Provins, a troubadour.

At Toledo, where Kyot is said to have learned the Grail, was a famous Kabbalistic school. There were other schools at Gerona, Montpellier and elsewhere in the south of France. As well, there was also such a school at Troyes, which dated from 1070, and was conducted by Rashi, perhaps the most famous of Medieval Kabbalists. Wolfram maintains that Kyot, in turn, supposedly received the Grail story from a Jew named Flegetanis. According to Wolfram:

> A heathen Flegetanis, had achieved high renown for his learning. This scholar of nature was descended from Solomon and born of a family which had long been Israelite until baptism became our shield against the fire of Hell. He wrote the adventure of the Grail. On his father's side, Flegetanis was a heathen, who worshipped a calf…

> The Heathen Flegetanis could tell us how all the stars set and rise again… To the circling course of the stars man's affairs and destiny are linked. Flegetanis the heathen saw with his own eyes in the constellations things he was shy to talk about, hidden mysteries. He said there was a thing called the Grail, whose name he had read clearly in the constellations. As host of angels left it on the earth.
>
> Since then, baptized men have had the task of guarding it, and with such chaste discipline that those who are called to the service of the Grail are always noble men. Thus wrote Flegetanis of these things.[599]

According to the authors of the *Holy Blood Holy Grail*, the various manifestations of the Holy Grail in the anonymous *Perlesvaus* correspond almost perfectly with the symbols of one of the most important grades of Kabbalistic of initiation, known as *Tiferet*. In *Tiferet*, the initiate is said to pass beyond the world of form to the formless, consisting of a kind of sacrificial death, and rebirth or resurrection into another dimension of all-encompassing unity and harmony. The authors further note that the images in the *Perlesvaus* are those normally associated with the Kabbalah as it is used magically. As the authors explain:

> For the medieval Cabalists the initiation into Tiferet was associated with certain specific symbols. These included a hermit or guide or wise old man, a majestic king, a child, a sacrificed god. In time other symbols were added as well – a truncated pyramid, for example, a cube and a rose cross. The relation of these symbols to the romances is sufficiently apparent. In every Grail narrative there is a wise old hermit – Perceval's or Parzival's uncle frequently – who acts as a spiritual guide. In Wolfram's poem the Grail as "stone" may possibly correspond to the cube.[600]

There may also be an alchemical connection involved in the object of the Grail itself. To Wolfram the Grail is an emerald fallen from Lucifer's crown when he was cast out of Heaven. The emerald is the sacred stone of the planet Venus, whose other name is Lucifer. Wolfram's version of the story appears to borrow from a Persian legend regarding Lucifer's struggle in Heaven. His source may have been the Arabic manuscript he cites in attributing the ideas contained in his book. The legends suggest that when God decided to expel Lucifer, the angels were forced to take sides and chose either God or the devil. But there were a few neutral angels, who refused to fall in with either camp. And when Lucifer lost his emerald, they were the ones who brought the stone to earth where it served as an emblem of the struggle to find the middle way in this life, to locate the middle ground between good and evil.[601]

Wolfram may also be making reference to the famous alchemical work, the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes, introduced to Europe by the Arabs. Reliance on a writer who was quite possibly involved in alchemy would explain why he envisioned the grail not as a cup but as "a stone of the purest kind," which sounds suspiciously like a reference to the philosopher's stone. In fact, Wolfram claimed for the grail powers similar to those that the alchemists attributed to the philosopher's stone. Both allegedly gave to their possessors spiritual perfection, union with God, and release from the fear of death. "Such power does the stone give a man that flesh and bones are at once made young again," Wolfram wrote in *Parzival*.[602]

According to Wolfram, the Grail sustained the lives of a brotherhood of chaste knights, called *Templeisen*, by pouring forth an abundance of "food warm or food cold, dishes new or old, meat tame or game."[603] Wolfram, referring to the Templars, also claims Kyot's research had revealed a genealogical connection between the account of the Grail: "And the sons of baptized men hold It and Guard It with humble heart and the best of mankind shall those knights be."[604] Like their real-life counterparts, who made their home in a palace near the site of Solomon's Temple, the *Templeisen* were headquarted in a castle. This fictional castle was called *Munsalvaesche*, or "mountain of salvation," a name which recalls Montsegur, the mountain fortress of the Cathars in Languedoc. In fact, the Cathars were said to be the guardians of a great treasure associated with a fantastic and ancient knowledge, and Wolfram's veiled references to the Cathars finally sparked contemporary speculation that he was himself a member of the sect.

Joseph of Arimathea

In the *Perlesvaus*, we find: "here is the story of thy descent; here begins the Book of the Sangreal." For, according to the controversial research of Henry Lincoln, Michael Baigent, and Richard Leigh, in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, the *Holy Grail* should not have been translated as the *Saint Graal* or *Saint Greal*, that has been depicted in legend, but as *Sang Real*, or "royal blood". The authors have supposed that the legends of the Holy Grail pertain to the hidden lineage of Jesus within European aristocratic bloodlines, which is certainly incorrect, considering the fact that Grail lore is originally Gnostic, and therefore derived

not from Christianity, but from traditions dating back to Babylon in the sixth century BC. Nevertheless, these legends would seem to pertain to a certain sacred lineage regarded of purported Merovingian descent, issuing from southern France, intertwined in Gnostic myth and implicating the Templars and Cathars.

An important branch of this "family" is thought to have somehow been connected with the legendary figure of Arthur, and culminatig in the House of Stuart. According to occult historian Lawrence Gardner, from 1188, the Priory of Zion had been restructured and evolved to pursue a more specific course of loyalty to the Merovingians of France, while the Templars were concerned with the Stuart succession.[605] Grail legend, recounts that the Merovingians were descended from Mary Magdalene, while the Stuarts were descended from King Arthur. During the thirteenth century the Scots had been continually harassed by the House of Plantagenet, the royal house of England, but in 1314 Robert the Bruce defeated the English invaders at Bannockburn, a battle in which the Scots were assisted by a contingent of Templars.

Purportedly, when the Templars came under trial, their leader de Molay had arranged for the Templar treasures to be removed in a fleet of eighteen galleys from the port of La Rochelle. The majority of these treasure ships sailed to Scotland, where they would be immune from attack from the Church. This was because King Robert the Bruce and the whole Scottish nation had been excommunicated for taking up arms against King Edward II of England, who subsequently formally recognized Scotland's independence in 1328. In 1315 King Robert's daughter Marjorie had married Walter Stewart, and the early Stewarts became Kings of Scots in 1371, later adopting the French version *Stuart*. Apparently, on 26 March 1371, the Royal House of Stewart was founded by Robert the Bruce's successor, King Robert II, the son of Marjorie and Walter Stewart. Gardner explains that, "For the first time since the sixth century Arthur mac Aedan of Dalriada, the key Grail successions of Britain and Europe had conjoined in Scots royalty, and the Stewarts' ancient legacy of kingship was fulfilled."[606] The Unicorn, the heraldic symbol of the Stuarts, was incorporated in the Royal Arms of Scotland, thus the Stuarts or Stewarts have long been known as the *House of Unicorns*.

The Stuart descent from King Arthur has supposedly been retraced by the suspect genealogical research of Laurence Gardner, in *Bloodline of the Holy Grail: The Hidden Lineage of Jesus Revealed*, who claims to have been granted "privileged access to European Sovereign and Noble archives, along with special insight into Chivalric and Church repositories." Gardner maintains that the Stuart heritage was part Scots and part Breton. The Scots lineage derived from Joseph of Arimathea, supposedly Jesus' brother, while their Breton inheritance stemmed from one of Jesus' sons through Mary Magdalene, who had accompanied Joseph to England, and, intermarrying with the Celts, whose descendants were subsequently known as the Fisher Kings, the "guardians" of the Holy Grail.[607] This was apparently recalled in William Blake's famous song *Jerusalem*, telling how young Jesus walked upon the Exmoor coast, and went to the Mendip village of Priddy. Supposedly then, those royal feet did "walk upon England's mountains green."[608]

The connection between the Joseph of Arimathea and Christ's blood was established by the medieval writer Robert de Boron, about 1200 AD. Boron mentions a grail that was not only the cup of the Last Supper, but the vessel used to capture Christ's blood after the Crucifixion. Symbolically, the Grail is the cup that receives the divine blood of the god, descended from the sacred bowl of the mysteries. The wine-cup of Dionysiacs and Orphics, an important element of Mithraic imagery, is known in Catholicism as a sacrament of the Last Supper, and wine symbolism and the wine-cup had also been a recurring motif of early Jewish synagogue art. Found in the *Chaldean Oracles*, the mixing bowl or cup is equated with the Monad in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and Zosimus refers to it as the symbol of spiritual baptism or initiation.

De Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie*, recounted the story the secret disciple of Jesus, who, along with Mary Magdalene, was one of two important figures associated with the Grail lineage. Though de Boron drew heavily from the apocryphal works *Acts of Pilate* and *Gospel of Nicodemus* of the fourth and fifth centuries. Like Wolfram, de Borron prefaces his poem with an acknowledgment of his debt to an earlier source: a nameless "great book" written by anonymous "great clerks." *Joseph d'Arimathie* was given to him by an angel or even, perhaps, by Christ himself. Once emptied of its contents, the work supposedly vanished. According to de Boron, Joseph of Arimathea had requested the body of Jesus from the Roman authorities so that he could bury it. While he was bathing it, some blood trickled out from the wound, which Jesus sustained on the cross through the spear of the Roman soldier. He collected the blood in the cup which had previously been used by Jesus and His disciples during the Last Supper. When Jesus' body disappeared however, Joseph was accused of stealing it, arrested by the Jewish authorities and jailed. While in jail, though he was deprived of food, he miraculously survived as a result of a wafer being dropped daily by a dove into the cup which he had with him. While in prison, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and entrusted the holy spear and the cup to him for safekeeping.

As Borron's story unfolds, Joseph flees from Palestine with a handful of followers, including his sister and her husband, Bron. As far as most of the twelve apostles are concerned, except for the little we

know about the Early Church, their story following the crucifixion is entirely unavailable. By the third century however, legends appear, derived from the apocryphal romances about the apostles which became widely popular in the latter half of the second century, describing the missionary travels of the twelve, Thomas in Persia and India, Andrew to the Scythians of South Russia, and so on.[609] Joseph supposedly journeyed westwards and established a church in Glastonbury, England, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Grail narratives set the newly freed Joseph adrift on the Mediterranean with neither oars nor sails. In 1601, *Annales Ecclesiasticae*, by the Vatican librarian Cardinal Baronius recorded that Joseph of Arimathea first came to Marseilles in 35 AD. From there, he and his company crossed to Britain to seek final refuge among the Celts, where he became ancestor to King Arthur.

The Celts

There have been various claims that the Celts of Britain were originally of Semitic origin, in part descended from the Phoenicians, brought to England through the tin trade as early as the first millennium BC. It is sometimes suggested that the Tuatha de Danann of Irish legend were the Danaans of ancient Greece, or the Denyen Sea Peoples. The Phoenician or Carthaginian origin of the Celts of Britain may have been substantiated in part with the discovery that the language of early Great Britain and Ireland was North African in origin.[610] The *Book of Ballymote*, believed to have been composed about 1200 AD, gives an alphabet described as African, a testament to its Carthaginian ancestry. Until recently, scholars considered that this African script was some sort of cryptic monkish secret alphabet, or maybe just gibberish, but since 1960, this alphabet has been shown to be an actual ancient North African one in use about 1000 BCE.[611]

Regardless of the possibility of early contact, the history of the Celts evidenced continuous interaction with the East. The oldest archaeological evidence of the Celts, who ranged from the British Isles and northern Spain to as far as eastern Europe, dates from about 700 BC, and exhibits a culture which received luxury items such as bronze and pottery vessels though Greek trade. The archaeology of the Celts can be followed with greater precision following the mid-fifth century BC, when Celtic culture, with its distinctive art style of abstract geometric designs and stylized bird and animal forms, had begun to emerge among the Celts centered on the middle Rhine, where trade with the Etruscans of central Italy, rather than with the Greeks, was now becoming predominant. Between the fifth and first centuries BC this culture accompanied the migrations of Celtic tribes into eastern Europe and westward into the British Isles.

Although Celtic bands had probably penetrated into northern Italy earlier, the year 400 BC is the approximate date for the beginning of the great migrations of Celtic tribes recorded by later Latin historians. Rome was sacked by Celts about 390 BC, and raiding bands reached Sicily. In 335 BC, Alexander the Great received delegations of Celts living near the Adriatic, and in 279 BC, the Celts sacked Delphi in Greece but suffered eventual defeat. In the following year, three Celtic tribes crossed into Anatolia and created widespread havoc until checked by the Seleucid king Antiochus I at the Elephant Battle of 275 BC. At that point, the Celts, called Galatians by third-century writers, settled in the territory to which they gave their name, Galatia.

Magian teachings are clearly demonstrable among the bardic class that produced the mythical literature and the art of the Celts, known as the Druids, of which Merlin would have been a representative. Magic was not, Pliny believed, indigenous either in Greece or in Italy, but was so much at home in Britain and continued with such elaborate ritual that he said it would almost seem as if it was they who taught it to the Persians, not the Persians to them.[612] Astronomy was of prime importance to the Druids, who were said to have had much knowledge of the stars and their motions, of the size of the world, and of natural philosophy. According to Caesar, "they discuss and impart to the youth many things respecting the stars and of our earth, respecting the nature of things, respecting the power and the majesty of the immortal gods."[613]

Another Magian doctrine familiar among the Druids was that of reincarnation. According to Caesar: "a lesson which they take particular pains to inculcate is that the soul does not perish, but after death passes from one body into another."[614] And Diodorus: "among them the doctrine of Pythagoras prevails, teaching that the souls of men are immortal, and live again for a fixed number of years inhabited in another body."[615] According Ammianus Marcellinus, the Druids were "members of the intimate fellowship of the Pythagorean faith,"[616] and the Christian Father Hippolytus recorded:

> And the Celtic Druids investigated to the very highest point the Pythagorean philosophy, after Zamolxis, by birth a Thracian, a servant of Pythagoras, became to them the originator of this discipline. Now after the death of Pythagoras, Zamolxis, repairing thither, became to them the originator of this philosophy. The Celts esteem these as prophets and seers, on account of their foretelling to them certain (events), from calculations and numbers by the Pythagorean art; on the

> methods of which very art also we shall not keep silence, since also from these some have presumed to introduce heresies; but the Druids resort to magical rites likewise.[617]

According to Caesar, a notable deity of the Gauls was *Dis*, or Pluto, the god of the Underworld. From him all the Gauls claimed to be descended, and on this account, says Caesar, they began their reckoning of the twenty-four hours of the day with the oncoming of night. Caesar also reported the existence among the Celts of personal gods with distinct titles and attributes, whom he equates with various figures in the Roman pantheon, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, and so forth, which was exactly what the Gauls themselves did after the conquest. He remarked that they held Hermes to be the chief of the gods, and looked upon him as the inventor of all the arts, as the presiding deity of commerce, and as the guardian of roads and guide of travelers.

Like their Carthaginian and Canaanite forebears, the Celts were reputed to practice human sacrifice. It was said that the Celts would murder a victim by stabbing him in the back, and divine from his struggling.[618] In an early Christian document, the *Dinnsenchus*, preserved in the *Book of Leinster*, it is said that the Celts would sacrifice their children to an idol to pray for fertility, "it was milk and corn they asked from it in exchange for their children, how great was their horror and their moaning."[619] At times, for those gravely sick or in danger of death in battle, huge wickerwork images were filled with living prisoners and criminals, or even innocent victims, including children, and burned alive to seek the favour of the gods.

Following the withdrawal of the Romans in the third century, and even after when St. Patrick had converted the Irish to Christianity, the teachings of the Druids were never completely abandoned, but instead a unique culture developed, known as Celtic Christianity. Soon after its conversion to Christianity, Ireland was covered with monasteries, whose organizations were merely a continuation of the Druidic colleges.[620] Essentially, the arts of the Druids survived early Irish Christianity, as its abundant hagiography, steeped in magical ideas, plainly shows. Saint Columba, abbot and missionary traditionally credited with the main role in the conversion of Scotland to Christianity, after becoming a monk, lived and studied with a bard in Leinster, and later defended the cause of the Druids when their schools and teachings were attacked.[621]

Christian Ireland, as Cahill demonstrates, in *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, became a bastion of study, and the community of Celtic Christianity was highly prolific in contrast to the rest of Europe, which was eclipsed during the Dark Ages. With their extensive libraries, Irish monasteries attracted students fleeing conflict from many parts of the world to meet there. Large quantities of manuscripts were brought there for safe-keeping and copying. Many Pagan writers were studied, and Irish monks knew Greek at a time when knowledge of that language had disappeared from the rest of Europe. The Celtic Christians also seem to have held on-going contacts with the esoteric schools of Alexandria. Irish records show that seven Egyptian monks were buried at Disert Ulidh in Ulster. Masses and prayers from apocryphal works used in Egypt were found in Ireland.[622] Irish monasteries were organized in close adherence to those in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, and in many cases, the physical lay-out and arrangement of the monastic community were identical.[623]

The Jewish tendencies within the Celtic Church were so prominent that it was explicitly accused of Judaism, and its adherents of being Jews.[624] The Sabbath was observed among them, and the Jewish Passover was officially celebrated. The killing of animals for food was performed in accordance with Judaic requirements. Surviving documents of the Celtic Church are full of references to the Jewish apocryphal books and other texts which had long been forbidden in Rome. Monks in general shaved a circular patch on top of the head, while Celtic monks shaved a strip from ear to ear, and while one off Rome's representatives accused them of wearing the "tonsure of Simon Magus," Adaman, a distinguished Irishman, freely admitted it.[625]

Finally, the last important figure in the tradition of Celtic Christianity was John Scotus Erigena, the greatest Christian philosopher of the Dark Ages, whose Neoplatonism annoyed Rome, all the while shaping the systems it later adopted. Erigena's translations of the works of Christian Neoplatonists, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory of Nyssa, made them accessible to Western thinkers. In his principal work, *On the Division of Nature*, John Scotus attempted to reconcile the Neoplatonist doctrine of emanation with the Christian tenet of creation. Though highly influential upon his successors, notably the Western mystics and the thirteenth century Scholastics, *De divisione naturae* eventually suffered condemnation by the church because of its pantheistic implications. Striking similarities have been recognized between his speculations and those of Kabbalistic writings, such as the *Sepher ha-'iyyun*, or "Book of Speculation".[626]

Mary Magdalene

In some accounts Joseph of Arimathea is accompanied on his journey by a number of other people, among whom were Lazarus, Martha, and Mary Magdalene. Also called Mary of Magdala, she supposedly bore a son to Jesus, and having found her way to France, who intermarried with the Sicambrian Franks, giving rise to the Merovingians. According to medieval legends Mary Magdalene carried the Holy Grail with her to Marseilles, which is said to have somehow passed from her to the priests of the Cathar sect, who kept it at their stronghold at Montsegur. Eventually, the Cathars were forced to hide the Grail in one of the many caves in the mountain, just before the Albigensian Crusade when the Catholic church moved in to close the Montsegur monastery, in the process of snuffing out the last vestiges of the heretical sect.

Several Mediaeval legends described Magdalene fleeing the Holy Land and being set ashore near Marseilles, where her purported relics are still venerated. *The Life of Mary Magdalene* by Raban Maar (776-856), Archbishop of Mainz and Abbe of Fuld, was unearthed at Oxford University in the early 1400's, and inspired the founding of Magdalene College by William of Waynflete in 1448. The work was also quoted earlier in the *Chronica Majora* of Mathew Paris, in around 1190, and is listed in the *Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Historica lieraria Basilae* at Oxford. There is also *Saint Mary Magdalene*, by the Dominican friar Pere Lacordaire, and *La Legende de Sainte Marie Magdalene*, by Jacobus de Voraigne, Archbishop of Genoa, born in 1228. Another important work by de Voragine is the famous *Legenda Aurea*, "Golden Legend", according to which: "After the ascension of our Lord, when the disciples had departed, she, with her brother Lazarus and her sister Mary, also St. Maxim, embarked in a ship, on which, thanks to its preservation by our Lord, they all came safely to Marseilles. They thereafter proceeded to the region of Aix, where they converted the inhabitants to the faith."[627]

Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' most celebrated disciples, famous, according to *Mark* 16:9-10 and *John* 20:14-17, for being the first person to see the resurrected Christ. Early Christian texts describe her as "the woman who knew the All," and the one whom "Christ loved more than all the disciples."[628] She was the apostle "endowed with knowledge, vision and insight far exceeding Peter's."[629] According to Gnostic tradition, Mary Magdalene was associated with Sophia, represented by the Sun, moon, and a halo of twelve stars. She was the female gnosis of Sophia, deemed to be the Holy Spirit, represented by the traditional symbol of the great goddess, the dove. Similarly, in the *Song of Solomon*, the dove is used to describe the beloved.

Mary Magdalene formed part of an active cult in Europe of the Middle Ages, in which she was revered by initiates of the occult as the planet Venus, and who regarded her as a medium of secret revelation. According to J. B. Trend, in *The Legacy of Islam*, the goddess worship of the Sufis was reinterpreted within Christianity as the veneration of the Virgin Mary,[630]however, interpreted esoterically, the many supposed dedications to Mary, the mother of Jesus, were understood to represent Mary Magdalene and her son through Jesus. Pierre Plantard, a past Grand Master of the Priory of Zion, from 1981-1984, explained that Mary is Isis, *Queen of Heaven*.[631] Egyptian depictions of Isis frequently displayed her holding her child Horus on her lap. Similarly, many statues of Mary holding her child, found all over Europe, though mainly clustered in the south of France, were black. Along with Isis, the black goddess was a common figure in esoteric literature, being featured in Homer as Calypso, in Virgil as Dido, and in Wolfram's *Parzival* as Belacane. She has been equated with the Queen of Sheba, the fabled Ethiopian monarch who fell in love with King Solomon. In *Song of Solomon* the beloved pleads on her own behalf that, "I am black, but I am beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."[632]

In *The Golden Ass*, by the second century AD mystic Apuleius of Madauros in North Africa, she is made to say:

> I am Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, queen of the dead, queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of all the gods and goddesses that are… The primeval Phrygians call me Pessinuntica, Mother of the gods; the Athenians, sprung from their own soil, call me Cecropian Artemis; for the islanders of Cyprus I am Paphian Aphrodite; for the archers of Crete I am Dictynna, for the trilingual Sicilians, Stygian Proserpine: and for the Eleusinians their ancient Mother of the Corn.
> Some know me as Juno, some as Bellona of the Battles; others as Hecate, others again as Rhamnusia, but both races of Aethiopians, whose lands the morning Sun first shines upon, and the Egyptians who excel in ancient learning and worship me with ceremonies proper to my god-head, call me by my true name, namely, Queen Isis.[633]

To the Kabbalists, the black virgin is the female demon Lilith, the mother of Cain through Adam. Originally, Lilith was a female demon who can be traced to Babylonian demonology in the female spirit *Lilitu*.[634] To the Sabians, Lilith-Zahriel is the daughter of the King and Queen of the Underworld whom

they give in marriage to the King of Light.[635] According to a Kabbalistic document, *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, the first man and woman were created at the same time and from the same substance, as the original androgynous being, joined together at the rear. A conflict arose as to the best position for intercourse and Lilith resented Adam's assumption of superiority and her subjection to a passive role.[636] In the *Zohar*, Lilith is known by as the black harlot. She is one of the four mothers of the demons, and the permanent partner of Samael, and queen of the realm of the forces of evil, where she is the counterpart of the *Shekinah*. Just as the *Shekinah* is the mother of the House of Israel, so Lilith is the mother of the unholy stock who constitute the "mixed multitude" and rules over all that is impure.[637]

Alongside the veneration of the Magdalene, the cult of Mary the Gypsy was widespread in England during the Middle Ages. St. Mary the Gypsy, or Mary Jacob, was to have accompanied Mary Magdalene to Europe. In the early days of Christianity, the Emperor Constantine banned the veneration of Mary the Gypsy, but her cult continued, and it was introduced into England from Spain. Mary the Gypsy was identified with the goddess Aphrodite, who was born "from the foam," and her significant emblem was the scallop shell, as depicted in Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. Outside Catholic doctrine, the Holy Spirit was considered to be female, and was always associated with water. Often depicted with a fish-tail, St. Mary was the original merri-maid (mermaid), and given the name Marina. She is portrayed alongside Mary Magdalene (*la Dompna del Aquae*) in a window at the Church of St. Marie in Paris.

As Maid Marion, her cult is incorporated in the Robin Hood legends, while Mary Magdalene's incarnation appears in the Celtic tradition of the Morrigan (Great Queen) of Fate, Morgan le Faye. Mary the Gypsy, sacred harlot and love cultess, was ritually portrayed by the Anglo-Saxons as the May Queen, and her dancers, Mary's Men, still perform their rites under the corrupted name of Morris Men in English rural festivities. Another reference to Mary's Men is found in the Merrie Men of the Robin Hood tales. Robin Hood was a species of "fairy" derived ultimately from the old Celtic and Saxon fertility god or vegetation deity, the so-called "Green Man." In popular folklore, Robin Hood was interchangeable with Green Robin, Robin of the Greenwood, Robin Goodfellow, Shakespeare's Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who at the summer solstice, presides over fertility, sexuality, and nuptials. The Robin Hood legend provided a manner by which the ancient mystery rites were insinuated inconspicuously into nominally Christian Britain. Every May Day, rituals would be enacted around the phallic May Pole, traditional symbol of the archaic goddess of sexuality and fertility. On Midsummer's Day, every village virgin would become, metaphorically, Queen of the May. Many of them would be ushered into the "greenwood" where they would undergo their sexual initiation at the hands of a youth playing the role of Robin Hood or Robin Goodfellow, while Friar Tuck, the "Abbot of Unreason", would officiate, "blessing" the mating couples in a parody of formal nuptials.[638]

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Chapter 17: Hermes

The Ottoman Empire

In the thirteenth century, as the Crusades were waning, a great onslaught came in upon the Muslim world from the east: the redoubtable Mongols. Ghenghiz Khan, the self-styled *Scourge of God*, moved his hordes westward to Iran, conquering all lands in their path. Many centers of civilization were stormed and sacked, and inhabitants were slain by the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. After taking northern China, their conquests turned west and they poured into Russia, then raided Europe. Pressure continued upon the Middle East. The Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor were defeated in 1243. Starting in 1252, to rid the world of the Assassins and to destroy the Abbassid caliphate, Hulagu Khan razed Alamut, the Assassin headquarters. In 1258, following a siege of several months, Baghdad fell and was given over completely to the Mongols.

In the thirteenth century, Osman, as leader of Turkish clansmen, began to acquire by capture or alliance a number of small towns in Anatolia, founding what came to be called the Ottoman Empire, which over the next two centuries, began asserting control over an increasingly large area, including eastern Thrace, most of Bulgaria, Macedonia, and parts of Serbia, Bosnia and Hungary, even crossing the Danube, as well as extensive advances into Asia. However, the empire was yet to contain the Roman capital of Constantinople. This task would be left to Mehmed the Conqueror in the fifteenth century, to fulfill the long awaited prophecy. When Mohammed was asked which city the Muslims would conquer first, Constantinople or Rome, he answered, "the city of Heraclius," and, "truly you shall conquer Constantinople, and truly what a wonderful leader her leader will be, and truly what a wonderful army will that army be."

The Ottoman capture of Constantinople was perhaps one of the greatest battles in History. Constaninople, or *Stambul* as the citizens called their city, was the last remaining stronghold of the former Byzantine Empire. Constantinople had remained virtually impregnable for centuries because of its particular geographical formation. The city was located on a peninsula on the Bosphorus, the channel that separates Europe from Asia, and the northern walls of the city were flanked by an inlet known as the Golden Horn, entry into which could be prevented from its mouth. In one of the greatest military maneuvers' in history, Mehmed II constructed a greased wooden ramp from the shore of the Bosphorus, and sixty-seven ships of the Ottoman fleet were hauled up over land and down to the Golden Horn. In a massive assault launched on May 29, 1453, cannon fire breached the walls, and the city was taken. Mehmed II entered the city, and went to the famous Hagia Sophia, which was converted into a mosque and offered prayers.

Suleyman, who succeeded Selim I, was called *The Magnificent* by the Europeans, and *Kanuni*, "The Lawgiver," by his own people. Within the first year of his reign he conducted a campaign against Belgrade in 1521, and the following year, assembled his forces in Asia for an attack on the island of Rhodes. Setting out from Istanbul in 1526, he opened all of Hungary. Suleyman also waged the first of attacks against the city of Vienna. On October 12 1529, mines seriously damaged its wall, and infantry attacks nearly succeeded in opening the city. Both sides grew weary however, and the Ottomans decided to retreat, which was deemed as a miracle by the defenders of Vienna, who were on the verge of surrender. Suleyman equipped and beautified Constantinople and other cities with mosques, schools, hospitals, palaces, mausoleums, bridges, aqueducts and public baths, two hundred and thirty-five of which are said to have been built by his chief architect Sinan. Originally a Christian from Anatolia, Sinan developed into the most distinguished architect that Turkey produced. His masterpiece was the magnificent mosque named Sulaymaniyah, named after his master, and designed to eclipse the Hagia Sophia.[639]

Though the Ottoman Turks made significant contributions in three fields: architecture, poetry and statesmanship, they had a particular talent for organization, and implemented one of the most efficient bureaucracies perhaps the world has ever known. The Turks safeguarded the rights of non-Muslims within the empire, by dividing the Jews and Christians into *millets*. These were autonomous self-governing

religious communities, each organized under its own laws, and headed by a religious leader that was responsible to the central government, particularly for the paying taxes and maintaining internal security. Taxes to be paid often included the *devsirme*, whereby Christian youth from the Balkans were recruited, converted to Islam, and shuttled back to Istanbul to receive their education, and to offer a lifetime of service to the Sultan. The military arm supplied by the *devsirme* system was known as the famous Janissary corps.

The central administration of the empire consisted of three main parts. The first was the Sultan's extensive household. Second was the departments of government grouped under the control of the Grand Vizier, who was the Sultan's deputy in all state matters. Lastly, the Muslim religious institution consisted of functionaries concerned with education and law, grouped under the overlordship of the *Shaykh al-Islam*. The broad efficiency of the Ottoman political system was dependant on the competence of the most important of these functionaries, the *Qadis*, responsible for local administration and criminal law. Although, when the *Qadis* began to issue rulings for political or monetary motives, the entire Ottoman political system started to collapse.

Ottoman successes were interrupted briefly in the early part of the seventeenth century, but were eventually resumed. In 1669 the Venetians were forced to recognize their loss of Crete. Hungary was invaded in 1664. This was the last Turkish conquest of a European kingdom, although the Ukrainians acknowledged Ottoman authority and the Poles surrendered Podolia, and in 1683 the Turks launched their last and unsuccessful siege against Vienna. While the empire lasted several more centuries, from this point forward, due to internal decay, and its inability to keep pace with the technological advancement of the West, its power slowly began to decline.

The Renaissance

The fall of Constantinople led a number of Christian scholars to find their way to other parts of Europe, particularly to Italy, bringing with them the *Corpus Hermeticum* and other esoteric works, through which an interest in astrology and other occult arts culminated in the Renaissance. Meaning literally "rebirth," the Renaissance is the period in European civilization immediately following the Middle Ages, conventionally held to have been characterized by a surge of interest in classical learning and values. Among the Scholastics, classical literature was regarded merely as a means of education, while the Church feared the corruptive tendencies of its inherent paganism. With the rising tide of discontent with the Catholic establishment, articulated by men like Dante and William of Ockham, this perception underwent a transformation, especially in Italy. There, the movement that resulted, referred to as Humanism, aimed at basing all branches of learning on the literature and culture of classical antiquity, believing, contrary to the Scholastics, that it was only by way of a classical education that man could be perfect.

Essentially, Humanists were interested in language, literature, politics, and history, rather than "sacred subjects". According to the bias of modern historians, Humanism was another great step in the progress of Western "rationalism", inspiring inquiry and criticism, with the effect of helping men break free from the perceived mental encumbrances imposed by religious orthodoxy. Described by McNeill, in the *History of Western Civilization*, "beginning about the middle of the fourteenth century a number of men discovered a new enthusiasm for the literary works of the classical world; and from literature admiration for classical models passed over to art and architecture, and even colored the religion of a few enthusiasts." Ultimately, he notes, "but the fact remains that Italy became the cultural leader of Europe and the scene of innovations in literature, art and philosophy during the fourteenth centuries, which, under the stimulus of pagan classical models, largely broke away from the Christian tradition of earlier centuries."[640]

However, the Humanists were primarily responsible for the decline in influence of the thought of Aristotle, in favor of the very mystical, or even irrational, philosophies of the Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and Hermeticism. The recovery of Neoplatonic material as well as the other works of antiquity resulted as part of a program sponsored largely by the Medicis, the famous ruling family of Florence, who had gained increasing power, when the weakness of the Holy Roman Emperors in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, made it possible in Italy for small city states to achieve full independence. The northern region came to be divided between a number of competing cities, of which Venice, Milan and Florence were the most powerful. In Florence, the foundation of the Medici family's fortunes were laid by Giovanni di Bicci, who founded the Medici bank in 1422, and was appointed banker to the papacy. His son Cosimo, gained adherents by giving gifts and loans to all orders in society as well as to churches, confraternities, and religious orders, and also by granting patronage to writers and artists. He was responsible for commissions to the sculptor Donatello, and the architects Michelozzo and Filippo Brunelleschi, and for the building of villas in the countryside at Careggi and Cafaggiolo.

In 1439, Cosimo began sending his agents all over the world in quest of ancient manuscripts, and in 1444, founded Europe's first public library, the Library of San Marco, and through his commission, the

corpus of Platonic, neo-Platonic, Pythagorean, Gnostic, and Hermetic thought was translated and became readily accessible. He also instructed the University of Florence to begin teaching Greek for the first time in Europe in approximately seven hundred years, and undertook to create an academy of Pythagorean and Platonic studies, which quickly generated a multitude of similar institutions throughout Italy, becoming centers of the Western esoteric tradition. Then, in 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks, dozens of manuscripts began to appear, carried west by fleeing churchmen and scholars. About 1460 a manuscript that contained a copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was brought by a monk to Florence from Macedonia. So prized was this find that, though the manuscripts of Plato were awaiting translation, Cosimo ordered that they be put aside and to proceed instead with their translation.

These texts were translated by Italian philosopher, Marisilio Ficino. In the Mediaeval period, knowledge of the Platonic corpus had consisted mainly of the *Timaeus*. Ficino's translations and commentaries on the writings of Plato and other classical Greek authors generated the Florentine Platonist Renaissance, which influenced European thought for two centuries. His numerous translations from Greek into Latin included some Neoplatonic and early Christian writings and, above all, the complete works of Plato and the third century Neoplatonist Plotinus. In 1462 Ficino became head of the Platonic Academy, situated at the Medici villa at Careggi, outside Florence. Although never formally organized, its members considered themselves a re-creation of the Academy that had been formed by Plato in Athens, and with its endowment of Greek manuscripts, became one of the foremost intellectual centers of Europe.

Ficino wished to revive the ancient pagan mystery teachings of the "Chaldeans, Egyptians and Platonists." Ficino also completed translations of the *Sayings of Zoroaster* and the *Hymn of Orpheus*. He advocated the regular singing of Orphic hymns, which he believed echoed the music of the spheres. Ficino believed an individual would submit to a symbolic death and rebirth, and emerge with what was perceived as a new identity, often denoted by a new name. If such a ritual were conducted under the proper astrological conditions, one could even, theoretically, correct deficiencies in his horoscope.

After Ficino, leadership of the Academy was gradually assumed by Gionvanni Pico della Mirandola. Pico believed that Pythagoras had acquired knowledge of sacred mysteries from the Jews in Egypt, and having also recognized the parallels between Hermeticism and the Kabbalah, he attempted to combine the two disciplines, being the first to interpret the Kabbalah in Christian terms, and fusing it with Hermeticism. In 1486, Pico went to Rome with nine hundred Hermetically oriented theses, which he offered to defend in a public debate. Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, with which the debate was to have opened, is taken as a characteristic example of Renaissance humanism. In it he emphasizes the centrality of man in the universe and his supreme value and importance, and begins by quoting Hermes Trismegistus, "What a great miracle is man, Asclepius." The intended debate was prohibited by the Papacy, and thirteen of Pico's theses were branded as heretical. The ensuing public outcry necessitated an *Apology* which was published in 1487, together with most of the oration on the *Dignity of Man*, and Pico was finally rescued from his troubles with the death of the presiding pope and the intervention of Lorenzo de' Medici.

Moshe Idel has pointed out that, "Kabbalah was conceived by both Jewish and Christian Renaissance figures as an ancient theology, similar to and, according to the Jews, the source of such later philosophical developments as Platonism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, and atomism."[641] Growing persecution in other parts of Europe had led many Kabbalists to find their way to Italy, which during the Renaissance became one of the most intense areas of Kabbalistic study, second only to Palestine. Beginning with the end of the thirteenth century, the situation of the Jews in much of Europe had begun to change, becoming increasingly unstable. In 1290, King Edward issued a decree to have all Jews expelled from England. All the crowned heads of Europe then followed his example. France expelled the Jews in 1306. In 1348 Saxony followed suit. In 1360 Hungary, in 1370 Belgium, in 1380 Slovakia, in 1420 Austria, in 1444 the Netherlands. Growing persecution in Spain led many Kabbalists to find their way to Italy, bringing with them the *Zohar*, together with the writings of Menahem Recanati in the fourteenth century.

The Spanish Inquisition had led Kabbalistic activity to diminish in Spain, where many Jews had converted to Christianity to escape persecution, known as *conversos*, or as the people called them, *marranos*. Though, many Spaniards were suspicious of their motives, and in response, in 1480, the Spanish Inquisition was implemented to, among other things, eliminate secret Jews. Finally, in 1492, every Jew that would not accept conversion was expelled. Many crossed into Portugal, only to be expelled from there four years later, and some went into North Africa, while others still sought refuge in Constantinople. Some Jews returned to the Holy Land, where a new school of Kabbalah was founded. Many moved to Eastern and Northern Europe, particularly the Netherlands, joining remnants of earlier migrations from Palestine.

However, except for perhaps Prague, it was those Jews who moved into Italy, and from there into other parts of Western Europe, that had the greatest influence on what we may describe as modern Kabbalah. According to Gershom Scholem, "the activities of these migrants strengthened the Kabbalah, which acquired many adherents in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries."[642] The key representative of the Italian Kabbalists of the Renaissance was Leone Ebreo, who, following medieval Jewish sources, saw Plato as dependent on the revelation of Moses, and even as a disciple of the ancient Kabbalists.[643] While Rabbi Yehudah Messer Leon, a committed Aristotelian, criticized the Kabbalah's similarity to Platonism, his son described Plato as a divine master. Other Kabbalists, such as Isaac Abravanel and Rabbi Yohanan Alemanno believed Plato to have been a disciple of Jeremiah in Egypt.[644] On the similarity of the teachings of the Greek philosophers and the Kabbalah, Rabbi Abraham Yagel commented:

> This is obvious to anyone who has read what is written on the philosophy and principles of Democritus, and especially on Plato, the master of Aristotle, whose views are almost those of the Sages of Israel, and who on some issues almost seems to speak from the very mouth of the Kabbalists and in their language, without any blemish on his lips. And why shall we not hold these views, since they are ours, inherited from our ancestors by the Greeks, and down to this day great sages hold the views of Plato and great groups of students follow him, as is well known to anyone who has served the sage of the Academy and entered their studies, which are found in every land.[645]

Study of the classical works was regarded by the Renaissance as the retrieval of the Ancient Wisdom, referred to as the *prisca theologia*, considered a pure tradition imparted to the wise men of antiquity, and the key to establishing a universal religion that could reconcile Christian belief with ancient philosophy. The principle figure in this tradition was Hermes Trismegistus, erroneously thought to have lived before Plato, and at times identified with Moses. Ficino presented a family tree of wisdom starting chronologically with Zoroaster, then Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras and Plato. According to Ficino, in the preface to the Plotinus commentaries, the divine theology began simultaneously with Zoroaster among the Persians and Hermes among the Egyptians, and that this wisdom tradition led in an unbroken chain to Plato, by way of Orpheus and Pythagoras.[646] This wisdom was seen to underlie Jewish, Orphic and Christian teachings, developed from blended Hermetic and Magian origin.

Through the influence of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, the recovery of ancient learning during the Renaissance was concerned mainly with astrology. Renaissance humanism did not help to diffuse interest in the "irrational". "On the contrary," noted Seznec, "the first effect of humanism was to encourage astrology."[647] The revival of classical themes that characterized the period, was not a purely detached curiosity in the aesthetics of Greek art forms, on the part of the Renaissance humanists, as has become common to consider. Rather, Renaissance philosophers and artists were interested in interpreting Greek mythology for its purported astrological symbolism, in the manner of the Neoplatonists, who interpreted astrological doctrines not only in Homer, but in all religious tradition, including foreign cults.[648]

The method of interpretation that consists of endowing mythology with astrological meaning dates back to antiquity. In the tradition of the ancient Greeks, who connected the signs of the zodiac with heroes of myth, the Hellenistic Age had tended to view myth, not as erroneous fancy, but as allegorical tales designed to convey occult meanings. Philosophers sought to explain the purpose of mythology throughout the Hellenistic Age. Their theories may be reduced into three types. Firstly, they were considered allegorical fables designed to convey moral and philosophical ideas. Secondly, the myths were thought to be distorted accounts of historical facts, where mythical figures were historical figures raised to the rank of immortals. Lastly, the gods were thought of as cosmic symbols, whose struggles were expressed through myth.

The early Christian Gnostics had generally believed that by allegorization they could interpret all religious literature in relation to their theology. Thus, they claimed to know the true meaning of the mystery religions, as well of Greek and oriental mythology. They could explain the hidden significance of Homer, Hesiod, and other poets. The Gnostics would further claim that anyone who knew the story of the Elohim and Eden in the Gnostic *Baruch*, could understand the labors of Hercules, and the stories about Zeus and Leda and Danaus.[649]

The Euhemeristic tradition, by which the gods were seen as real persons having lived in the distant past, exercised a continuing influence throughout the Middle Ages. In the seventh century, Isodore of Seville, in the *Etymology*, identified mythical heroes as the pioneers of civilization. Ado of Venice, in his Chronicle of the Six Ages of the World, which stems from the Etymology, during the time of Moses, Prometheus fashioned men out of clay, Atlas was a great astrologer, while his grandson Mercury was

skilled in several arts. Similarly, according to Peter Comestor, in the twelfth century, Zoroaster invented magic, Isis taught the Egyptians the alphabet and how to write, Prometheus was wise and Minerva taught several arts. In the twelfth century, William of Conches, insisted that certain authors spoke of astral bodies in terms of myth, and that, "this way of treating of celestial things is legitimate; without it we would not know in what part of the sky a given sign is located, how many stars it contains, nor how they are arranged.

Noted historian, Jean Seznec, in *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, has pointed out that the artists of the Middle Ages relied primarily on literary sources, and often from mythographers of late antiquity. In their desire to depict the mythological themes of antiquity, they did not have access to classical models on which to base their work, and therefore, without any sort of visual model, rarely provided accurate details as to how the gods of Greek mythology ought to be portrayed. Seznec has indicated that, beginning in the twelfth century, European artists began to turn away from traditional sources, in favour of Arab works, which were more astronomically accurate.

Often they looked to the *Picatrix*, which focused particularly on what it called "talismans", which it compared explicitly to the alchemical elixir. Through the proper design and construction of a talisman, and through proper performance of the rituals associated with it, the magician could control the energy emanating from heavenly spheres. In the form of angelic entities or spirits, he could, for instance, command the powers of Mars in matters of war, of Venus in matters of love. Thus, the Hermetic magician learned "to draw these celestial spirits down to earth and to induce them to enter into a material object, the talisman."[650]

The *Picatrix* describes some fifty images of stars, planets, and zodiac signs, which, if engraved, preferably on precious stones, according to the aspects of the heavens at some favourable moment, were supposed to receive the greatest possible amount of celestial influence to store it away for future use. For the favour of Jupiter, for instance, a white stone should be engraved with the figure of a crowned figure seated on a throne, his hand upraised, each of the four feet of the throne must rest on the neck of a winged man, the same manner in which Pausanias had described Olympian Zeus. For the favour of Mars, one requires a gem engraved with the image of "a young man, naked, at his right a young girl with hair knotted at the back of her head; his left hand rests on her breast, his right on her neck, and he gazes into her eyes."[651]

Arab figures showed almost no relation to Greco-Roman planetary types. Having acquired their knowledge of astronomy from the Sabians, their descriptions resemble types found in Babylonian sources. Therefore, to the Arabs, Mercury, as a pious and scholarly figure, corresponded to the Babylonian Nebo, the writer-god. Jupiter, as judge to Marduk, who signs the decrees of destiny. The Sun himself, who wears a crown and holds a sword on his knees, is close to Shamash. In Florence, the planetary gods sculptured on the Campanile of Giotto appear in such guises. The Sun is a descendant of oriental gods, presented as a king holding a scepter in his left hand and in his right a sort of wheel. Similarly, in the Capella degli Spagnuoli, Saturn holds a spade in addition to the classical sickle, Mercury appears as a scribe, indicating that the figure represented the scholarly Nebo. For the same reason, the choir of the Eremitani at Padua, and on a capital in the Doge's Palace in Venice, Mercury has assumed the likeness of a teacher.

Renaissance artists did much to liberate these images from their Oriental models, and represented them as if they were contemporary figures. At times, the foreign gods are portrayed in Christian garb. Marduk or Jupiter of the Campanile in Florence is presented in a monks robe, holding a chalice in one hand, and in the other a cross. Jupiter is the ruler of the Western countries, therefore, as the *Picatrix* explains, when praying to him, "be humble and modest, dressed in the manner of monks and Christians, for he is their patron; act in every way as the Christians do, and wear their costume: a yellow mantle, a girdle, and a cross."[652]

Ficino wrote extensively about the techniques through the use of amulets, talismans, unguents and elixirs, whereby planetary powers might be invoked by the principles of Hermetic analogy. Based on his knowledge of the works of Hermetic texts, Ficino, in *Libri de Vita*, first published in 1489, advocated a kind of astral magic involving the use of talismans. Particularly influential for Ficino among Neoplatonists would have been Iamblichus' *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, devoted to a subject treated in the *Asculepius*, the "Egyptian" art of drawing spirits into statues. There were plenty of mediaeval and Arab authorities he might have used who give lists of talismanic images, and the possibility that he may have used the *Picatrix* is substantiated by the similarity of some of the images, which he describes, with those in the *Picatrix.* Through such techniques, Ficino declared, "one could avoid the malignity of fate." [653]

It was not until the excavation of thousands of coins, reliefs, and statues in the sixteenth century, that European artists rediscovered classical representations of mythological figures, allowing them to recreate their traditional forms, and thus transform the Western artistic tradition. Nevertheless, under the

influence of Ficino, these tended to be works of astral magic, of the manner described in the *Picatrix*. Thus, according to Frances Yates:

> The phenomenon is exactly parallel with that other phenomenon which Warburg and Saxl discovered and studied, namely how the images of the gods were preserved through the Middle Ages in astrological manuscripts, reached the Renaissance in that barbarised form, and were then reinvested with classical form through the rediscovery and imitation of classical works of art… One might say that the approach through the history of magic is perhaps as necessary for the understanding of the meaning and use of a Renaissance work of art as is the approach through the history of the recovery of classical form for the understanding of its form.[654]

Botticelli, for one of the most recognized artworks of the Renaissance, the *Primavera*, had consulted Ficino. Frances Yates commented: "I want only to suggest that in the context of the study of Ficino's magic the picture begins to be seen as a practical application of that magic, as a complex talisman, an image of the world arranged so as to transmit only healthful, rejuvenating, anti-Saturnian influences to the beholder."[655] Botticelli's three works, being some of the most recognized Renaissance paintings, the *Minerva and the Centaur*, *The Birth of Venus*, and the *Primavera*, commissioned for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de Medici, all dealt with occult themes and represent the magical practice of drawing down planetary influences into images.

Of the twenty-seven figures portrayed in Raphael's *School of Athens* is Zoroaster, holding a celestial sphere. The disciples seated at *The Last Supper*, by Leonardo da Vinci, are grouped in four groups of three, talking only among themselves, corresponding to the four elements in the Zodiac, with Christ in the middle, as the Sun. Da Vinci, a supposed past Grand Master of the Priory of Zion, was often called "the magician of the Renaissance."[656] Studies have shown that German Renaissance artist Albrecht Duerer took his inspiration from Ficino.[657] The figure in the *Melancholia* of Duerer, symbolizes the "children of Saturn", who in obedience to her, meditate on the secrets of wisdom. Michelangelo too may have been influenced by Hermeticism and Ficino's ideas, having been exposed to them through his presence at the court of the Medicis. He contributed to the planning of the Medici Chapel, which was added to the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence, the site of the Tomb of Cosimo, patriarch of the Medicis.

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Chapter 18: Hiram

The Rosicrucians

The old kingdoms of the Merovingians were divided in later centuries between France, and the emerging German state, known as the Holy Roman Empire. By 1300, the Holy Roman emperors were little powerful, stemming from a long dispute between rival emperors to consolidate authority in their diverse dominions, which had been traditionally scattered and disunited. In 1356, a landmark constitutional document in German history, the *Golden Bull*, named seven electoral princes who exercised almost all imperial rights in their lands. With the accession of Maximilian in 1493, an Austrian family, the House of Hapsburg, eventually succeeded to the imperial throne. By marriage they acquired the duchy of Burgundy that included much of the Netherlands, and by other inheritances and marriages, they later gained Hungary and Bohemia.

However, the Catholic Hapsburgs were confronted, in the sixteenth century, with the emerging Protestant movement. Throughout the Middle Ages, calls for reform had been directed at the Church, but the official hierarchy did little to meet the criticism poured out against it. In this environment, the attacks of Martin Luther found viable ground. In 1517 Luther inaugurated the Protestant Reformation when he posted Ninety-Five Theses on the church door of Wittenberg which stirred a great public reaction. Luther countered Catholic dogma by his interpretation of the words of Paul, "the just shall live by faith." Therefore, the fasts, ceremonies, the sacraments of the Church, and a priesthood to mediate between man and God were unnecessary. Finally, in 1521 Luther was accused of heresy, but fortunately for him, many German princes were sympathetic to his cause, and during his lifetime the movement spread through about half of Germany, and also spawned numerous sects, the most prominent of which was led by Calvin.

Luther's movement had found support in the Order of the Rosy Cross, also known as the Rosicrucians, and purportedly descended from the Templars, whose primary objective was the destruction of the authority which had nearly succeeded in its extinction, the Church of Rome, and its Hapsburg supporters. The three political aims of the Order were, abolishing the monarchy and replacing it with a government of "wise" rulers, the radical reformation of the sciences and philosophy in accordance with "spiritual" principles, and the discovery of a universal medicine or *elixir* of life which would cure all illness. According to occult historian Laurence Gardner:

> It was by no chance that Martin Luther's protest gained support in some very influential circles, for Rome had many enemies in high places. Not the least of these enemies were the *Knights Templars*, and the underground Hermetic societies whose esoteric crafts had been condemned by the Catholic Inquisition. The truth was not so much that Luther gained the support of others, but that he was the willing instrument of an already active movement which endeavored to dismantle the rigid international domination of the Pope.[658]

In England, the most significant consequence of the Reformation was the formal rejection of the Pope's authority. The infiltration of Protestant theology in England was gradual. King Henry the VIII, lacking a male heir, appealed to the Pope to have his marriage annulled. When the Pope delayed, in impatience, Henry made Parliament declare him head of the English Church, securing sanction for his divorce, resulting in his excommunication, followed in due course by the establishment of the independent Church of England under Queen Elizabeth I.

Queen Elizabeth I's court was steeped in esoteric thought. An important source of these tendencies, as well as much of Rosicrucian philosophy, was famous occultist John Dee. In his *Monas hieroglyphica*, Dee believed that he had discovered a formula for combined Kabbalist, alchemical, and mathematical science, which would enable its possessor to move up and down the scale of being, from the lowest to the highest spheres. Dee believed that he found the secret of conjuring angels by numerical

configurations in the tradition of the Kabbalah, and claimed to have gained contact with good angels, from whom he learned advancement in knowledge. At sunset, in 1582, he supposedly saw in the window of his laboratory, the figure of a child-angel, said to be Uriel, the spirit of light, who held in his hand the famous "angelical stone." Michael appeared with a fiery sword in his hand and bade Dee to take it up, and informed him that by gazing at it he could communicate with otherworldly spirits. Dee then recorded hundreds of spirit conversations, including a angelic language composed of a mysterious alphabet he called *Enochian*.

While acting as Astrologer Royal to Queen Mary, who had succeeded Henry VIII to the throne, Dee was accused of high treason and practicing enchantments against Mary's life, having cast Elizabeth's horoscope as well as the Queen's. He was thrown in prison, but managed to clear himself of the charges, including one of heresy, though he was strongly suspected of being a magician and a conjurer. When Elizabeth became Queen after Mary's death, Dee was fortunate enough to have the benefit of her favour. In 1588, in his capacity as royal astrologer, he was asked to choose the most favorable date for the coronation of Elizabeth, and subsequently tutored the new queen in the understanding of his own mystical writings.

Elizabeth did not marry, and therefore had no direct heir. Mary Stuart, Mary Queen of Scots, was the nearest relative, but she was catholic. Philip of Spain and the Catholics in France plotted for Mary's accession to the throne, and when Elizabeth discovered that plots to place the Scottish queen on the English throne threatened her life, she had Mary Stuart imprisoned and eventually executed. Following Elizabeth's childless death in 1603, the throne was left vacant. James VI of Scots, the son of Mary Stuart, was deemed to be Elizabeth's closest living relative, and was invited to succeed. Thus, he became James I of England, the first Stuart monarch to preside over England. James did not share Elizabeth's sympathies for John Dee, and when he appealed to the king for help in clearing his reputation from charges of conjuring devils, the King ignored him. Dee finally died disgraced and in abject poverty in 1608.

However, prior to his death, after his career in England had come to an end, Dee had found his way to Prague, where he seems to have been the leader of not only an alchemical movement, but a movement for religious reform. Rudolph II, the Hapsburg ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, moved the capital from Vienna to Prague in Bohemia, which became an occult oriented court, the center of alchemical, astrological, and magical studies of all kind. Rudolph II devoted vast sums of money to the building of his library, which comprised of the standard corpus of Hermetic works, as well as the notorious *Picatrix*. Rudolph was indifferent to the Counter-Reformation of the Hapsburgs, and allowed a number of the scientists and intellectuals of Prague to speak their views without restriction from the Church. Prague then became a haven for those seeking to study esoteric sciences, coming from all over Europe. There arrived John Dee and Edward Kelly, Johannes Kepler, and Giordano Bruno, the renowned Renaissance heretic and occultist.

The emperor's fascination with Hermeticism was matched by his interest in Kabbalah. The reign of Rudolph was a golden age of Jewry in Prague. In the sixteenth century many Jewish refugees who were expelled from Moravia, Germany, Austria and Spain came to Prague. In Prague Jews studied Kabbalah undisturbed. One of the most famous Jewish scholars and educators of the time was Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, also known as Maharal, who had positive relations with Rudolf II. Rabbi Loew published more than fifty religious and philosophical books and became the center of legends, as the mystical miracle worker who created the *Golem*, an artificial man made of clay brought to life through magical combinations of the sacred letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which acted as a guardian over the Jews.

Crisis came upon the Protestant movement when Rudolph II died in 1612, threatening the immunity enjoyed by esoteric circles among the Protestants of Germany. Initially, the German leaders of the Protestant cause in the Palatinate of the Rhine, a small province of the Holy Roman Empire, had offered support to Henry IV king of France, then Henry of Navarre, leader of the Huguenots, as the French Calvinists had come to be called. Though, Henry's plans for an invasion of Germany, to end Hapsburg rule in Europe, came to an end, with his assassination in 1610. As a consequence, the leaders in the Palatinate, who had been eager to help the cause of Henry, then sought other means to pursue their plight against the Hapsburgs. It was at this point that the German prince Frederick, Elector of the Palatinate of the Rhine, began to be seen as the ideal incumbent to take the place of leader of the Protestant resistance against the Hapsburgs.

Frederick had powerful connections with French Protestants, his uncle being the Huguenot leader, the Duke of Bouillon. Most importantly, in 1613, Frederick had married Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I, representing an important dynastic alliance, forged primarily through the efforts of John Dee, to bolster the Protestant movement against the Catholics. After his marriage, Frederick established a court at his capital of Heidelberg, whose theme was thoroughly Rosicrucian. He had been invested with the famous English chivalric Order of the Garter, a survival of the Scottish Templar tradition.[659]The name Rosicrucian

was derived from Rose Cross, or Red Cross, signifying the symbol of the patron of the Order, St. George, whose legend, founded on the ancient gods of the Near East, claimed him to have slain a dragon, like Marduk and Tiamat, Baal and Lotan, and Zeus and Typhon. Primarily, it was hoped that James, who appeared to support the Protestant cause, would come to the assistance of his son-in-law, in the case of an uprising against the Catholic Church and its Hapsburg supporters.

A year after Frederick's marriage to Elizabeth, and largely as a result of Dee's influence in Germany, the notorious Rosicrucian Manifestos, claiming to represent a combination of "*Magia, Cabala, and Alchymia*," made their appearance. The first of these was the *Fama Frateritatis*, an allegorical history of the Rosicrucians, which appeared in 1614, and followed by a second tract a year later. The *Manifestos* proclaimed purported to issue from a secret, "invisible" fraternity of "initiates" in Germany and France, and vehemently attacked the Catholic Church and the old Holy Roman Empire. Following the *Fama Fraternatis*, several lodges of the Order were founded and the members of these groups claimed that the Rosicrucians had been active in the events that surrounded the *Reformation*, and the rise of the *Lutheran* movement in Germany and Switzerland. It was noted that Luther used as his personal seal the symbol of a rose and a cross, and Andrea, the reputed author of the *Manifestos*, was known to be one of his close friends and supporters.

Although the *Rosicrucian Manifestoes* were written anonymously, they are often attributed to Johan Valentin Andrea, supposed successor to Robert Fludd as Grand Master of the Priory of Zion. Fludd apparently became intimately acquainted with the writings of Paracelsus. His medical philosophy comprised of mystical healing and astrology as well as science. Fludd's special passion was alchemy, and he expounded at length on the topic in a two-volume history of the Microcosm and Macrocosm.

The author of the *Fama* seems to have been familiar with a curious work entitled the *Naomatria*, the main influence behind which had been Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica*.[660] According the *Naometria*, published in 1604, an apocalypse involving numerology, and based on the Biblical dimensions of the Temple of Solomon, there was a meeting in 1586, between some evangelical princes and Electors and representatives of the French King Henry of Navarre, the King of Denmark, and the Queen of England. The object of this meeting is said to have been the formation of a league in defense against the Catholics. This alliance, which had close associations with the Order of the Garter, was known as the friendship of the Lily (Henry the King of France), the Lion (King James of Britain), and the Nymph (the Duke of Wurttemberg).[661]

The *Fama* was part of a larger Protestant treatise titled, *The Universal and General Reformation of the Whole Wide World*; together with the *Fama Fraternatis of the Laudable Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, Written to All the Learned and the Rulers of Europe*. The author asserted that none could apply for membership to the Order directly, but applicants might "speak either by word of mouth, or else... in writing. And this we say for the truth, that whosoever shall earnestly, and from his heart, bear affection unto us" will come to the fraternity's notice. "And it shall be beneficial to him in goods, body, and soul."[662]

The *Fama* then went on to relate the life story of the supposed founder of the *Rosy Cross* brotherhood, stating that the Order had been founded as early as the 1300's, by a German mystic known by the pseudonym Christian Rosenkreuz. Rosenkreuz traveled to the Middle East, where he was introduced to magic and the Kabbalah, suggesting that the Rosicrucians were familiar with the teachings of Sufis, to whom the rose was also a familiar symbol. There Rosenkreuz was shown many secrets, among them mathematics, physics, alchemy, and a document the *Fama* refers to as the *Book M*, whose full name is thought by some to be *Book Mundi*, or *Book of the World*, said to have held the secrets of the universe.[663] Rosenkreuz traveled to Egypt, where he studied natural history and, presumably, the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, and then to Fez, in Morocco, where he was taught the magical art of conjuring spirits, and was introduced to magic and to interpretations of the scriptures based on the Kabbalah.

When Rosenkreuz returned to Germany, he decided to inform the world of his new knowledge, though, because he was initially met with hostility, to conceal his political and cultural reforms behind the mask of a secret society. Rosenkreuz revisited the monastery where he had stayed in his youth, and persuaded three of its senior members, known in Rosicrucian literature as the Three Wise Men, to whom he revealed the occult knowledge he had received from the Arabs. Four other monks were introduced, with the seven members setting out across Europe, to begin secretly spreading its occult doctrines. They decided not to reveal their true identities to outsiders and agreed on six rules of conduct, which were that they would heal the sick without charge, wear no special garment which revealed their occult beliefs, that would meet annually to report their progress, that they would nominate a successor to replace them in the even to their death, that they would use the initials *RC* as their identifying mark, and that the existence of the Order would remain secret for at least a hundred years.

Years later, in 1604, several of the brothers, including the author of the *Fama*, came upon a mysterious tomb, where there was a brilliant light shining. Examining the compartments, the Rosicrucian brothers found copies of all the order's books, a copy of the *Vocabularium* of Paracelsus, Christian Rosenkreuz's life story, and a number of magical trinkets. The brothers concluded that they had uncovered the resting place of their order's founder. The body had not yet begun to decay and in his arms he was holding a gold-lettered copy of *Book T*, which the *Fama* described as the greatest treasure next to the Bible.

A further Rosicrucian tract appeared in 1616, whose theme was Frederick's wedding to Elizabeth Stuart, the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*, a complex Hermetic allegory which subsequently influenced such works as Goethe's *Faust*. The *Chemical Wedding* was originally of anonymous authorship, but Andrea later confessed to having composed it as a joke. These manifestos created much turmoil, provoking reaction from the Church and the Jesuits, and arousing enthusiastic support from factions in Protestant Europe. Conservative forces though, gained momentum, and in 1617, the throne was offered to the stringent Catholic Hapsburg Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, a pupil of the Jesuits, determined to stamp out heresy. Ferdinand immediately set about suppressing the protestant movement, causing Bohemia to enter into a state of open rebellion against the Hapsburg ruler. In 1619, the Bohemians decided to offer the crown of Bohemia to Frederick, who then moved to Prague with his family, precipitating the Thirty Years War. As the year wore on, the situation became more volatile and Frederick's enemies began amassing forces to expel him. Frederick's forces were routed at the Battle of White Mountain outside of Prague. Contrary to the hopes of the Rosicrucians, James did not offer the aid of England in support of his son-in-law, and the movement ended in utter ignominy. Within two years Frederick and Elizabeth had been driven into exile in Holland, and Heidelberg was overrun by Catholic troops.

The last to be heard of the Rosicrucian brotherhood was a brief scare in France. One morning in August 1623, the people of Paris were informed that a certain mysterious brotherhood had taken up residence in their midst. One version of the notices declared, "We, deputies of the principal College of the Brethren of the Rosy Cross, are staying visibly and invisibly in this town by the Grace of the Most High, to whom the heart of the Just turns. We show and teach without books or masques how to speak the language of every country where we wish to be, to bring our fellow men out of the error of death." Another placard offered membership "to all those who wish to enter our Society and Congregation."[664] The posters though gave no further instruction as to how or where would-be members might apply to the Rosy Cross brotherhood, but they suggested indirectly that those worthy would be recognized and contacted in due course.

Spokesmen of the French church reacted by issuing various manifestoes exposing the "Pretended Invisible Ones" and their "Horrible Pacts" with Satan. In his *Instruction to France about the truth of the Rose Cross Brothers*, published in 1623, Gabriel Naudier claims that thirty-six "deputies" of the Rosy Cross had convened in the provincial city of Lyons on the very day the posters appeared in Paris, at which the participants celebrated a grand Sabbath, at which the devil appeared before them. The members at this point prostrated themselves before an emissary of the devil, and swore they would renounce all the rites and sacraments of the Christian Church. In return, Satan's representative bestowed upon them marvelous powers, including the ability to transport themselves magically wherever they pleased, to speak with such eloquence and apparent wisdom that people would always be drawn to listen, to disguise themselves so cleverly that they would always appear to be natives of whatever place they found themselves, and to keep them forever supplied with gold. Finally, the manifestos confirmed that six missionaries had instantaneously been posted to Paris, where they went into hiding in a quarter of the city favored by Protestants. No more posters appeared, no applicants for membership made themselves known, and the Rosicrucians apparently

The Freemasons

During the Thirty Years War, Andrea created a network of secret societies known as the Christian Unions. According to Andrea's directives, each society was headed by an anonymous prince, assisted by twelve others divided into groups of three, each of whom was to be a specialist in a given sphere of study. The original purpose of the Christian Unions was to preserve threatened knowledge, especially the most recent scientific advances, many of which the Church deemed heretical. More importantly, the Christian Unions functioned as a refuge for persons formerly associated with the defeated Rosicrucians in Germany. Once in England, these men, both English and European, formed the Invisible College, later the Royal Society.

The Invisible College was named in obvious reference to Francis Bacon's college of initiates mentioned in his *New Atlantis*. Francis Bacon was one of the most important representatives of Rosicrucianism. Bacon, who was chancellor of England in the reign of King James, is also thought by many to have been the real author responsible for the workss of Shakespeare, or to have supervised the

translation of the King James Bible. He is considered the father of modern science, having emphasized the importance of experimentation in his landmark work, *The Advancement of Learning*. However, recent scholarship has shown that he was committed to the Renaissance occult tradition, and his survey of science included a review of magic, astrology, and a reformed version of alchemy.[665] In his early career as a lawyer, Bacon became a member of a secret society called the Order of the Helmet, which worshipped the Greek goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athene, depicted wearing a helmet and carrying a spear. As a young man he was also a student of Hermetic, Gnostic and Neoplatonic philosophy and had studied the Kabbalah.

Of the Royal Society's founding members, virtually all were Freemasons, a secret society that continued the tradition of Hermetic science, and which connected the Ancient Wisdom with sacred geometry embodied in the design of Solomon's Temple. The exact origins of the Freemasons are not known. According to Masonic legend, Freemasonry dates back to the construction of King Solomon's Temple, and to the guilds of Mediaeval masons who built the Gothic cathedrals. They are often thought to have been an extension of the original Knights of Templar, and a continuation of the Rosicrucian brotherhood. One of the earliest inductions into a Masonic lodge on record was for Robert Boyle in 1641. Boyle also had intimate relations with the Royal Society, and purportedly succeeded Andrea as the Priory of Zion's Grand Master. Another initiate was Elias Ashmole, antiquarian and expert of chivalric orders, in particular, the Order of the Garter, who, along with astrologer William Lilly, founded a Rosicrucian lodge in London in 1646. This lodge was based on the utopian ideal of the creation of a *New Atlantis*, which symbolized the golden age before Adam's Fall, when humanity was spiritually perfect.

The Freemasons were often suspected of being behind the English Civil War, though their position during the affair is unclear. In 1642, when Charles I, the son of the Stuart king, James I, tried to arrest five MPs for obstructive behavior, the English Civil War erupted, and Oliver Cromwell assumed command of the Parliamentary forces. In November of that same year, Charles was given the opportunity to escape. He was, of course, recaptured. After which, Cromwell attempted to rid the British Parliament of most of the members he knew were loyal to the king. Nevertheless, the majority of the house agreed, "that the concessions offered by the king were satisfactory to the settlement."[666] Cromwell ordered Colonel Pryde to purge Parliament of those members who had voted in favour of a settlement with the King. What happened then is referred to in history books as "Pryde's purge." When the purge was completed, fifty members remained. They were recorded as the "Rump Parliament."

Eventually King Charles surrendered, and finally, in 1649 was tried and beheaded. With no king to consider, Parliament established an interim period of Commonwealth. In 1653, Oliver Cromwell terminated both his Parliament and the Commonwealth, and appointing himself Lord Protector, and ruled by military force alone. When Cromwell died in 1658, his despotic legacy fell to his son Richard who did not possess his father's ruthlessness, with the result that it was not long before Charles II, the late king's son, was invited back to rule as King of England. The "Restoration" of Charles II Stuart to the throne thus occurred in 1660, eleven years after the execution of his father.

It is commonly thought that the fraternity emerged out of a craftsmens' guild, and that these early "Operative Masons" were soon supplanted by "Free and Accepted Masons". While the first initiation is believed to have been that of Ashmole, in 1648, as John Robison notes, the cover of secresy within the organization must have attracted many Royalists. He states:

> Nay the Ritual of the Master's degree seems to have been formed, or perhaps twisted from its original institution, so as to give an opportunity of founding the political principles of the candidate, and of the whole Brethren present. For it bears so easy an adaptation to the death of the King, to the overturning of hte venerable constitution of hte English government of three orders by a mean democracy, and its re-establishment by the efforts of the loyalists, that this would start into every person's mind during the ceremonial, and could hardly fail to show, by the countenances and behaviour of the Brethren, how they were affected.[667]

When James II, King Charles II's brother and successor, issued a *Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*, allowing various opposing creeds to co-exist, the Parliament not only condemned the king but had him deposed for daring to acknowledge the alternative faiths. The king was forced to leave the throne, bringing to an end the Stuart succession to the throne of England. The throne was then offered jointly to William of Orange and his wife Mary, James' daughter. Though William and Mary were of Stuart lineage, the Scots were disappointed at the loss of a Stuart monarch, and in 1689, the year of James II's deposition, Bonnie Dundee led a force of Highlanders against government troops at Killiecrankie. The rebellion was called a Jacobite Rising, because of their support of James II, which is derived from the Latin Jacomus, or Jacob in Hebrew. The next significant Jacobite Rising took place fifty-six years later, in 1745, when

"Bonnie Prince Charlie," Charles Edward Stuart, also known as the Pretender, challenged William of Orange. The Bonnie Prince was symbolically crowned King Charles III by the clergy of Scotland's Episcopal Church. Though, a year later, in 1746, the Young Pretender was disastrously defeated at the Battle of Culloden Moor, and the Scots' attempt to take London and install a Stuart king were foiled.

However, English Masonry lost all trace of affection for the Stuart cause. It was mainly in France, where the family took refuge, that Masonry became again affiliated with the Stuarts, who came to be believed to be descended surviving Templars that had escaped to Scottland. An important figure of the Jacobite cause was Charles Radclyffe, alleged Grand Master of the Priory of Zion. In 1725, Radclyffe is said to have founded a lodge in Paris, the first Masonic outside of England, eventually acknowledged grand master of all French lodges. While English Freemasonry offered three degrees of initiation, that became universal throughout the order about 1730, Radclyffe appears to have been responsible for promulgating, if not in fact devising, *Scottish Rite Freemasonry*, which introduced higher degrees, and promised initiation into greater and more profound mysteries, supposedly preserved and handed down in Scotland.

The Jacobite cause alleged that a Masonic lodge had been founded in Scotland, during the early eighteenth century, which drew its charter from a surviving Templar chapter in Bristol, that had already been in operation for several hundred years. It was maintained that during the Crusades, a small group of "Syrian Christians", who claimed descent back to the Essenes, presumably the Sabians of Harran, were rescued from the Muslims by the Templars. When they left Jerusalem, these Gnostic Christians eventually settled in Scotland, and founded a new chapter of the Templar Order, which later merged with a lodge of Freemasonry.[668]

The dissemination of eighteenth-century Freemasonry owes more ultimately to Radclyffe than to any other person. This has not always been readily apparent, because Radclyffe kept a relatively low profile, and seems to have worked through such men as the Chevalier Andrew Ramsay, another supporter of the Jacobite cause and a member of the *Royal Society*. As a young man, Ramsay was a member of a quasi-Masonic, quasi-Rosicrucian society called the *Philadelphians*. Among them were at least two close friends of Isaac Newton, a man said to have preceded Radclyffe as Grand Master of the Priory of Zion. Ramsay, who eventually became the preeminent Masonic spokesman, also maintained that Masonry was the heir to the secrets of the Templars, who in turn had inherited the ancient wisdom of the pagan mysteries. Many Frenchmen joined the new Masonic lodges, even though the government issued orders prohibiting membership. The king decreed that should any member of the court join a lodge, he would face imprisonment in the Bastille. Finally, in 1738 the Roman Catholic Church officially condemned Freemasonry. Though, despite this official disapproval Masonry flourished, and by the 1750's numerous lodges practicing the Scottish Rite were established all over France.

A new ambassador of Freemasonry appeared early in the 1750's, a German named Karl Gottlieb von Hund. In Paris Hund had become acquainted with members of the Jacobite cause, and learned from them their secrets. He was initiated in 1742, at which time he claims to have been introduced to a new system of Freemasonry, confided to him by *unknown superiors*. His system, a further extension of the Scottish Rite, was subsequently called the Strict Observance, a name derived from the oath it demanded, an oath of unquestioning obedience to the mysterious *unknown superiors*. The Strict Observance claimed to have descended directly from the Knights Templar, some of whom had purportedly survived the purge of 1307 to 1314 and perpetuated their order in Scotland. To his embarrassment and subsequent disgrace, Hund was unable to elaborate further on his new system of Freemasonry. As a result, his contemporaries dismissed him as a charlatan and accused him of having fabricated the story. To these charges Hund could only reply that his "unknown superiors" had inexplicably abandoned him. They had promised to contact him again and give him further instructions, but had never done so. To the end of his life, Hund affirmed his integrity. In any case despite the charges leveled against him, Hund was not left completely abandoned.

Masonic Myth

According to Masonic legend, at the time of building of the Tower of Babel, Nimrod, King of Babylon, instructed the first Masons. Then, when Abraham went into Egypt, he taught these sciences to the Egyptians. His pupil, named Euclid, further instructed the Egyptians in the seven liberal arts, foremost of which was the science of Geometry, and how to apply the knowledge to such works as the building of castles, churches, manors, towns and houses. During their time in Egypt, the Jews learned the *Craft* of masonry, when they returned to the Promised Land, where Solomon completed the temple, which his father had begun, and sent for masons, among whom was Hiram. From there, the science was disseminated to many other regions.

Though Masons were said to have built Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, and the Egyptian pyramids, traditionally, Freemasonry places the founding of the original lodge in the reign of King

Solomon. The geometric science that went into the construction his of Temple is regarded as representing the *Ancient Wisdom*, or in Masonic terminology, the *Craft*, a knowledge which a Masonic initiate is offered induction into upon membership. The Craft he learns is a secret which he must swear, "in the presence of Almighty God, and this Worshipful Lodge, erected to Him and dedicated to the holy St. John," not to divulge "…under no less penalty than that of having my body severed in two, my bowels taken from thence and burned to ashes."

According to Albert Pike, nineteenth century lawyer, writer, a Civil War general, and regarded as the "Plato of Freemasonry" or the "Masonic Pope", "...Masonry is identical with the Ancient Mysteries." The initiation ceremony of Freemasonry was a dying god ritual based on the story of Hiram Abiff, a Phoenician commissioned by King Solomon to assist in the construction of his Temple. To build the Temple, Solomon imported masons, artists and craftsmen from neighboring countries, and specifically, sent a message to the king of Tyre asking if he could hire the services of the king's master builder, Hiram Abiff, who was skilled in geometry. Because of his skill, Solomon appointed Hiram as the chief architect and master mason of the Temple.[669] Kabbalistic tradition recounts that Solomon carried Hiram off to Hell by evoking a demon. When Hiram returned, he told Solomon all that he had seen and learnt in the infernal kingdom, and the rabbis suggest this was the true source of Solomon's wisdom.

According to the Masonic account, one day, as he entered through the entrance of the Temple, Hiram was accosted by three fellow masons, Jubela, Jubelo, and Jubeum, who demanded from him the secret of the Master Mason's work. When Hiram refused to divulge this secret information, telling the workers that they would receive it in good time, once he had progressed further in his career, they killed him. The three renegade masons, buried Hiram's body and marked the grave with an acacia tree. This last aspect of the story led early Masonic historians to regard Hiram Abiff as a symbolic representation of Osiris, for in both Masonic and Egyptian mysteries the resurrected god is buried on a hill in a tomb marked by a tree, and Osiris was called the *Lord of the Acacia Tree*. A search party was organized but it was fifteen days before his corpse was discovered. Solomon was informed and ordered that Hiram's body should be exhumed, and reburied with a full religious ceremony and the honors due to a craftsmen of his rank. The three assassins were eventually exposed, tried and put to death for their crime.[670]

During the initiation into Freemasonry's first degree, of Entered Apprentice Mason, the candidate is blindfolded and dressed in loose-fitting white trousers and top. On one foot is a simple slipper, his left leg exposed to the knee, and the left breast of the tunic drawn aside so that his chest is bared. A hangman's noose is put around his neck and draped down his back. The candidate is then questioned, with a knife blade pressed against his throat, about his eligibility and whether his motives in joining the fraternity are worthy. After reciting a specific dialogue with the Worshipful Master, the blindfold is removed and the "lights" of Freemasonry are revealed, the *Volume of the Sacred Law* (the Bible), the *Square and the Compass*. Throughout the ceremony the Apprentice is taught moral virtues based on architectural analogies.

In the ritual of the first and second degree of Fellowcraft Mason, the candidate learns secret signs, grips and passwords, and the meaning of the two pillars that flanked the main entrance of Solomon's Temple, known historically as Jachin and Boaz, representing the twin-pillars of the Phoenician Hercules. In the words of Albert Pike, "these columns were imitations, by Hiram, the Tyrian artist, of the great columns consecrated to the Winds and Fire, at the entrance to famous Temple of Melkarth, in the city of Tyre."[671] According to Masonic legend, Hiram was a Hermetic alchemist, his forerunner being the son of Lamech, Tubal-Cain. Lamech, who was seventh in succession from Adam's son Cain, had three sons: one invented geometry, another was the first Mason and the third was a blacksmith who was the first human to work with precious metals. Reflecting the legend recounted by Josephus, prior to the Flood, Lamech and his sons were said to have decided to preserve their knowledge on two stone pillars, so that future generations would discover it.[672] One of these was discovered by Hermes Trismegistus, who transcribed its sacred geometry onto an emerald tablet. This science was inherited by Pythagoras, who also discovered the second pillar, and "the astronomy which he mysteriously taught, was astrology: his science of numbers was based on Kabalistical principles."[673]

According to Pike, in the legend of Hiram, "…some see figured the condemnation and sufferings of Christ; other those of the unfortunate Grand Master of the Templars; other those of the first Charles, King of England; and others still the annual descent of the Sun at the winter Solstice to the regions of darkness, the basis of many an ancient legend."[674] Thus, in the ritual of the Third Degree, of Master Mason, the initiate is guided through a ceremony that mimics the assault on Hiram, blow by blow, including his death, then the initiate is placed on the ground covered with a shroud, when finally the Junior Warden attempts to raise the candidate from his "grave" using the grip of the Worshipful Master. The candidate's gaze is directed down in the darkness of an open grave, inside of which is a skull and crossbones. Now

reborn as a Master Mason, the candidate is given more passwords, grips, and building analogies. The Worshipful Master indicates a small illuminated star to the east of the candidate, who is then told:

> Even in this perishable frame, there resides a vital and immortal principle, which inspires a holy confidence, that the Lord of Life will enable us to trample the King of Terrors beneath our feet, and lift our eyes to that bright morning star whose rising brings peace and tranquillity to the faithful and obedient of the human race.[675]

The Masons regarded themselves as the rightful inheritors of the Essenic tradition of Johannite Gnosticism from the Templars, whom they are to avenge through the elimination of the Catholic Church. According to Albert Pike, the Masons inherited the teachings of the Gnostics, who "derived their leading doctrines and ideas from Plato and Philo, the *Zend-Avesta* and the Kabbalah, and the Sacred books of India and Egypt; and thus introduced into the bosom of Christianity the cosmological and theosophical speculations, which had formed the larger portion of the ancient religions of the Orient, joined to those of the Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish doctrines, which the New-Platonists had equally adopted in the Occident."[676] Ultimately, Pike believed Freemasonry to represent the ancient doctrines of the Aryan race, and according to Masonic historian Manly P. Hall, "Masonry came to Northern Africa and Asia Minor from the lost continent of Atlantis, not under its present name but rather under the general designation Sun and Fire Worship," which they personified, as explained by Pike, "as Brahma, Amun, Osiris, Bel, Adonis, Melkarth, Mithras, and Apollo; and the nations that did so grew old and died."[677]

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Chapter 19: Lucifer

In Europe, during the eighteenth century, academies and societies began to proliferate, founded with various aims, such as the promotion of agriculture, though some of them made no pretense of existing solely for literary, scientific or other purposes, but provided meeting-places at which ideas were debated and discussed. Though the extent of the involvement of prominent secret societies in subversive activities remains a controversial subject for historians, these were real organizations, providing an important network for influential members of society, with often complex beliefs systems and rituals. Therefore, we may likely expect such societies to have exercised some degree of influence on their numerous followers. F. M. Roberts, in the *Penguin History of the World*, acknowledges:

> Among such associations the most remarkable was the international brotherhood of freemasons. It was introduced from England to continental Europe in the 1720s and within a half-century spread-widely; there may have been more than a quarter-million masons by 1789. They were later to be the object of much calumny; the myth was propagated that they had long had revolutionary and subversive aims. This was not true of the craft as a body, however true it may have been of a few individual masons, but it is easy to believe that so far as masonic lodges, like other gatherings, helped in the publicity and discussion of new ideas, they contributed to the breaking up of the ice of tradition and convention.[678]

The Enlightenment

Most of the current attitudes and prejudices towards religion, our objection to the supposed excesses of the Catholic Church, the presumed incompatibility between religion and science, and the perceived need for the separation between Church and State, date back to the Enlightenment, an intellectual movement of the eighteenth century, centered in Paris, which spread itself across all of Europe and to the American colonies. Although its criticism of convention and "superstition" is taken to exemplify "free-thought", it was mainly directed at the authority of the Church, and, as many of the intellectuals of the period were members of secret societies, their ideas may be understood to reflect the subversive plans of those societies.

In the thirtieth degree of Masonry, *Knight Kadosh*, the candidate is shown a papal tiara, and told: "This represents the tiara of the cruel and cowardly Pontiff, who sacrificed to his ambition, the illustrious order of those Knights Templar of whom we are the true successors." The candidates are then invited to trample on the tiara, while brandishing daggers and shouting "Down with imposture." Like their Rosicrucian predecessors, the aim of the Masonic movement was the establishment of a new order based on occult principles, through the elimination of "despotism" and "tyranny", used euphemistically to refer to the Catholic Church. Therefore, through its criticism directed at the Church and the French aristocracy, the Enlightenment helped to foment the sentiments that led ultimately to the French Revolution.

The essential premise of the Enlightenment movement was the encouragement of the use of "reason" towards questioning the validity of religion and established authority. The forerunners of the Enlightenment intellectuals had been such men as the seventeenth century French philosopher, Rene Descartes. Descartes was a Rosicrucian, and in *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, Stephen Gaukroger maintains that Descartes search for a general theory of "method" was partly influenced by the contact he had with the order while in Germany. His "rationalism" certainly betrayed occult influence, and his notion that most effected the Enlightenment rejection of faith, was that all is uncertain, until established by reasoning from self-evident propositions.

The tendency was further developed by three Englishmen: Sir Francis Bacon, Newton and John Locke. Sir Francis Bacon, the great Rosicrucian scientist, advocated a reform of knowledge based on direct observation, rejecting the blind obedience of authority in favor of the immediate world of sense experience.

Freemason John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatise of Government*, were to remain central to the debates that raged throughout the Enlightenment. Locke argued that there are no ideas innate in man's nature, but that all knowledge is derived from experience. Moral values, Locke asserted, and therefore state laws and religion, are derived from sensations of pleasure and pain, the mind categorizing good what experience shows to be pleasurable.

Nearly all of the primary figures of the French Enlightenment, namely Voltaire, Montesqieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Concordet, and Rousseau, were all members of Freemasonry. Freemasonry had achieved remarkable importance during the eighteenth century, with wide acceptance among the aristocracy, including such monarchs as Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Francis I of Austria. Benjamin Franklin and Voltaire were members of the same Masonic lodge, and Mozart made use of his experience as a Freemason to create a vision of reason, beauty and love, in his opera *the Magic Flute*, which celebrated the Masonic alternative to the mass of the Church.

These French philosophers made use of the new possibilities offered by the press, and of another innovation of the Enlightenment, the novel, to carry out their attacks on the legitimacy of the Church and the existing state. Montesqieu wrote the *Persian Letters* in 1721, in which he used the fictitious correspondence of a Persian visitor to Paris, to satirize the Church and the society it ruled. In the *Spirit of the Laws*, he theorized that laws are abstract rules but necessary relationships derived from nature. Values, to Montesqieu, are the product of society, due to factors such as climate, religion, social practices and custom. Voltaire was the most rabid opponent of the Catholic Church. His novel *Candide*, a philosophical fantasy, is a debate between Pangloss and his disciple Candide. Voltaire ridicules the philosophical optimism typical of Leibniz, a religious explanation that sought to find justification for the existence of evil in the world. Candide saw and suffered such misfortune that he was unable to believe that this was "the best of all possible worlds." Having retired with his companions to the shores of the Propontis, Candide discovered that the secret of happiness was "to cultivate one's garden."

Diderot, one of the most important leaders of the movement, gathered scores of the *philosophes* to compile the great achievement of the Enlightenment, the *Encyclopedie*. Those *philosophes* most closely associated with the *Encyclopedie* developed a view of the world that was materialist, deterministic, and even atheistic. All knowledge, they considered, could be traced back to sensations. The human personality was simply the cumulative result of such impressions. Therefore, traditional notions such as the soul were unnecessary hypotheses. Some even suggested that all human faculties, intellectual and spiritual, as well as physical, were founded in matter. In some cases, it was postulated that no absolute moral standards could be established, and that the individual is completely dominated purely by physical impulses.

Many of the Enlightenment thinkers were committed to the philosophy of Deism, a tenet of Freemasonry, which proposed that God imparted law and regularity to the universe, but that He withdrew Himself after the initial act of creation, and refrained from further interference. Though, if God was not involved in human affairs, kings could not rule by Divine Right as they had claimed. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes had assumed the existence of a social contract that assigned absolute authority to the monarch. Though, if a sovereign were to violate the terms of the social contract, it would be justifiable to remove to him. Locke, on the other hand, argued that the social contract did not grant absolute powers, but entrusted the ruler with leadership as long as he safeguarded the rights of men. Similarly, in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau put forward the democratic theory of sovereignty, in which he argued that the social contract is not established between the ruler and the ruled, but among the ruled themselves. If a government failed to satisfy the people, they would have the right the change it in any way they pleased.

Thus, according to Enlightenment thinkers, bad institutions and deceitful or ignorant leaders had distorted and corrupted the natural order. Therefore a radical reorganization of society was thought, not only possible, but necessary. As William H. McNeill describes:

> History came to be viewed, in Gibbon's phrase, as a record of the miseries, crimes and follies of mankind, but in that record there appeared a slow, halting but unmistakable progress. Reason, to optimistic eyes, seemed to be winning new victories every day; a new age of enlightenment had dawned and mankind seemed on the point of emerging from a long night of superstition and ignorance. All that remained was to eliminate the remnants of bygone times: in particular, to men like Voltaire, that meant the destruction of the Church. Once all such obstacles had been removed, nothing would any longer prevent a rational reorganization of society and the inception of an age of general happiness when the natural goodness of men would prevail.[679]

The Illuminati

Though the groundwork had been established by the Masonic "philosophes" of the Enlightenment, the the French Revolution of 1789 was brought about through the instigation of the most notorious of the secret societies of the eighteenth century, the *Illuminati*. The order was founded by Adam Weishaupt. Though born Jewish, as a young boy Weishaupt was educated by the Jesuits. However, when he began to teach law at university, he became an active supporter of the Protestant cause, and was involved in a series of bitter arguments with prominent Catholic clergymen. While an undergraduate, Weishaupt studied the ancient pagan religions, becoming familiar with the *Eleusinian* mysteries, and the theories of Pythagoras, and drafted the constitution for a secret society modeled on the ancient mysteries. Though, it was not until he was initiated into Freemasonry, that his plan for an ultimate secret society was spawned.

Weishaupt first made contact with a Masonic lodge in 1774, but was sadly disappointed by what he discovered. In his opinion, the other members the lodge were ignorant of the occult significance of Masonry, and knew nothing about its pagan symbolism. On May 1, 1776, Weishaupt announced the foundation of the *Order of Perfectibilists*, in deliberate reference to the Cathars, which later became more widely known as the Illuminati. The first meeting of the order was only attended by five people, but soon attracted influential members of Bavarian society.

Weishaupt dreamed of a utopian superstate with the abolition of private property, social authority and nationality. In this anarchistic state, human beings would live in harmony within a universal brotherhood, based on free love, peace, spiritual wisdom and equality. Weishaupt's principal targets for reform were the monarchy, the Church and the aristocracy. The subversive nature of the *Illuminati* was illustrated by the mystical symbolism of the initiation ceremony into the highest grade of the order. The candidate was led into a room where, in front of an empty throne, on a table were placed the traditional symbols of kingship: a scepter, a sword and a crown. The initiate was invited to take up these objects but was told that if he or she did they would be refused entry. They were then taken into a second room draped in black. A curtain was pulled back to reveal an altar covered in a black cloth, on which stood a plain cross and a red Phrygian cap of Mithras. This ritual cap was handed to the initiate with the words "wear this, it means more than the crown of kings." Similarly, in initiation into the Mithraic mysteries, the initiate was handed a sword and a crown, but rejects them saying, "Mithras alone is my crown."[680]

Ultimately, according to Albert Pike, the Illuminati, like their predecessors, the Templars, Rosicrucians, and Freemasons, were inheritors of the ancient tradition of the Kabbalah:

> The Occult Science of the Ancient Magi was concealed under the shadows of the Ancient Mysteries: it was imperfectly revealed or rather disfigured by the Gnostics: it is guessed at under the obscurities that cover the pretended crimes of the Templars; and it is found enveloped in enigmas that seem impenetrable, in the Rites of the Highest Masonry.
>
> Magism was the Science of Abraham and Orpheus, of Confucius and Zoroaster. It was the dogmas of this Science that were engraven on the tables of stone by Enoch and Trismegistus. Moses purified and re-veiled them, for that is the meaning of the word reveal. He covered them with a new veil, when he made of the Holy Kabbalah the exclusive heritage of the people of Israel, and the inviolable Secret of its priests. The Mysteries of Thebes and Eleusis preserved among the nations some symbols of it, already altered, and the mysterious key whereof was lost among the instruments of an ever-growing superstition. Jerusalem, the murderess of her prophets, and so often prostituted to the false gods of the Syrians and Babylonians, had at length in its turn lost the Holy Word, when a Prophet announced by the Magi by the consecrated Star of Initiation [Sirius], came to rend asunder the worn veil of the old Temple, in order to give the Church a new tissue of legends and symbols, that still and ever conceal from the Profane, and ever preserves to the Elect the same truths.[681]

As part of his plan for political change, Weishaupt aimed to conduct a secret operation to infiltrate Masonic lodges, and establish a power base within continental Freemasonry. Within a short time the Illuminati had lodges all over Germany and Austria, while branches were founded in Italy, Hungary, France, and Switzerland. However, it was the Illuminati plot to overthrow the Hapsburgs in 1784, exposed by police spies who had infiltrated the order, which led to the Bavarian government banning all secret societies, and driving the followers of Weishaupt underground. Nevertheless, suspicion remained that its members might still be working in secret, spreading subversive ideas, and scheming behind the scenes.[682] Prior to the French Revolution, Weishaupt is to have said, "Salvation does not lie where strong thrones are defended by swords, where the smoke of censers ascends to heaven or where thousands of strong men pace the rich fields of harvest. The revolution which is about to break will be sterile if it is not complete."[683]

Nevertheless, the Illuminati proceeded with their plot. The chief conduit of their activities in France was the *Loge des Chealiers Bienfaisants* at Lyons. This Lodge stood at the head of French Freemasonry, and the fictitious Order of Masonic Knights Templars was formed in this Lodge. It's Grand Master was Illuminati member, the Duke of Orleans. The Duke was connected to the Stuart cause, his mother being the German princess Elizabeth of the Palatinate, granddaughter of Elizabeth Stuart and Frederick. The Duke of Orleans primary motivation, besides his hatred of the King and his wife, Marie Antoinette, was to himself succeed as King following the sought revolution.

About eight years before the Revolution, he was elected Grand Master of France, and the whole association of various lodges came to be known as the Grand Orient. The chief instigators of the Revolution, Mirabeau, Condorcet, Rochefoucault and others, were high-raking officers of these lodges. The Count Mirabeau was himself a member of the Illuminati. Mirabeau had attended the Grand Masonic Convention in 1782 at Wilhelmsbad where the ground plan for the uprising is reputed to have originally been discussed. He also confessed to other delegates of the convention that he was a disciple of the Cathar heresy, whose aim was to bring down the French monarchy, and destroy the Catholic Church so that the "religion of love" could be established in France. Mirabeau introduced the philosophy of Illuminism into the Masonic lodges. In 1788, deputies of the Illuminati were sent, upon his request, to inform the French lodges on strategy. Their first item of advice was the creation of a Political Committee in every lodge, and from these committees arose the Jacobin Club. Soon, nearly every lodge in the Grand Orient was infiltrated by supporters of Weishaupt, who were active in spreading the political policies of terrorism against the state.

In 1789, when the Bastille was stormed, the Comte de Mirabeau, allegedly said, "the idolatry of the monarchy has received a death blow from the sons and daughters of the Order of the Templars."[684] Albert Pike declared that, "the secret movers of the French Revolution had sworn to overthrow the Throne and the Altar upon the Tomb of Jacques de Molay."[685]The revolutionaries, many of whom were members of Masonic organizations, adopted the symbolism and language of the occult societies. The Masonic tenets of *Equality, Liberty and Fraternity*, became the rallying cry of French Revolution. In the Revolutionary literature of the period, the Illuminist symbol of the eye in the triangle, as it would later appear on the American dollar bill, appears on book covers. Also important was the Phrygian cap worn originally by Mithras, known as the *Red Bonnet*, which was adopted as the headgear of the citizens' militia. Finally, when Louis XIV the King of France was executed, a voice cried out from the crowd "De Molay is avenged."

The Duke of Orleans was viewed as a hero by the crowd that stormed the Bastille. After the fall of the monarchy in August 1792, he renounced his title of nobility and accepted the name *Philippe Égalité* from the Paris Commune, one of the popular Revolutionary bodies. When he was elected to the Revolutionary legislature, which convened in September 1792, Égalité supported the radical democratic policies of the Montagnards against the more moderate Girondin. However, during the trial of Louis XVI, the Girondins accused the Montagnards of conspiring to put Égalité on the throne. Though Égalité voted for the execution of Louis, he fell under suspicion when his son Louis-Philippe, duc de Chartres, defected to the Austrian, and was arrested finally arrested and sent to the guillotine in November. Nevertheless his son, Louis-Philippe, the Duc de Chartres, was brought to power by another revolution, and reigned as king of France from 1830 to 1848, when he was forced to abdicate and was finally replaced by a Republic.

America: the New Atlantis

It has been claimed that, in 1398, nearly one hundred years before Columbus sailed across the Atlantic, that America was discovered by a Merovingian descendant by the name of Prince Henry Sinclair. Many believe that following the arrest of the Templars, surviving knights found their way to Scotland, where they were welcomed and given refuge by Robert the Bruce. At that, Henry Sinclair was Lord of Rosslyn, and a close friend of Robert the Bruce, and the Sinclairs had long been connected to the Templars. Some believe that Sinclair may have transported several of the Templars by ship to Nova Scotia, where their treasure was buried on Oak Island. The favored theory is that one of the items taken to Nova Scotia was the Holy Grail itself.[686]

Another legend has it that, in Portugal, following the suppression of the Templars in the fourteenth century, the order was exonerated of all guilt in an inquiry ordered by the king. Instead of disbanding, the Knights Templar of Portugal merely changed their name, to the Knights of Christ. Their maritime role left an important mark on history: Vasco da Gama was a Knight of Christ, and Prince Henry the Navigator was

a Grand Master of the Order. Ships of the Knights of Christ sailed under the Templars familiar red *patte* cross, and it was under the same cross that Columbus' three caravels crossed the Atlantic to the New World. Columbus himself was married to the daughter of a former Grand Master of the Order, and had access to his father-in-law's charts and diaries.[687] Columbus may also himself have been a member of a secret society which had connections with the Templars and the Cathars. He was associated with a political group that supported the ideas of Dante, one of the alleged Grand Masters of the Rosicrucians, and his voyages were sponsored by Lorenzo de Medici, and Leonardo da Vinci.[688]

It is said that the original vision for the political development of America was a work entitled *The New Atlantis*, by Sir Francis Bacon. Although Bacon's insistence on the founding of the English colonies was prompted by the Spanish threat, his long-term goal was the creation of a society based on principles derived from esotericism. Bacon, like many of his contemporaries, believed that during the Golden Age of civilization an advanced race existed on a lost continent called Atlantis. In *The New Atlantis*, published in 1627, after the foundation of the English colonies in the Americas, Bacon suggests that that continent was America, having once been submerged by a deluge. His account tells the story of a family who are shipwrecked on a mysterious island where the inhabitants have built a perfect city, while remaining entirely unknown to the rest of the world. The country was ruled by philosopher-scientists who have flying machines and ships which travel under the sea. This advanced race possessed a superior knowledge which was imparted to them by heavenly beings. In their great college, called Solomon's House, the priest-scientist of Atlantis pursued researches in all the arts and sciences. Solomon's House was modeled on the lines of the Invisible College advocated in Rosicrucian writings, and Bacon's books often featured title pages with Masonic symbols, including the compass and the square, the two pillars of Solomon's temple and the blazing triangle, and the eye of god. In a speech to Parliament, Bacon alluded to the establishment of Solomon's House in the American colonies as the blueprint for the country.

As early as the 1620's, it is claimed, Masonic lodges were being formed in the American colonies, although the more formal forms of Freemasonry in Europe did not emerge until the eighteenth century. In the 1650's, the Masonic influence was spreading. A group of Dutch settlers, who were third-degree Masons, then the highest degree, arrived in Newport, Massachusetts in 1658. They introduced Masonry to the colony, and members of the family operated a Masonic lodge in the area. Through these colonists, the ideals of Freemasonry, which had inspired the French Revolution, also inspired the American Revolution.

All the members of the Boston Tea Party were Freemasons who belonged to the St. Andrews lodge in the city. Arguments about the taxes levied on the American colonies by the British finally came to a head in 1773, with the passing of the Tea Act. The British, attempting to save the East India Company from bankruptcy, arranged for the delivery of tea directly to the colonies. In revolt against the new tax they had to pay, a group of Boston citizens disguised as Native Americans raided the East India Company's ships in the city harbor, and threw their cargo overboard. When the British introduced a bill in March 1774, closing the Boston port until compensation was paid to the East India Company for the loss of their goods, events quickly escalated. Then, a small force of colony militia tried to seize an ammunition store at Concord and fired on the British Redcoats, and the American Revolution had effectively begun.

One of the most influential figures in the American Revolution was the writer, philosopher and scientist Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was originally a Quaker, but had become a Freemason in 1731, when he joined the Lodge of St. John in Philadelphia, which was the first recognized Masonic lodge in America. In 1732, he helped draft the bylaws of this lodge, and in 1734, he printed the *Constitutions* which was the first Masonic book ever issued in America. He eventually rose to Grand Master of the St. John's lodge, and in 1749 was elected Grand Master of the Province. While in France in the 1770's, as a diplomat for the American colonies, Franklin was made Grand Master of the politically-oriented Masonic lodge called Neuf Soeurs in Paris. Franklin also eventually became Grand Master of the Order of the Rosy Cross.

In 1754, George Washington was fighting the French, and with the encouragement of John Adams, a Freemason and a member of the secret Order of the Dragon, had begun a military career which led him to become commander-in-chief of the rebel forces of the American Revolution. Like Washington, the majority of the military commanders of the American revolutionary army, which fought the British during the War of Independence, were practicing Freemasons. George Washington was himself a high-ranking Mason. He had taken his first degree initiation at a lodge in Fredericksburg, Virginia in 1734.

Among the fifty-six American rebels who signed the *Declaration of Independence*, only six were not members of the Masonic Order. Their success lead to the establishment of the first modern secular state. The purpose of removing the role of religion from the sate was ostensibly to limit the sort of persecuation that had become habitual in Europe. More correctly, however, the goal of the illuminati was to remove religion, which it referred to euphamistically as "superstition" and "despotism", from the public sphere. The American constitution itself was inspired by the French Revolution, and the ideals of

Freemasonry. It enshrined “Liberty”, meaning freedom from the yoke of Christian morality, rules which it attempted to replace with “unalienable rights”, a concept orginally discussed among the secret meetings of the Illuminati.

George Washingtone wrote insistend that he did not deny “the Doctrines of the Illuminati, and principles of Jacobinism had not spread in the United States.” “On the contrary”, he replied “no one is more truly satisfied of this fact than I am.” He continues:

> The idea that I meant to convey, was, that I did not believe that the Lodges of Free Masons in this Country had, as Societies, endeavoured to propagate the diabolical tenets of the first, or pernicious principles of the latter (if they are susceptible of seperation). That Individuals of them may have done it, or that the founder, or instrument employed to found, the Democratic Societies in the United States, may have had these objects; and actually had a seperation of the People from their Government in view, is too evident to be questioned.

In September 18, 1793, President George Washington dedicated the United States Capitol. Dressed in Masonic apron, the president placed a silver plate on the cornerstone and covered it with the Masonic symbols of corn, oil and wine. The plan of the city of Washington DC itself was designed by Freemason and architect Pierre Charles L’Enfante in the form of a pentagram, or five-pointed star. In 1848, in a Masonic ceremony, the cornerstone was laid of the Washington Monument, an obelisk or pillar, like those formerly dedicated to the dying gods of ancient Middle East. And, every president of the United States since Independence has purportedly been a 33rd degree Freemason.

About the Author(s) (optional)

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Notes
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[646] Yates. *Giordano Bruno and Hermetic Tradition*, p. 15

[647] *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 57

[648] Seznec. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 85

[649] Encyclopedia Britannica. *Gnosticism*.

[650] Baigent & Leigh. *Elixir and the Stone*, p. 38-39

[651] Seznec. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 54

[652] quoted fr. Seznec. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 162

[653] Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 57.

[654] *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 81

[655] *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 77

[656] Thorndike. *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. V., p. 32.

[657] Seznec, Survival of the Pagan Gods, p. 72

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[659] Yates. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 221, Baigent and Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge*, p. 92

[660] Yates. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. xii.

[661] Yates. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 34

[662] *Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects*, p. 50

[663] *Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects*, p. 50

[664] *Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects*, p. 46

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[666] Astle. *Babylonian Woe*, p. 119

[667] Proofs of a Conspiracy, p. 12

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[671] *Morals and Dogma*, p. 9.

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[673] *Morals and Dogma*, p. 626.

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[675] Knight and Lomas. *Hiram Key*, p.14

[676] *Morals and Dogma,* 248

[677] Hall, *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic Philosophy,* p. 176 and *Morals and Dogma*, p. 77.

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[680] Howard. *The Occult Conspiracy*, p. 63

[681] *Morals and Dogma*, p. 840.

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[684] *Occult Conspiracy*, p. 68.

[685] *Morals and Dogma*, p. 823.

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[687] Baigent & Leigh. *The Temple and the Lodge*, p. 55

[688] Howard. *The Occult Conspiracy*, p. 74